

very hard and long. For at the rate at which the Landed Few are reaching forth and grasping the legitimate heritage of the Landless Many, it will not be long before the land will all be wired in and the landless man's hopes of a holding will become a faded dream.

We have seen how Benson and Hyde helped many of the land kings to enter into their kingdoms, by the aid of the ever willing dummy; but we have not yet seen the end of the iniquity. It remained for the precious twain to hatch out and exploit a scheme that would have made most men balk at the beginning as before the sheer, unscalable walls of the impossible. The new plan was to obtain possession of large tracts of State school-lands and other lands through the medium of dummies, and *dispose of them on highly advantageous terms to the United States Government itself!*

Thousands of acres of the school-lands "stood on end," as the real-estate men say in the Sierras and the foot-hills. Generally they were of little value, being covered by chaparral and dotted with granite boulders. How was it possible to unload such land upon the Government? Simply by interesting its trusted officers in the plan. The Government was making forest reservations in California and indemnifying holders of land forfeited for that purpose by giving them—acre for acre—what were known as "lieu lands," to be selected by the claimant at will in any State where Government land was to be found. Benson and Hyde's long acquaintance with the local land offices and the offices in Washington placed them on terms of intimacy with the officials. This intimacy was the means of their acquiring advance information in regard to the intentions of the Department of the Interior and the Land Office at Washington. The information enabled them to influence men who would recommend to the Government the acquisition of certain tracts as forest reserves. Having established a *modus vivendi* with these men on a money basis the conspirators not only decided what land should be recommended for forest reservations, but even drew, in their own offices, the maps which subsequently went forward to the Government with the recommendations of the officials! They made the forest-reserve selections so as to include the property which they had or knew they could get. With the advantage of knowing the lands likely to be declared within a forest reserve, they went to work to secure persons

who would take up the State school-lands in those prospective reservations.

This was accomplished by buying (as the testimony before United States Commissioner Heacock showed), anybody and everybody who was willing to sell his or her name for from five to twenty dollars. Mrs. Belle Curtis, a former stenographer in Hyde's office, testified that the janitor of the office, several of his colored friends, a number of ranch-hands from Hyde's ranches and Stein, Hyde's barber, his wife, and many of their friends, were taken to Hyde's office, where they signed applications for State school-lands which they had never seen, which might be in Africa for all they knew. For signing the applications and the assignments of their rights they received from five to ten dollars. Four corrupt notaries received the applications, assignments, and affidavits in bunches of as many as forty at a time and affixed their jurats, though they knew nothing of the persons whose names were signed to the documents.

Having the title to the school-lands, the next step of the schemers was to secure the "lieu lands," which was easily done through the obliging officials. It was shown in the testimony in court that land costing Hyde and Benson \$2 an acre was disposed of to the Government for lands selling for \$3 an acre. The bribe paid to the officials was generally ten cents an acre for the lands actually selected by the Government. It was the particular mission of Henry P. Dimond to push the matters through the Land Office in Washington; but Hyde and Benson had still other agents. William E. Valk and Woodford D. Harlan, of the General Land Office at Washington, confessed that they were in the employ of the grafters and were paid by them. Money was sent in letters to Valk, to Harlan, to J. J. Barnes, and to other officials at Washington. The local land officials were "taken care of" in a still simpler manner. Greenbacks were sent in envelopes addressed to the agents of the different land offices, without any note whatsoever. These facts were all shown in court, and as the result of the untiring efforts of Attorney Heney, the Government's powerful instrument, the conspirators have been held for trial. The trial has not been held yet, however.

The attention of President Roosevelt had been called to some charges of land fraud against Binger Hermann, Representative from