

compel them to remain. An order was issued convening a military commission of three officers. Four prisoners were ordered before it for trial. They were found guilty of double desertion, cutting the telegraph wire, and burning a tannery in Government employ. Each confessed his guilt. I ordered them shot to death in presence of the troops, and saw the order executed. Five other men - four deserters and one citizen, guilty of inciting desertion, all of whom had been captured with arms in their hands fighting in the Federal ranks at the battle of L'Anguille - were tried in the same way, found guilty, and put to death. Two deserters were similarly dealt with at Fort Smith and one at Batesville. These summary measures had the desired effect. The spirit of desertion was crushed. It did not again manifest itself while I commanded the Trans-Mississippi District.

"In consequence of the virtual abdication of the civil authorities I believed it my duty, as the only man having the requisite force, to institute a government ad interim. I considered this incumbent on me alike for preserving society and for creating and maintaining an army. Hence on June 30 I proclaimed martial law. To make this declaration effective a provost marshal was appointed in each county, and all the independent companies therein were placed under his control. Over these were appointed provost-marshals of districts, which included several counties. The provost-marshal-general at my headquarters had command over all. It was my intention still further to improve and strengthen the organization by forming the independent companies into regiments and brigades as a reserve force for future contingencies. Martial law and the regulations enforcing it put an end to the anarchy by which the loyal population had been so long afflicted. They exorcised the devil of extortion that was torturing soldiers into desertion by starving their wives and children; they restored the credit of Confederate currency and saved the army from starvation; they broke up trading with the enemy and destroyed or removed out of his reach thousands of bales of cotton that selfish and venal planters were ready to sell for Federal gold; they insured the exclusion of spies, the arrest of traitors, stragglers, and deserters, and the enforcement of the conscription. Occasional acts of injustice may have been committed, but in the main the greatest good of the greatest number of loyal citizens was promoted. That was certainly the result, because these citizens themselves, as members of the independent companies, carried martial law into effect in their respective localities. Many arrests were made; but, though the order proclaiming martial law plainly invited the civil authorities to reassert their jurisdiction, I never heard that the writ of habeas corpus was even spoken of, except in the case of a negro man who had attempted the rape of a white woman whose relations were in the army. The writ was not sued out and the negro was hanged, as he deserved to be.

"The opposition to martial law never embraced many persons other than Tories, speculators, extortioners, and deserters, and a few of the smaller politicians, who mistook the clamors of these malcontents for the voice of the people. Before resorting to this alternative I not only satisfied myself that the circumstances made it necessary, but that it was demanded as a necessity by the loyal population. During all of June letters and petitions to that effect came to me continually. Prominent citizens urged it at personal interviews. The editors of the two leading exponents of public opinion in Arkansas, the Gazette and True Democrat, strongly advised it. The State Military Board approved it. Not a single State officer nor a member of Congress at any time indicated to me a different opinion. There seemed to be but this one sentiment among good citizens."