

CATTLEMEN GUILTY The Masquerader

JURY FINDS AGAINST RICHARDS, COMSTOCK AND OTHERS.

Officers of Nebraska Land and Feeding Company Adjudged Guilty on All Counts of Conspiracy to Defraud the Government.

Omaha, Dec. 21.—The trial in the federal district court of Bartlett Richards, president; Will G. Comstock, vice president; C. C. Jameson, secretary, treasurer and general manager of the Nebraska Land and Feeding company, controlling the 400,000-acre "Spade" ranch, and Aquilla Triplett, their agent, ended in the conviction of the four defendants on thirty-six counts of an indictment which charged conspiracy to defraud the government of public lands and subornation of perjury. The jury took but two hours to consider the evidence.

This trial began Nov. 19 and the jury was completed two days later. The entire time of the court since then was devoted to hearing testimony for the government and the arguments of the attorneys, no witnesses being introduced for the defense.

The accusation against the officers of the Nebraska Land and Feeding company was that they attempted to secure title to vast tracts of land within the "Spade" ranch enclosure in Cherry, Sheridan and Box Butte counties, Nebraska, by means of fraudulent homestead entries under the Kinkaid law, which permitted the homesteader to take up a section of land in the semi-arid districts. Scores of witnesses were introduced who swore that they filed on the lands at the solicitation of agents of the principal defendants, with the understanding that they would be paid all the way from \$300 to \$1,000 for their claims when title was secured, and that all necessary improvements should be made by the company.

A year ago Richards and Comstock, who are counted in the millionaire class, were convicted in the federal court of illegally fencing government land and fined \$300 each and sentenced to six hours' imprisonment each. The latter part of the sentence was served at the Omaha club, in the nominal custody of their attorney, who had been deputized for that duty by United States Marshal T. L. Matthews. As a sequel to this episode President Roosevelt removed both the marshal and United States District Attorney Irving L. Baxter.

A few months later Rev. George G. Ware, an Episcopal clergyman, Lead and Deadwood, S. D., president of a big cattle company, and two of his agents were convicted on charges similar to the one on which Richards, Comstock et al. have just been tried. His case is now before the United States court of appeals.

Fred Hoyt, T. M. Hartington and James Baird, officials of the Maverick Loan and Trust company of Gordon, Neb., and Ami B. Todd of Denver, an agent, were included in the indictment found against Richards, Comstock and the others, but elected to be tried separately. Their trial will begin early in January. F. M. Walcott, an attorney, who was also indicted, was discharged.

A number of other wealthy cattlemen and their agents are under indictment for similar offenses.

The maximum penalty for the offense is two years' imprisonment and \$10,000 fine on each count.

Charity Workers Fight at Lincoln.
Lincoln, Dec. 26.—As a result of the letter written by Chancellor Andrews and his opposition to the methods of the Salvation army a fight occurred at Salvation army headquarters between Captain E. Kinder of the army and Secretary C. E. Prevey of the city charity organization. Captain Kinder was placed under bonds and Secretary Prevey is in bed at home nursing two badly bruised eyes and a flattened nose. The lip of the army captain is seriously cut.

New Information Against Williams.
Auburn, Neb., Dec. 24.—A short session of the district court was held, with Judge Kelligar on the bench, when the attorneys in the case of the state against Charles Williams, charged with killing his father, argued on a motion to quash the information in the case. The court sustained the motion and granted the county attorney leave of time to file amended information. This case is set to come up for hearing on Jan. 3.

Stock Buyer Sues Railroad.
Beatrice, Neb., Dec. 24.—J. T. Gore, a stock buyer at Liberty, instituted a damage suit for \$2,000 against the Burlington company for delay in making a shipment of cattle from Denver to Chicago. Plaintiff alleges he lost heavily because the stock failed to arrive in Chicago in a reasonable length of time.

Bonds for New Road Carry.
Shelby, Neb., Dec. 24.—At the special election held here on the proposition to vote bonds in aid of the proposed Omaha and Nebraska Central railway, the bonds carried by twenty-two votes more than the necessary two-thirds.

The Masquerader

(Continued from page 1.)



"Why don't you drop the thing?" on the candidate being a Chilcote. I did what eight men out of ten would have done. I yielded to pressure."

"It was a fine opening!" The words escaped Loder.

"Most prisons have wide gates," Chilcote laughed again unpleasantly. "That was six years ago. I had started on the morphia track four years earlier, but up to my father's death I had it under my thumb, or believed I had, and in the realization of my new responsibilities and the excitement of the political fight I almost put it aside. For several months after I entered parliament I worked. I believe I made one speech that marked me as a coming man." He laughed derisively. "I even married!"

"Married?"
"Yes—a girl of nineteen, the ward of a great politician. It was a brilliant marriage, politically as well as socially, but it didn't work. I was born without the capacity for love. First the social life palled on me, then my work grew irksome. There was only one factor to make life endurable—morphia. Before six months were out I had fully admitted that."

"But your wife?"
"Oh, my wife knew nothing—knew nothing. It is the political business, the beastly routine of the political life, that is wearing me out." He stopped nervously, then hurried on again. "I tell you it's hard to see the same faces, to sit in the same seat day in, day out, knowing all the time that you must hold yourself in hand, must keep your grip on the reins!"

