

THE GREEN GOODS CASE

Three years after the World's Fair in Chicago and at no great distance from the site of its famous Midway, Iowa officers in Federal service laid a trap to catch a group of swindlers, sprung the trap, and brought about the climax of what came to be known as "The Green Goods Case", tried at Keokuk, Iowa, in April, 1896. From the simply worded reports of the officers, court records, newspaper clippings, letters, and a carefully written set of notes by one of the principals, the history of the case can be followed.¹

It was the old, old story of the ever-blooming hope of humanity that it may obtain something for nothing. Those who conducted the questionable transactions worked on Barnum's theory that a sucker is born every minute. They were confident, too, of being protected from complaints by the fact that the victim was just as deep in the mire as they were, for was he not planning to defraud the government when he agreed to circulate these "green goods" or counterfeit bills?

But not all of the victims were as docile as these operators of the swindle believed them to be, nor were all to whom the offers were made — who constituted what in modern slang is called a sucker list — silent before the law. It was this combination of circumstances that brought the Federal government into the case and gave the three officers from Iowa the opportunity to inscribe their names in bold capitals on the roll of bravery which has marked the dealings of Uncle Sam and his men with the underworld.

¹ Thomas P. Gray's manuscript story of the case; Dr. S. W. Moorhead's *Recollections of a Busy Life*, in clippings from *The Daily Gate City* (Keokuk), March 9, 11, 1926.

For some time before this event, circulars mailed in Chicago offering "green goods" for sale were being distributed all over this western territory and found eager purchasers. The "goods" were described as counterfeit greenbacks. The letters and circulars sent out were similar in appeal. They were headed at the top "Confidential" and addressed the recipient as "Friend". Each stated that the name and address had been given the writer by a "confidential agent" who said "you were in a position to handle my goods with safety".²

Assurance was given that the "goods" offered would "defy detection", being "perfect in every detail because printed from the genuine plates used by the United States government". The denominations of the bills were one, two, five, ten, and twenty dollars. The one addressed was warned that business could be transacted only "face to face" and that he must come to Chicago where the writer would "show his stock".

One of the circulars sent out to prospective victims referred in guarded terms to the details, although admitting the scheme was unlawful. Only in the final paragraph was the real business of the swindlers suggested and then only indirectly.

In case the recipient of the foregoing should desire any of the sixteen to one currency he will return the following brief telegram:

KEEP THIS FOR REFERENCE.

When you are ready to come and see me, send the following telegram, exactly as it is in the frame below. Sign any name you please.

Remember, write me no letters,³ as I will not receive nor answer them.

² From the indictment in the records of the case in the Federal District Court at Keokuk.

³ By this trick the swindlers evidently hoped to evade the attention of the post office inspectors.

G. STEWART,
Winchester Station,
Winchester County, New York.
"Send Picture of Erie, Number 948."
"Frank."⁴

Should the one invited to share in this distribution not have the ready cash, he was given permission to enlist a friend's aid, provided this friend was "trustworthy and could keep a secret, and that both could come together". The terms on which the "green goods" could be purchased were "\$300 buys \$3,000; \$400 buys \$5,000; \$500 buys \$7,000; \$650 buys \$10,000; \$800 buys \$15,000 and \$1,000 buys \$20,000".⁵

If the victim accepted the terms he was given instructions as to the hotel to visit in Chicago where he was received by members of the gang. If he displayed sufficient funds to permit him to purchase the "green goods" a satchel full of money, actually genuine but purporting to be counterfeit, was brought out and the deal was made. The victim counted out his money, the valise or satchel was (he supposed) turned over to him, and he was instructed to take the first train home and not to open the valise until he arrived there. With visions of great riches before him the purchaser of the "green goods" opened the satchel only to find it filled with old newspapers.

His first impulse was to cry out that he had been swindled and to take the case to officers, but on soberer thought he was reminded this would not do; he had paid over his money for counterfeit bills which he intended to circulate for his own gain and he knew this was a serious offense. He was as guilty as the swindlers. So he suffered his loss

⁴ This was printed in *The Weekly Gate City* (Keokuk), May 7, 1896. This was before the Democratic Convention made "sixteen to one" a national slogan.

⁵ From the indictment in the records of the Federal District Court at Keokuk.

in silence. But there were hardier souls who, like the boy with the jam pot, felt that another licking couldn't be so bad, and they brought their soiled hands to a paternal Uncle Sam to be washed.

