

EDITORIAL

WE confess to a power of bewilderment over the law in the matter of Canada's army. First, at the outset of war we start to raise a volunteer army for fighting in Europe as though the Militia Act had nothing whatever in it about fighting except to keep out Fenians and the like. We remind ourselves that England never asked us for a man or a gun. We offered everything. The offer was accepted. The British Empire is built on what the French call *laissez faire*—a magnificent sort of spontaneity calculated to thrill, and it does. Then we complain long and loud that parts of the people do not share this sentiment like the rest of us. We wonder why. They do not send out soldiers so freely. They are divided among themselves. We wonder why, set forth all the reasons why they should, satisfy ourselves that the reasons are sound and whether there is not some form of moral or national suasion that will budge these people.

Two years ago England was in a similar state. There was ample scope in the law to make the men of England into a vast army, and if there had not been, a law good enough for the purpose could have been made in a day. But England believed in the volunteer system because she had always had it. There never had been a war when all the male effectives of the country were needed at the front, simply because as a general thing England did most of her fighting thousands of miles from London and nation-armies are not easy to transport and to maintain over the seven seas. But England found that volunteers were not coming up as fast as the front needed them. Therefore the law was put on the stage. There it was plain enough; if the men did not come of free will the law might fetch them. But before the law was more than mentioned England set herself to organize. The national register was made. The Derby scheme combed the country for effectives. It was known exactly where all the men were in case of emergency. And it was known also that if the men did not come forward in the light of that knowledge, the law would reach out and grab them under the national register which was the means adopted to make the law easily effective. Compulsion then when it came had to do with only a remnant.

In Canada much different. We send out voluntary national service cards and call it a national register. Men are not even compelled to use the cards. The country does not yet know what that canvass accomplished. In the meantime a leader of those who do not believe in voluntary enlistment discovers that the Militia Act says thus and so regarding an army for the defence of this country. He says that if the government will only enforce this law the people whom he represents will obey it, because they are a law-abiding people. At last, months afterwards, suddenly it is decided to enforce the law. Then there is rebellion against it. Those who most vociferously opposed voluntary enlistment still more violently clamour against compulsory service. We are in a national back water. And with our fingers on the sudden law we now talk about going back to a better application of the principle of voluntary enlistment.

Truly the law as applied to the army is a strange matter. The law itself is not worth the paper taken to print it without some sort of army to enforce it. To enforce the law calling out the army we depend upon the army that exists. Most of that army is overseas.

But at least we may be spared the absurd system of trying to get 100,000 men by means of the recruiting evangelist.

TALK of coalition interested us if for no other reason than the off chance of seeing Sir Lomer Gouin take his place at Ottawa. Here is a man of remarkable strength, in organization, in strategy, in sentiment, in practical statesmanship. In Quebec he is more powerful if less magical than Laurier. He has done his life work in Quebec. He knows the people of that province better than do the inflammatory leaders who make bonfires of popular senti-



And they say he's not going to Ottawa after all.

ment. Gouin is a leader. He has the wisdom which goes with a native talent for benefiting by experience. Some people never have any experience because they lack the capacity to profit by what goes in one ear and out the other. Sir Lomer Gouin is no such man. We should be willing to see even the experiment of coalition government, without regard for the present status of Parliament, just to get the strong hand of Sir Lomer in the counsels of them that rule at Ottawa. But rumour says—not. No coalition. No sensation. No summer drive. Just the nibbling on the defensive.

CANADA is not even to have the colossal figure of a food dictator. After all our trouble last week to point out what the problems are to confront such a man in Canada, it is announced that instead of such a despot issuing his dicta to the populace at the doors of city halls exhorting them in the name of the King to save more and waste less, we are to have a prosaic Commission—the usual representative lot, omitting no necessary interest. Well, the sooner the Commission the better we shall stop talking about the Controller, and the better the Commission the sooner we shall get down to business in the matter of saving food and a little of the people's money in the purchase of it. But we insist that so big a task as food regulation in Canada should at least not be entrusted to the *pari-mutuels*.

