

# The Facts of the Raid upon the Jesuit Novitiate

By Unknown

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At the present time, when our country is engaged in a war that needs the exertion of every particle of her strength, it is an unpatriotic thing to do anything or say anything unnecessarily that, by causing dissensions among our own people, weakens national unity and therefore lessens national strength. Certain Protestant ministers at Guelph, Ont., have recently caused a furore in Ontario and excitement all over Canada by calumnious charges that St. Stanislaus' Novitiate of the Society of Jesus, situated at Guelph, was harboring defaulters from military service. A more cruel and damaging calumny against an institution can hardly be conceived, but the malice of these Protestant ministers has not stopped at that, for they have added other and equally venomous slanders against the members of the Jesuit Order. The original charge against the Jesuits, that defaulters under the Military Service Act were hiding in the Novitiate, has been completely disproved by the highest military authorities and legal authorities of the Government at Ottawa. Fear of a libel action in the Courts has caused the Protestant ministers who made the charges now seek to deny that they ever made any charges at all, and they endeavour to hide their retreat by raising new issues, such as the doctrine of Jesuit theologians on lying, and the equity of the Military Service Act. These Protestant ministers, and the Orange lodges back of them, are also trying to hide their discomfiture by calling for a Government enquiry into all the circumstances preceding and following the Guelph raid. It is for the Government to decide whether such an enquiry is desirable. Catholics have no wish to oppose enquiry, but they cherish no vindictiveness and they will not insist on keeping alive a controversy that is injurious to religious harmony and national unity. It must be cordially acknowledged that the great body of Protestants have shown no sympathy with the Guelph ministers and their Orange supporters who made the false charges against the Novitiate. Archdeacon Mackintosh, of St. James' Anglican Church at Guelph, declared, as reported in the *Toronto Star*, June 27th: "I have not yet seen anything that can justify the charges made. The church is no place for stirring up religious strife. That is not the mission of the pulpit." Many of the leading newspapers of Canada have similarly denounced the Protestant ministers who have resorted to calumny in order to stir up bigotry. In this paper it is proposed to give nothing but a plain statement of the facts of a case that has aroused widespread interest all over Canada.

On the night of June 8th, 1918, when the community were in their beds, the Novitiate of St. Stanislaus was "raided" by a party of Dominion Military Police headed by Captain MacAuley, Deputy Provost Marshal. Captain MacAuley told the Superior of the House that he must parade all the members of the community before him within five minutes or he would proceed forcibly to search the premises. On being challenged to show his authorization Capt. MacAuley was unable to do so, but acting on the advice of a lawyer who had been summoned by telephone, the Superior gave the Captain all facilities for a complete search of the House and examination of its inmates.

Including priests, instructors, lay brothers, novices and everyone within the institution, the whole community counted 46. There were 22 novices, and after getting particulars of them all Capt. MacAuley arrested three as deserters under the Military Service Act, but before he could take these alleged deserters away Capt. MacAuley received orders by telephone from Ottawa to stay proceedings. The next day the Rev. H. Bourque, S.J., Superior of the Novitiate, sent a letter of protest to Ottawa against the raid. After describing how a cordon of armed men had been drawn around the house and the entrance made at night time, Father Bourque said:

"I now beg to protest as strongly as I can against this outrageous conduct. If the Militia Department at Ottawa needs any information about the Novitiate at Guelph I will do all in my power to furnish it. If the military authorities of this district wish to ascertain for themselves the status of this house and its members I will give them every facility for doing so. But I will not submit without protest to the wholesale indignity of having my house invaded at night, of having the gates of the grounds closed and a guard set over them, and of having a cordon of police on patrol around the buildings, as was done last night. I will not accept in silence the base imputation that this religious community is in league with deserters to evade the law, nor can I tolerate in the least degree that such an odious impression be made on the public mind as undoubtedly must be made by such a preposterous display of force. For the only inference that can be made from such special treatment, from the unwarranted and high-handed manner of the whole proceeding, which we regard as an insult not merely to ourselves, but to the Catholics of the Dominion and to all decent men, is that we must indeed, be what ignorant and often confuted factions have made us out to be — double-dealing, dangerous men who can be made to obey the just law of the land only at the point of the bayonet."

In reply to this protest from Father Bourque, the Minister of Militia, Major-General S. C. Mewburn, wired the most complete apology for the action of his subordinate. General Mewburn said:

"Am just in receipt of your letter of the 8th inst. on my return to Ottawa, and words can't express to you my deep regret of the action taken by the Deputy Provost Marshal, Capt. MacAuley, on the evening of the 7th. My attention was called to this matter on my arrival in Ottawa this a.m., and I find that my A.G. has taken immediate action for a more thorough investigation, and if the facts are as stated in your letter, which, of course, I do not doubt, I can assure you that the error of judgment committed by this officer will be dealt with in a proper way, as I will not tolerate any such action on the part of any military officer as far as the operation of the Military Service Act is concerned. As I have already stated, I deeply regret this occurrence and thank you for your frank letter. The question of liability for military service of any of your students is now being considered by the Department of Justice."