Early in 1896 a number of complaints of such swindles came to the attention of Post Office Inspector W. G. D. Mercer, a resident of Corning, Iowa, then on duty in Chicago. He first did some investigation by himself and then planned to impersonate one of the men on the swindlers' list of prospective victims and to take an assistant with him as a "friend" who might also plan to invest in the "green goods". For this assistant, Inspector Mercer chose Thomas P. Gray of Keokuk, Iowa, a Deputy United States Marshal. He selected Gray, he explained, because he knew he did not drink. Since the swindlers were in the habit of offering their victims drinks and then drugging them, Inspector Mercer felt the five hundred dollars which he intended to use for "bait" would be safer in his hands than in charge of a man who might drink and be drugged and robbed. Before the plan got well started, however, Mercer learned that he was being "shadowed" and he decided to have W. A. Richards of Des Moines, another Deputy United States Marshal, assist Gray in the case.⁶

The plan⁷ was for Gray to impersonate a man named J. C. Bratton of Warren, Arkansas, who had received a circular, while Richards posed as Nick Martin, a friend of Bratton's. To perfect his plan, Inspector Mercer left Chicago and visited Keokuk incognito, on February 29th.

⁶ Letter from W. G. D. Mercer, apparently addressed to the Keokuk *Gate City*, written from Warren, Arkansas, dated March 12, 1896. Mercer praised Marshal Gray's work in the case. The letter was found among his papers now belonging to his daughter, Miss Helen Palmer Gray.

⁷ The story of the capture of the swindlers is taken largely from the account by Marshal Gray and from Dr. Moorhead's *Recollections of a Busy Life*, in clippings from *The Daily Gate City* (Keokuk), March 9, 11, 1926.

There he conferred with Marshal Gray who promised to have Richards at his home on the following Tuesday (March third). After this conference Mercer went to Warren, Arkansas, to see Bratton and Martin, the two men who were to be impersonated, and made a study of the town so that he could instruct both Gray and Richards as to the personal appearance of the Arkansas men and give them a picture of the town.

This done, Mercer sent a telegram to the "green goods" men in Chicago saying, "John L and friend are coming". Returning by way of St. Louis, he arranged to have a second message sent from there by a Post Office Inspector. As planned in the first conference, Mercer returned to Keokuk and met the two officers at the home of Gray, where for eighteen hours the Inspector drilled and rehearsed them in their parts. The officers were told just how the town of Warren was built, the location of the buildings, the habits and customs of the men they were to impersonate — and these facts were gone over and over again to make sure there could be no slip that might cause suspicion to be directed to the officers when they met the men they had set out to capture.

Informed that the second decoy telegram had been sent as arranged, Mercer, Gray, and Richards left Keokuk on March fourth for Chicago. The three traveled together until they reached Galesburg, Illinois, where they separated after having had their pictures taken — just in case. Mercer then boarded a faster train and reached Chicago ahead of the two officers. Secreted in a mail wagon he rode to the post office to look after some details there.

Gray and Richards, on a slower train, arrived on the morning of March 5, 1896, and went directly to the Atlantic Hotel, where they registered as J. C. Bratton and Nick Martin of Warren, Arkansas. They noted as they did so,

that a stranger sitting in the office was watching them closely, but they pretended not to see his interest. They went into the restaurant for breakfast and while apparently interested only in their sausage and cakes saw this man, whom they afterwards identified as Frank McLane, alias Frank Smith, go over to the register, scrutinize it carefully, and then disappear.

Breakfast over, the two officers went to their room, as directed in the "confidential letter" they had received. Richards, who had been up two nights in succession traveling from Des Moines to Keokuk and thence to Chicago, complained that his feet hurt him and ordered some hot water for a footbath. He was soaking his feet when about nine o'clock in the morning, the man the officers were to know as Albert Vogel knocked on the door of their room. This man's real name is said to have been Al. Sloan. He also used the alias Albert Gray. Bratton opened the door to be greeted by Vogel with:

"Is this Mr. Bratton?"

"If you are the man I want to see, you have a way of making yourself known", was Bratton's answer.

"How will John L. do?" came Vogel's reply.

Still following his instructions, Bratton replied, "That is very good, but it is not all".

Vogel then handed Bratton the telegrams from Warren, Arkansas, and St. Louis. He was invited to step into the room and Bratton introduced him to his companion, who was sitting all the time with his feet in the tub.