"It is always possible to apply for the Chiltern Hundreds."

"To retire? Possible to retire?" Chilcote broke into a loud, sarcastic laugh. "You don't know what the local pressure of a place like Wark stands for. Twenty times I have been within an ace of chucking the whole thing. Once last year I wrote privately to Vale, one of our big men there, and hinted that my health was bad. Two hours after he had read my letter he was in my study. Had I been in Greenland the result would have been the same. No; resignation is a meaningless word to a man like me."

Loder looked down. "I see," he said slowly; "I see."

"Then you see everything—the difficulty, the isolation of the position. Five years ago—three—even two years ago—I was able to endure it. Now it gets more unbearable with every month. The day is bound to come when—when"—he paused, hesitating nervously—"when it will be physically impossible for me to be at my post."

Loder remained silent.

"Physically impossible," Chilcote repeated excitedly. "Until lately I was able to calculate—to count upon myself to some extent—but yesterday I received a shock—yesterday I discovered that—that"—again he hesitated painfully—"that I have passed the stage when one may calculate."

The situation was growing more embarrassing. To hide its awkwardness, Loder moved back to the grate and rebuilt the fire, which had fallen low.

Chilcote, still excited by his unusual vehemence, followed him, taking up a position by the mantelpiece.

"Well?" he said, looking down.

Very slowly Loder rose from his task. "Well?" he reiterated.

"Have you nothing to say?"
"Nothing, except that your story is unique and that I suppose I am flattered by your confidence." His voice was intentionally brusque.

Chilcote paid no attention to the voice. Taking a step forward he laid his fingers on the lapel of Loder's coat.

"I have passed the stage where I can count upon myself," he said, "and I want to count upon somebody else. I want to keep my place in the world's eyes and yet be free!"

Loder drew back involuntarily, contempt struggling with bewilderment in his expression.

Chilcote lifted his head. "By an extraordinary chance," he said, "you can

do for me what no other man in creation could do. It was suggested to me unconsciously by the story of a book—a book in which men changed identities. I saw nothing in it at the time, but this morning, as I lay in bed, sick with yesterday's flu, it came back to me. It rushed over my mind in an inspiration. It will save me and make you, I'm not insulting you, though you'd like to think so."

Without remark Loder freed himself from the other's touch and walked back to his desk. His anger, his pride, and, against his will, his excitement were all aroused.

He sat down, leaned his elbow on the desk and took his face between his hands. The man behind him undoubtedly talked madness; but after five years of dreary sanity madness had a fascination. Against all reason it stirred and roused him. For one instant his pride and his anger faded before it, then common sense flowed back again and adjusted the balance.

"You propose," he said slowly, "that for a consideration of money I should trade on the likeness between us and become your dummy, when you are otherwise engaged?"

Chilcote colored. "You are unpleasantly blunt," he said.

"But I have caught your meaning?"

"In the rough, yes."

Loder nodded curtly. "Then take my advice and go home," he said. "You're unhinged."

The other returned his glance, and as their eyes met Loder was reluctantly compelled to admit that, though the face was distorted, it had no traces of insanity.

"I make you a proposal," Chilcote repeated nervously, but with distinctness. "Do you accept?"

For an instant Loder was at a loss to find a reply sufficiently final. Chilcote broke in upon the pause.

"After all," he urged, "what I ask of you is a simple thing—merely to carry through my routine duties for a week or two occasionally when I find my endurance giving away, when a respite becomes essential. The work would be nothing to a man in your state of mind, the pay anything you like to name." In his eagerness he had followed Loder to the desk. "Won't you give me an answer? I told you I am neither mad nor drunk."

Loder pushed back the scattered papers that lay under his arm.

"Only a lunatic would propose such a scheme," he said brusquely and without feeling.

"Why?"

The other's lips parted for a quick retort; then in a surprising way the retort seemed to fall him. "Oh, because the thing isn't feasible, isn't practicable from any point of view!"

Chilcote stepped closer. "Why?" he insisted.

"Because it couldn't work, man—couldn't hold for a dozen hours!"

Chilcote put out his hand and touched his arm. "But why?" he urged.

"Why? Give me one unanswerable reason."

Loder shook off the hand and laughed, but below his laugh lay a suggestion of the other's excitement. Again the scene stirred him against his sounder judgment, though his reply when it came was sound enough.

"As for reasons," he said, "there are a hundred, if I had time to name them. Take it, for the sake of supposition, that I were to accept your offer. I should take my place in your house at—let us say at dinner time. Your man gets me into your evening clothes, and there at the very start you have the first suspicion set up. He has probably known you for years, known you until every turn of your appearance, voice and manner is far more familiar to him than it is to you. There are no eyes like a servant's."

"I have thought of that. My servant and my secretary can both be changed. I will do the thing thoroughly."

Loder glanced at him in surprise. The madness had more method than he had believed. Then as he still looked a fresh idea struck him, and he laughed.

"You have entirely forgotten one thing," he said. "You can hardly dismiss your wife."

"My wife doesn't count."

Again Loder laughed. "I'm afraid I scarcely agree. The complications would be slightly—slightly"—he paused.

Chilcote's latent irritability broke out suddenly. "Look here," he said, "this isn't a chaffing matter. It may be moonshine to you, but it's reality to me."

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