The Literary Digest for August 25, 1917 CANADIAN HIERARCHY FIGHTING CONSCRIPTION

HE VEILED OPPOSITION of the Catholic clergy in the province of Quebec to the Canadian Conscription Law has passed, in the view of Government circles, into a phase of active hostility. The signal for this change is held to be the interview with Cardinal Begin, Archbishop of Quebec, published in his own official organ, the Ouchee Action Catholiauc.

The Cardinal's hostility to the draft seems to be based upon the fact that a handful of young men in the Catholic seminaries of the province are not exempted from the operation of the law. The Cardinal, who is the leading churchman in the Dominion, says:

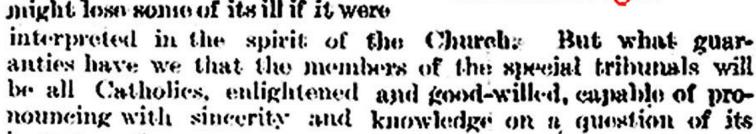
"This conscription law is a menace which causes the Canadian clergy the worst possible

apprehensions.

This military service . . . is not only a serious blow to the rights of the Church of Christ, independent in its domain, and whose laws and practise exempt the clergy and that class of the society which that name designates from the service under arms, but also it (the conscription law) constitutes a fatal obstacle to the recruiting of ministers of God, shepherds of souls, as well as to that of the staff of clerical teachers, and through this very fact it creates, in our society, an evilmuch worse than that which it is alleged to attempt to remedy."

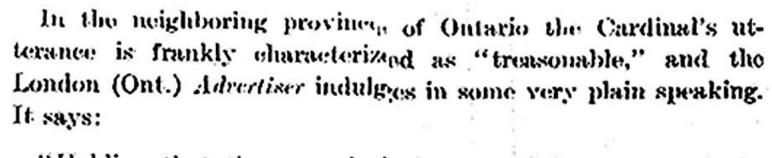
The Archbishop thinks that the "evil" might be mitigated if the exemption boards were composed entirely of "Catholics, enlightened and good-willed":

"The danse as it is written might lose some of its ill if it were



unportance? "I like to believe . . . that no one will dure, on a matter so important and delicate, hust the sentiments of the whole Catholic population of the Dominica and imprudently sow, on this side of the Atlantic, the seed of the fatal religious discords that have

divided the Old World."



"Holding that the conscription law constitutes a fatal obstacle to recruiting for the priestlhood, and for the staff of clerical teachers, Cardinal Begin declares it thus creates an evil 'much worse than that which it is alleged to attempt to remedy.'

"The evil which it is hoped the law will remedy (without dealing with the 'alleged' part of the phrase) is the lack of men to take the place of the fallen and wounded and to fight the cause of humanity against the coursed Prussianism of Wilhelm and his militarist parasites. What greater evil than this Prussianism can the conscription law cause? "Presumably the Cardinal's main objection to the law is that

divinity students are not to be exempted because of their calling. Why they should want to lbe excluded from the operations

of the bill, if they possess red blood, is hard to see."

The Advertiser, somewhat umkindly contrasts the position

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Louis Nazaire, Cardinal Begin

FIGHTING CONSCRIPTION

of Cardinal Begin with that of another member of the Sacred College, Cardinal Mercier, of Malines:

"If Germany wins, the liberty which the Cardinal prizes so highly will vanish. If he doubts that, he has only to look at Belgium and France. Let him ask Cardinal Mercier. Have the Belgian Roman Catholics any liberty of speech or action? Is there any ground for supposing better treatment would be afforded the Canadian? If there were, it would not be to the Canadians' credit."

The Cardinal is assured that the law will be administered not

Characterizing the Canadian Conscription law in his own official organ as a serious blow to the rights of the Church of Christ," Cardinal Begin, Archbishop of Quebec, is held by nany to have thus given a lead to the French-

draft in the dominion.

Canadian clergy in their opposition to the

by "Catholics, enlightened and good-willed," but with entire impartiality. The Advertiser remarks:

"If the conscription law is exried out without fear or favor, and without religious discrimination, but simply with a view to taking those best fitted for service and least nécessary at home for national work, there can he no more injustice to the Roman Catholio than there is to the Protestant. If there are more young . men in Quebec unmarried and fit to fight than in other provinces, more will be taken; if there are fewer, fewer will be taken."

Meanwhile the Quebec clericals have found a scapegoat upon which to fasten the opprobrium for the conscription law. The Montreal La Croix, which circulates largely among the clergy of Quebec, quite gravely writes that the Masonic order is responsible for it all:

"No one ignores the brutal principle at the base of the conscription bill which an English majority wishes to introduce in our laws in order to be able to send French-Canadians to the European butchery, and to any other butchery which may happen in the fu-Sir Robert Borden, who received the word of command from London and from the Grand Lodge of England, of which he is a member, and whose reunious he must have attended during his last trip to Europe, will not listen to the language of reason and good sense."

La Croix further remarks:
"We hope that the elections

will show so clearly and so firmly that the great majority of the people is opposed to conscription so that no Government will in the future even think of supporting such a measure."

The anti-Masonic sentiments of La Croix raise the ire of one of the leading weeklies of Canada, the Toronto Saturday Night, which caustically remarks:

"Imagine such fool stuff being handed out for consumption, and moreover believed to be true by a lot of people ignorant of every principle of Masonry. Masonry is not confined by seet, creed, or nationality. Nor does it interest itself in political issues. No doubt it suits the book of such journals as La Croix, well knowing the ignorant superstition which exists against Masonry in the Province of Quebec, to couple conscription with it. It is of such trash that anticonscription arguments are made."

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