

# WHAT MARTIAL LAW MEANS

There has been some foolish talk about proclaiming martial law in Nova Scotia. Do the people who talk so glibly about it know what it means? Martial law is not law at all, in the ordinary sense of the term. The proclamation of martial law means the suspension of all laws, of all ordinary authority, of all civil rights, and all personal liberties. It means that everything must be subordinated to military necessities — business, pleasure, even the private life of the citizen, who may no longer come and go and work and play as he would, but must obey any restrictions that may be placed on his movements or actions.

The rights of property, the right to exercise control over one's belongings, the right of public meeting, and of free speech—all rights enjoyed in peace time disappear under martial law. The military authorities may take anything for their own use, from the horse or the motor car of the private individual to a factory or a railway system or a line of steamships, and that without any payment. They may stop all commercial or industrial operations, they may order the population to be in their homes by a certain hour, they may seize all food or other supplies, they may fix the price at which commodities may be sold, and they may suppress the publication of all news and the sending of any letters and telegrams.

Freedom of circulation is always suspended under martial law, and those persons who are abroad at this moment and desire to return home may find it difficult to do so. The functions of civil courts and civil authorities, such as the police, cease under martial law; all offences are tried before military tribunals summarily, and any penalty up to the extreme penalty of death may be awarded. There is no appeal from such judgments. General existence under martial law has never been known in England in modern times.