

known for years as one of the shrewdest land-experts in California. Benson had heard of some of his dazzling operations, in which he had taken up whole townships by the aid of unprincipled land officers, notaries, and dummies. The surveyor greatly admired the sagacity of Hyde and was anxious to employ it in his own behalf. The two men formed their secret partnership. Since then, Hyde has been a very valuable ally of Benson, for that gentleman had run nearly to the end of his tether in the surveys.

For a time they were content with the methods pursued by Hyde—neat and secret violations of the homestead, timber-land, and swamp-land laws by means of dummies. They connected themselves with rings of small land-grabbers all over the coast. These rings transferred vast tracts of timber and grazing-land from the Government to the private ownership of Californian Cleons who were stringing car-loads of barbed wire. Benson and Hyde, as the master minds, came in for a liberal share of the proceeds in each case. When a land king wanted to grab a new principality from the Government, they would help him in his predatory plan—always for a large consideration. In one case four dummies went before a corrupt notary and took up forty timber claims, for which the notary received \$400 in fees—\$10 for each entryman. A man would come into the office as Jones, then go out and come in as Smith, and repeat the operation ten times. Hundreds of such dummies were employed. They were, for the most part, ranch-hands, stenographers, sailors, stevedores, and colored janitors. The papers were all signed in blank and the men who did the signing rarely knew the nature of their contents. Each dummy received a small sum for his services and was satisfied. The making of final proof was a matter of little concern to the conspirators, for they had a cohort of men ready to swear they knew the land, had lived upon it for the prescribed length of time, and were locating upon it for their own and for nobody else's benefit. Some of the syndicates which grabbed kingdoms made contracts with the grafters to furnish final proofs at so much per application.

Consider for a moment the land grafter's dummy. He is a curious individual—the most servile of tools. His deeds are the most complete exemplification of the working of the Land Conscience. He is always landless and dependent, though by validly using the same

methods that he uses corruptly he might be landed and liberated. You can buy him, you can sell him; and his price is always low. Here and there, to be sure, he has been known, curiously enough, to take as his reward for a shady transaction a small piece of the land he has procured for a great land baron, and live upon it in a sort of villein socage, tending the herds of the great man before whom he bows. But nearly always he is of the Order of Transients, and his demand is for dollars.

In the early days four dummies went forth to locate land in the Sacramento Valley for Moneyed Principals. By a simple plan the years of actual residence required by law were reduced to the lowest terms. A wagon, with a few boards nailed over the top of it, was drawn over the corner-stake of four quarter-sections, all of which were taken up. The wagon served as the house which each man was required to erect by the provisions of the law. Its four corners were so placed as to cover the four corners of the land and in each corner an entryman slept as soundly as if the Land Conscience were something remote and trivial. The wagon was moved about from corner to corner, and it did not take long for the Moneyed Principals to acquire a large territory. The grafters practised many other neat little frauds. One man made his residence in a house two feet high, six feet long, and three feet wide, which he removed at will from one quarter-section to another.

But the dummy has shown more iniquitous energy in locating swamp and overflow lands than in any other way. These lands, situated in various parts of California, were sold by the State to private individuals in tracts not to exceed 320 acres to any one person, at \$1.25 per acre, provided the land should be reclaimed. But by the use of dummies one of the land kings secured over 17,000 acres, and another 31,000. It was in the reclamation business that Comedy peeped forth in the schemes of the grafters. Much of the land was in the foot-hills and mountains, where there were large vacant tracts suitable for grazing. These tracts were often glacial meadows, partly overflowed in the spring, but dry during the summer, when the cattle ranged over them. Hundreds of thousands of acres of these meadows were applied for as swamp land. The act of reclamation was charmingly simple. The Land Conscience of the dummy was appeased by the mere dragging of a hoe over the ground for twenty or thirty yards. Down in Visalia they will show