

Under the lax administration of imperfect laws it is easy enough for those who so desire to extend their holdings of Government land almost without limit, and in the year 1900, operations began upon the gigantic scale, which has since aroused the fear and indignation of those charged with the honest administration of the law and those who have looked upon the economic value of the remaining public land as one of the great national resources in times of stress either industrial or social.

Nearly fourteen million acres of land were taken in 1900 from the public domain, a jump of fifty per cent. over the figures of the year before. In 1901 nearly sixteen million acres so disappeared from the Government maps. In 1902 nearly twenty million acres was the grand total shown in the Land Commissioner's report, and 1903 promises to make a new record, with an absorption between thirty and thirty-five million acres of land.

In the eighties, when the Land Office made its great record in caring for home seekers, the population of a State or Territory increased in direct ratio to the number of land claims filed.

A curious feature of the present land operations of the United States Government is that not only has there been no increase of population noticeable in the States absorbing largest amount of Government land, but it is a fact that in many localities where the acreage disposed of has reached a stupendous total there has been an actual decrease of the agricultural population. Men have been driven from their homes to make room for a few range cattle or sheep.

WHOLE TOWNSHIPS SEIZED.

In many instances whole townships have been entered under this law in the interest of one person or firm, to whom the lands have been conveyed as soon as the receipts for the purchase price were issued. The reports from one public