

Oregon. Hermann had been Commissioner of the General Land Office, and it had been charged during his tenancy of that position that he had worked in collusion with others to swindle the Government out of millions of acres of valuable timber and agricultural land in his State. In 1903 Hermann was removed from his office of commissioner, having, it is alleged, burned forty-three letter-books containing correspondence that he did not want to have looked into.

Heny went to Oregon and tried to interest John H. Hall, the United States District Attorney, in the prosecution of charges against various grafters with whom Hermann is said to have been in conspiracy, notably Henry Meldrum, formerly United States Surveyor-General, S. A. D. Puter, and others. Mr. Hall did not seem to take the proper interest in the cases. He was charged by Heny before the Federal Grand Jury with retarding the course of justice, and was removed from his office—to which Heny was immediately afterward appointed by the President. Heny secured possession of facts that not only implicated Hermann in the frauds, but soon placed three of the entire Oregon delegation at Washington under the imputation of direct complicity. The most unpleasant part of the whole history is that Hermann was able, after his removal from the General Land Office, and with the official charges of fraud still resting against him, to inspire such confidence in the breasts of the voters of Oregon as to be elected to Congress!

District Attorney Heny found that the Oregon grafters had pursued practically the same tactics as those of California, from whom they evidently copied—they had made fraudulent surveys, used dummies to hold land and turn it over to them in large tracts, and had worked the forest-reserve scheme for all it was worth.

Indictment after indictment was lodged by the Grand Jury with which Heny was working. Representative Hermann and ex-District Attorney Hall and others were indicted for fencing-in Government lands in large tracts.

On February 13th last, United States Senator Mitchell, Representatives Hermann and Williamson, State Senator Franklin, P. Mays, W. N. Jones, George Sorenson, and others, were indicted for conspiracy to defraud the Government by securing possession of 150,000 acres of land in the proposed Blue Mountain

Reserve and transiting them into timber-land scrip by reversion of title to the Government.

Senator Mitchell, law-partner of ex-Judge A. H. Tanner, and indicted with him on several counts, was accused of making his position in the Senate a sort of business office for the prosecution of Land Graft at Washington. One of the most damning pieces of evidence against him was a letter written by him to Tanner in Portland, dated Washington, February 5th, of this year, in which the Senator virtually confesses his alliance with the grafters. In this letter Mitchell tries to get Tanner to testify that the Senator's skirts are clear, and that he never had any share in the moneys received for expediting patents, or in other irregular ways; but Tanner made open confession in court of his own and Mitchell's complicity in the affair.

Many wealthy men of the West were indicted along with the Federal officers. It would be tiresome to give all the names; it would be a sort of roll-call of nearly all who have secured large holdings of fertile lands in Oregon and California. By the time the Grand Jury had adjourned, it had uncovered such a mass of fraud, nearly all of recent occurrence, as to make honest hearts sicken, and its indictments had fallen on the lowest places and the highest, and spread terror in the Kingdom of Graft.

If in the foregoing chapter of fraud the reader thinks that he has read the half or even the tenth part of the history of the land-grafters of California and Oregon, let him not deceive himself. Volumes could be written upon the Mexican-grant frauds, the railroad-grant steals, the timber-land swindles, the desert- and mineral-land grabs and other giant iniquities. I have here merely touched the ground in the high places, taking the most conspicuous examples of this greatest of all grafts. And at the bottom of it all is that cool, indifferent, easily satisfied Land Conscience, one of the most baffling elements of human nature, with which the reformer of the future will have to deal.

For something primal in man's nature, something that moves for conquest, something which sets the lust for land even above the lust for gold, makes the Land Conscience the shifty, supine thing that it is. Reformer of the future, if you would change all this, my word for it, you have your work cut out.