Ignoring the splashing of Martin in the foot tub, Gray — now known as Bratton — demanded of Vogel if he "had sent the letters to Warren?" Vogel said he had not, but that he was a "confidential man" of his father, F. G. Vogel [Chas. Blodgett, also known as Chas. Hurd] whom he described as an old man with rheumatism, who spent much of

his time at Waukesha where he could drink the medicinal waters. He then plied the men with questions about Warren, designed to test their knowledge of the place. He asked how they had come to Chicago, by what railroads, and then asked about people and places in Warren. While he was talking Vogel, who had taken back the telegrams he had handed to Bratton, began to tear them into little pieces. He then asked Bratton if he had any of the letters that the elder Vogel had written him, suggesting that it would be dangerous if any of these should be found and pointed out that he was destroying the telegrams for that reason.

Bratton insisted that he had but one letter, the "confidential one" which he wanted to keep until he saw the elder Vogel, as he did not quite understand the "State right" part of it, but that if satisfactory terms could be agreed on, he and Martin were prepared to buy the "State right" for Arkansas.

He wanted to know how they were to be protected in the matter, saying to Vogel, in effect, "You have sent letters to many people in Arkansas, and no doubt have replies from many. How do we know that you will not sell to other men in other parts of the state?"

"I had wondered if you knew how we got your name", Vogel replied, according to Marshal Gray's recollection of the conversation. "It would be dangerous to have many correspondents, and for that reason we are careful who we write to, and you are the only man in Arkansas who has received a letter from Mr. Vogel. And if we make a deal with you, that will end it, as long as you make a good agent. You see we had a good agent in Arkansas who was very satisfactory and pushed the business so that he made \$250,000 in eight months. But as the business was somewhat dangerous, he wanted to drop it and enjoy his fortune, so we asked him to give us the name of a man we could get in his place and he gave us your name."

Bratton asked the name of this person, but was told that it was not their policy to divulge the name, since a person in a business of this kind would naturally not want his name published. Martin interrupted to ask when the elder Vogel would come to the hotel to see them and was told that this was impossible, but that instead they would be taken to his city office. When the pseudo-Arkansans objected to this, realizing that there was no telling what they might be led into, they were told "they must not be foolish about this" as Mr. Vogel "has been in business long enough to protect those with whom he dealt".

There seemed to be nothing to do but to agree to go to the older Vogel's office. This was arranged for one o'clock in the afternoon, when the younger Vogel would walk through the office of the hotel and they were to follow him at an interval of some sixteen feet. They were assured that the older Vogel would show them the "green goods", and that they would not be expected to buy unless completely satisfied.

Shortly before one o'clock that afternoon, the officers saw Smith come into the hotel lobby, linger for a moment, and go out. He was followed on the stroke of one by Albert Vogel, who walked through the lobby then out of the door, followed by the Iowa men as had been arranged. The officers now realized that Smith's position was that of a "spotter", who had been assigned to watch and check on their movements. From the loop they took an elevated train to Sixty-third Street, where they got off and walked a block to a saloon, where they were invited to refresh themselves.

Pleading that he had a headache from the long train trip, Martin ordered a drink of selzer, while Bratton refused anything in the way of strong drink, saying that he had taken the cure and would not break over for anything. He

had been a hard drinker at one time, he explained, but had spent every dollar he could get to rid himself of this habit. Vogel then apologized, saying that it was the custom in Chicago to ask every friend to have a drink. He told Bratton he would be the last man in the world to try to cause a man to fall into the drink habit once he had shaken it off and he complimented him on having done so. The incident ended with the officers taking cigars and all left the place.

When they had gone about twenty feet from the saloon Vogel told them that they would not both be permitted to see the "goods" at the same time, but that as the office was only a block away, one could come with him, the other waiting where they stood for their return. This naturally did not fit in with the officers' plans as they wanted the corroborative evidence of one another concerning the proposed deal, so they sparred for time. Bratton declared that they would not transact business under these terms, but would go home first. Vogel insisted this would be foolish and assured them that they operated in this manner because it was safest for all concerned.

Martin then proposed to the guide that he bring F. G. Vogel out to meet them, saying "if your father is such a nice old man, go and bring him out here on the walk, so I can see him, and then I will know what kind of a man I'm dealing with".

This Vogel agreed to do, and he returned shortly with the elder Vogel, the four of them talking together for about twenty minutes. In the course of this conversation, the younger man again emphasized the fact that the two could not see the "goods" at the same time, since they (the Vogels) were not personally acquainted with Bratton and Martin.