For two weeks after the raid and after this correspondence between the Novitiate and Ottawa, not a word about the affair appeared in the public press, because all mention of it had been forbidden by the censor. Some leading members of the Guelph Ministerial Association then went to the offices of Toronto newspapers, and through their action the affair was made public.

The Department of Militia published a statement on the liability of the members of the Novitiate to military service. A list of the members of the Novitiate of military age, together with the dates on which they entered the Order, had been furnished to the Adjutant-General. The statement said it was clear that all those in the Novitiate except two were free from liability to military service. On these two further information was sought, and it was shown to the satisfaction of the Militia Department that they were both free from liability. One of these was a tonsured cleric before he entered the

Novitiate, and the other was an American student with clearance papers from the U.S. military authorities. Neither was one of the three whom Capt. MacAuley had wanted to arrest on the night of the raid. The Captain's suspicions that these were defaulters were groundless. One of the suspects was the son of the Hon. C. J. Doherty, Minister of Justice, and this circumstance added piquancy to the newspaper accounts of the raid, but it was proved that this young man had not only entered the Novitiate when he was nineteen years of age, before he incurred any liability under the Military Service Act, but he was also physically unfit for military service. Another case that the Rev. Mr. Palmer and his Congregationalist confrere, the Rev. W. D. Spence, adduced was that of a man called O'Leary, who was in the Novitiate at the time of the raid and who shortly afterwards enlisted in the army. Both these reverend gentlemen spoke of O'Leary as a defaulter. The facts are that O'Leary was not a member of the community but only an employed gardener. He had tried to enlist at the very beginning of the war but was rejected as unfit. He succeeded in joining the army early in 1916 and went overseas with a draft from the 95th Battalion. In England he had 18 teeth extracted and went down in weight to 80 pounds. He was sent back to Canada and honourably discharged from the army as physically unfit in September, 1917. It was only after the raid at Guelph that he understood that the M.S.A. applied to honourably discharged men like himself. He immediately offered himself at the recruiting office in Guelph, where he was most unjustifiably placed among defaulters, but when the case came before Col. Young, O.C. of the Western Ontario Regiment, that officer declared O'Leary was no defaulter, and was entitled to discharge if he wished it.

It has been proved beyond question that not a single inmate of the Novitiate was a defaulter from military service. The charge that the institution was harbouring defaulters is a calumny. The calumniators then tried to pretend they had never made any charges. The Rev. W. D. Spence, President of the Guelph Ministerial Association, said to a reporter of the *Toronto Daily Star* on June 26th: "I wish to reiterate that we have never made any charges that the Novitiate has been harbouring defaulters or anything else. All we asked is that an investigation should be made." Mr. Spence's "we" presumably refers to the Ministerial Association as a body. Whatever the Association may have done, there is no doubt that its members made the charges. Preaching in the Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Mr. Palmer thus delivered himself:

"And now, brethren, I come to what is the crowning act of shame on the part of some people right in our own district. Outside the city of Guelph, as some of you are aware, is the Novitiate of the Roman Catholic Church governed by the Jesuits. For many months past, in fact ever since the passing of the Military Service Act, persistent rumours were abroad that many young men whose people were well enough off to pay the price could be found there in hiding from military service.

"In the Novitiate are 46 men. Twenty-one of these are of military age; nineteen of these twenty-two [sic] have entered the Novitiate since the passing of the Military Service Act. All of these are sons of prominent Roman Catholics. Among the number is one, J. A. Doyle, who presumably is a defaulter from justice; also A. J. O'Leary [sic] who is an acknowledged defaulter from justice; also a son of the Hon. C. J. Doherty, Minister of Justice, who is 20 years of age and came from the Province of Quebec and entered the Novitiate [sic] to escape military service."

The above words of Rev. Mr. Palmer are given as reported in the *Toronto Daily Star* of June 24th. There are some obvious misprints which we have not corrected. The words which we have put in heavy type and those which follow them are either a charge that the Novitiate was hiding defaulters or they are nothing at all. This sermon of Mr. Palmer's was printed as a statement and distributed in the other Protestant churches of Guelph, and the Rev. Mr. Spence himself declared that this

statement accurately represented the facts. Every newspaper reader in Ontario knows that the headlines written about the affair made the charge of harbouring defaulters the central theme of discussion. That charge was investigated by the authorities at Ottawa and was declared false. Instead of taking the honourable course of withdrawing the charges thus disproven and apologizing for the wrong they had done to the Novitiate, the Rev. Mr. Spence and those with him are endeavouring to throw dust in the eyes of the public by saying that the Ministerial Association never made any charges at all and that the point at issue is not whether the Novitiate is harbouring defaulters, but whether the Military Service Act is equitable in its treatment of Protestant divinity students and Catholic divinity students. This, of course, is another question altogether, and the Government, not Catholics, are responsible for the Military Service Act. So far as the Jesuit Novitiate at Guelph is concerned, the facts show that the charges made by the Protestant ministers against that institution are simple calumnies.

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