

Soldiers of Fortune in Foreign Legion

APPROXIMATELY forty self-styled Americans are now serving in the famous foreign legion of the French army, scattered in Algeria, Morocco, Syria and Tonkin. But how many of that two-score are really citizens of the United States the French war department is unable to say. All it knows is that within the past three years forty men describing themselves as Americans have enlisted.

The reason for lack of accurate data on these self-exiled or self-styled Americans is that the French army requires absolutely no identity papers of applicants for service in its renowned expeditionary corps. A German who has never been any farther west than Frankfurt-on-the-Main may present himself before a recruiting officer and join the legion under the name of Otto Schmidt, American, born in Hoboken. Similarly a Pole may join up as Stanislas Skryzskinski, American born and bred in Cleveland.

Provided the applicant meets the physical requirements, which are fairly stiff, the French recruiting authorities make no investigation. "No questions asked" is the legion's rule.

For the legion Etrangere was founded "to offer refuge," according to the minister of King Louis Philippe who organized it in 1831, "to those foreigners who, by reason of the troubled state of Europe, have come within our borders, and whose presence, unemployed and harassed by necessity, may constitute a public danger." Soon after 1831 membership in the legion was thrown open to Frenchmen.

From the beginning of its history of nearly 100 years, the legion has normally been a good forty or fifty per cent German in makeup. Yet never, according to the French army chiefs, has that high percentage made the slightest difference in the legion's loyalty to either the white flag of Louis Philippe or the tricolor under which France's armies have marched during the reign of Napoleon III and the present republican regime. The glowing citation which the polyglot warriors amassed during the late war are ample proof that their famous song,

"Having no fatherland.
France is our mother."

is no mere poetical imagery.

The legion's strength is now close to twenty thousand men. In times of peace its effectives are normally not employed in France proper, but in the colonies. The regulations provide that legionnaires, who enlist for a five-year first term of service, shall be rotated from Africa to the far east and back again. For the legion the French high command tries to live up to the old recruiting promise of "Join the army and see world."

The discipline, as far as regulations go, is exactly the same as in the regular French forces. In practice the presence of a large number of German non-commissioned officers tends to make it more strict. However, foreign officers who can show good service records may be admitted as legion second lieutenants after a six months' training period. Oppor-

tunity for attendance at the French officers' training schools is held out to all ranks of legionnaires who show the necessary aptitude.

Among the officers now serving with the legion three are known to be bona fide Americans who joined the force during the late war. One certified American is serving as a first sergeant. But of the remainder of the required forty, little is known in official quarters. And official quarters, keeping to the idea of the "refuge," are not anxious to be further informed.

Bill Smith, a country shopkeeper, went to the city to buy goods. They were sent immediately and reached home before he did. When the boxes were delivered, Mrs. Smith, who was keeping the shop, uttered a scream, seized a hatchet, and began frantically to open the largest one. "What's the matter, Sarah?" asked one of the bystanders, who had watched her in amazement. Pale and faint, Mrs. Smith pointed to an inscription on the box. It read, "Bill inside." — Squib.

"No, sah, Ah doan't neber ride on dem things," said an old colored lady, looking in on the merry-go-round. "Why, de other day I seen dat Rastus Johnson git on an' ride as much as a dollah's worth an' git off at the very same place he got on at, an' I sez to him, 'Rastus,' I sez, 'yo' spent yo' money, but whar yo' been?'" — Boston Transcript.

"These firemen must be a frivolous set," said Mrs. Dumping.

"Why?" asked her husband.

"I read in the paper that after the fire was under control the firemen played all night on the ruins. Why didn't they go home and go to bed like sensible men, instead of romping about like children." — Councilor.

The House Agent—You say you have no children, gramophone or wireless, and you don't keep a dog. You seem just the quiet tenant the owner insists on.

The House Hunter—I don't want to hide anything about my behavior, so you might tell the owner that my fountain-pen squeaks a bit.

—The Bystander.

Coming home from school, Betty said: "Mother, I told Edna that she must do unto others as she would have others do unto her. Wasn't that right?" "Yes," said mother, "but do you always do that way yourself?" "No," replied Betty, "but it didn't hurt to tell her to, did it?"

How he could feel at home.—An American visitor in London, buying a paper from a newsboy, said, "I should have to pay double the price of this paper if I were in America."

"Well," replied the urchin, "yer can pay me double, guv'nor, if it'll make yer feel more at 'ome."

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