



A GREAT FRAUD.

The Great Peralta Grant Was Based
on Forgeries.

People of Silver City Need Have No Fear
That Reavis Will Own the Town.

From Spain comes one of the most sensational stories bearing on the famous Peralta claim. It is a story of which, with all of their investigation and research in the matter, the officers of this government knew nothing until a few months ago. Spanish authorities have strange ideas of international reciprocity. They remember well enough that a dozen years ago the United States asked that an examination be made of the archives for evidence about the Peralta grant. A claim to over 12,000,000 acres, including the best part of Arizona, had been made. The claimant offered in evidence what purported to be copies of the official documents from three Spanish kings making such a grant. Spain politely complied with the request, overhauled the archives pertaining to the period, and reported that there was no reference whatever to any such action by that country.

Two or three years later an American presented himself to the authorities in charge of these archives. He obtained permission to examine them. While so doing he was caught in two attempts to insert in these archives manufactured documents which would sustain the Peralta claim in the United States. The whole matter was made the subject of thorough but secret investigation by the Spanish authorities. But while they were making up their minds as to the enormity of the offense, the perpetrator fled. When the officers went in search of him he had passed out of the country. Not a word of this did the Spanish officials allow to become public. Not an intimation of it was conveyed to the United States in any way. For nearly ten years this matter, which so vitally concerned a territory of the United States, remained unknown outside of Spanish official circles, and it was through little help of Spain that the story, backed by elaborate records, finally reached this government.

Last year Mr. Mallet-Prevost, the special counsel assisting the United States attorney, Mr. Mat G. Reynolds,

went to Spain on a blind search for the evidence which would disprove the validity of the documents on which the Peralta claim rested. It was true that the Spanish government had once reported to our state department that it would find no trace of any Peralta grant. This was negative testimony. Something more positive was necessary to offset the imposing array of a perfect case which the counsel for the Peralta-Reavises were presenting with great confidence. Mr. Mallet-Prevost carried with him letters to prominent Spanish officials. Through these he formed at Madrid the acquaintance of a gentleman of Sevilla. He told this gentleman of his mission and of his purpose to visit Sevilla shortly in order to make search of the archives. The Spaniard at once proffered his good services. Shortly after, Mr. Mallet-Prevost received a letter from his acquaintance at Sevilla telling him that he had talked with some of the officials and had learned of an attempt some years before to insert in the archives evidence of the Peralta grant. This was a clew of which Mr. Mallet-Prevost had never dreamed. It took him several weeks to draw out the whole story, so closely were the records of the courts and the affairs of the offices kept by Spanish custom from the public.

In 1886, told in the court transcript finally furnished by the Spanish government, James Addison Reavis applied for permission to examine the archives of the Indias. He first appeared in the guise of a tourist taking photographs of the building. Two ladies accompanied him. One of them was the present Mrs. Peralta-Reavis, claiming to be the direct heir to the Barony of Arizona. A photograph of the baroness was shown to several of the clerks of the archives by Mr. Mallet-Prevost, and they at once remembered her as being with Reavis. While obtaining permission to look over certain books of records in the office, Reavis said that he was the representative of Dona Sofia Mazo Peralta de la Cordoba. He said nothing, however, about being her husband. Mr. Reavis did not immediately obtain the order, but visited the building several times, and acted in such a manner as to excite the curiosity of several officials. He approached one of them, told him he was interested in seeking for evidence of concessions of lands and offered to pay him for help in the work.

About the middle of May, Reavis presented his permit to examine the archives. The chief clerk gave him a place at the desk of Don Jose Quintano, and told the latter to be of any assistance he could, at the same time privately directing him to watch Reavis carefully. In a few days Reavis left, saying he had to go to Madrid on important business. Upon the reappearance of the American, Quintano told him it was useless to continue the search. He said the books had been carefully examined, and there was nothing in them pertaining to the grant. Reavis replied that he wanted to assure himself in his own eyes, adding: "I have much time and much money." The search went on. Quintano observed that Reavis paid more attention to signatures and seals and prints than he did to subject matter. He so informed the chief of the office.

On the 17th of July Quintano did not go to the office because of sickness. After office hours Reavis came to Quintano's house, said he was going to Madrid again, and asked him to go on with the search. Quintano said it was of no use: that he and his fellow-clerks were certain nothing could be found. Then Reavis said very confidently that he had a certainty the document he wanted was in the archives. Quintano asked where it was, if he felt so certain. Reavis replied that "it was in case No. 77, third drawer and book No. 31." Quintano remarked that this was impossible, as he and others had examined that book a few days before, and had found nothing.

The next day Quintano looked in the book Reavis had indicated, and there he found a document which he had never seen and which appeared suspicious. He told his fellow-clerks, and they confirmed his suspicions. The discovery was reported to the chief clerk, who cautioned his subordinates to keep it secret and to await the return of Reavis. No one was to say a word to Reavis about the document found. In order that the future action of the American might be more closely observed, the chief clerk directed that when he resumed his search he should be placed in front of the entrance to the galleries of the archives. Three clerks were commissioned to watch every movement he made. It was also arranged that no book should be shown him until it had been examined secretly; the documents in it numbered, the leaves counted, and

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