LET us not forget the extraordinary situation confronting the present Government. Never in our fifty years of Confederation have we had such a situation. With a vastly greater set of problems than ever before facing an administration; with our national expenditure more than trebled; with our whole machinery of getting producers into the country and the land opened up for settlers transformed into a machine for getting people out of the country and away from the business of production; with divided sentiments over our patriotism such as we never had in a crisis; with a complication over language and race doing its best to arrest our patriotic activity; with a huge and dwindling army overseas and an urgent necessity for repairing it; with party counsels trying to befuddle our national issues; with men preaching an organized Empire and others a nationalized Canada; with all these and as many more disturbing factors as you care to set down, the Government of the day must carry on one year past its appointed time, perhaps more, without any fresh mandate from the people. We have depended upon elections in this democracy to justify or to overthrow governments. When an election was not practicable we have fallen back upon the referendum. Now, we have neither referendum nor election. The

Government must continuously act when the political energy behind its enactments is reduced to a minimum and is not adequately replaced by Imperial impetus from London. In the face of these things let us not forget that Government in Canada has a task of unprecedented character and magnitude. We do not, however, omit to remember that never were the people of the country so determinedly and willingly behind the government. The people are here to be used. Let the Government, realizing its enormous difficulties, not fail to use us.

ONE year ago Tuesday of this week Kitchener was drowned. His death anniversary causes people generally in the British Empire to reflect upon the War and the Man. For a long while millions of us had a dim idea that the War was the Man. When Kitchener became Secretary of War many people thought the war was already as good as won. When he went below June 5, 1916, perhaps half as many people imagined that without this strong, silent man in the War Office a real Allied victory was impossible.

We know how foolish was the latter conjecture. We have too high an opinion of what Kitchener actively did as army organizer to suppose that without his personality the work could not successfully go on. Kitchener was both a bigger and a smaller man than the average Kitchener admirer considered him. In getting a clear estimate of his character we do much to clear up our ideas about country, citizenship and Empire. Those who credited Kitchener with the qualities of invincibility and prescience have had to revise their opinion. Kitchener was not unconquerable. In his day and in the kind of warfare he waged, he was as near invincibility as any general we have ever had. But the kind of war which was sprung upon the world in 1914 was as new to him as to any of the generals and other officers under him. He had never conducted organized trench warfare. He had always been a fighter in the open. When any little army of his moved across the sand in the grey of the morning it was to wipe out some dusky foe on the outposts of Empire. But he was essentially an outpost conqueror, a ruler of strange peoples, and in no sense an organizer of siege warfare involving the use of millions upon millions of men. The work of the allied armies on the west front was more novel to him than his own more soldierly kind of war would have been to a Hindenburg. In the face of modern warfare Kitchener was not anywhere near invincible. The world would be in a better condition to-day had war remained what Kitchener helped to make it, what Roberts made it before his time, as the work of brave men who ride without fear to defeat or to victory.

And Kitchener was most assuredly not a prophet. Had he been half as prescient as his admirers made him out to be he would have studied out the genius of the German system of warfare long ago and prepared England to meet it. The best prophecy nowadays is based upon investigation. Kitchener, so far as we know, did not investigate war conditions in modern times—war as we know it now. He had never raised his voice to warn England of what was to come. If warfare is a science it should be investigated by its experts. Kitchener was surely an expert in war. But he was not an investigator. On the very outbreak of the war that was to revolutionize the world's warfare he was about to set sail for Egypt, quite willing to escape the great struggle unless ordered to meet it by the nation. When he said that he would accept the Secretaryship of War for three years or the duration of the war, he was credited by some people with prophecy.

Kitchener did not predict that the war would last three years or longer. He accepted office for three years. If the war lasted longer, well and good, he would stay with the office. If it should be over before three years he would still continue in office. What he did appear to prophesy was that the war would not last longer than his own life. But fate proved him wrong. Kitchener is dead. The war goes on. And the memory of Kitchener still lives in the hearts of all those who were made fellow-citizens of his by the war; the memory of a great silent soldier, who, if war had remained the test of true courage, as it was in his day, would have gone down to history as one of the greatest warriors of all time.