"You may be officers", he told them, "and when we have shown you these goods, you will then want to testify against

us, and if both of you have been there, together, your testimony would equal ours; but in talking to us the way we will let you, there will be two of us to testify against one of you and we could beat you in court! You see we always protect ourselves and in that way our customers. See?" The officers did see — more than the swindlers did.

Since there was nothing else to be done, the officers made the best of the bargain and fell in with the plan of the operators. The elder Vogel insisted that in the twenty years he had been in business he had never let a customer go away dissatisfied. To allay suspicion Bratton then demanded to know more about the "State right" agreement and Vogel invited him to come to his office, declaring that the street was no place in which to discuss such things. Bratton then went with him to the office which was on the second floor of the World's Fair Hotel at Sixty-fourth and Cottage Grove Avenue. The younger Vogel accompanied them, leaving Martin on the sidewalk, with Smith across the street to keep him in sight.

The Vogels had two rooms side by side. They went from the hall into one room, locked that door, and then into the second room, locking that door. Three chairs and a desk were the only furniture in the room. Bratton was shown to a chair at the desk and the Vogels took chairs on each side of him. They then plied him with questions about Arkansas, how they came, who were the town's officers at Warren and similar queries designed to test the knowledge of Bratton and to indicate if by chance he were an officer as suggested in the conversation a few minutes before. At the conclusion of twenty minutes of questioning the younger Vogel seemed satisfied, declared "you are all right", and reached for a valise which he had on the floor beside him.

From this he took a one dollar bill which he said was a sample of their "goods". He displayed a bundle of fives

and another bundle of ones, asking Bratton to examine them carefully. Picking up the grip, the younger Vogel said, "here they are, they are all alike". Bratton assured him he was pleased with the goods and promised that if Martin felt the same, they would talk terms. The older man then wanted to know how much they had to invest. Bratton said about twelve hundred dollars and asked what would be given for that amount. The older Vogel promised the "State right" and \$25,000 in his goods and the agreement was made, providing Martin was satisfied.

Bratton was about to go and let Martin come in, when the older Vogel laid a detaining hand on his arm. "Before you go, Mr. Bratton", Marshal Gray's notes report the conversation, "I want to give you some advice and a word of warning". He then went on to tell how wicked Chicago was, explained its pitfalls, and warned him particularly of those who would "commit any crime for a few paltry dollars". In a fatherly sort of way he warned Bratton not to engage in conversation with anyone he did not know and not to take a drink with a stranger lest the liquor be drugged. He particularly cautioned Bratton against the wiles of "loose women" who, often in the guise of ladies in distress, sought to "rob a man of his money and his good name".

Bratton tried one more line by which to get some evidence and asked for a written guarantee to protect him in the "State right". This was not to be had, Vogel told him, saying that he and his son were "honorable men" whose word was as good as their bond — which was partly true.

With this assurance he seemed willing to close the deal. He then inquired about the hour the banks would open and it was agreed that if Martin approved of the "goods" young Vogel would meet them at 11 o'clock next morning, when they would have their money ready. Bratton then

walked out with the younger Vogel, who left him when they met Martin with whom he returned to the office. Martin was put through a similar inquisition and expressed his approval of the "goods". With Martin apparently satisfied, the interview was terminated and the men returned to the city, the younger Vogel with the two countrymen, Smith keeping them well in sight. Leaving the train at Congress Street, they headed toward the Siegel and Cooper store. The officers noticed Smith had also left the train and was following them on the other side of the street.

Had there been any real suspicion of "Bratton" and "Martin", it must have been dispelled when they entered the big department store. Young Vogel described it to them as the "largest store on earth". While Bratton tried to be matter of fact about all such grandeur, he appeared suitably impressed and awed and tried to act the part of the "country-jake" who would like to give the impression that he had "been about a bit". But Martin raced up one aisle and down another as he tried to follow the cash boys. He threw everyone in the store into an uproar as he suddenly darted through the crowds of shoppers, pointing excitedly at the overhead trolley system for packages.

After much persuasion Vogel got the pair away from this enchanted palace and piloted them to their hotel. He bade them goodbye and told them he would come for them at eleven in the morning. Smith, too, seemed to have been disarmed by this exhibition, or he left the job to others, for he had apparently disappeared. It was raining by night-fall, and after supper the two officers decided to try to make contact with Inspector Mercer to go over final details for the adventure which would come the next day. Bratton stationed himself in the front of the hotel lobby behind a newspaper. He could be seen from the outside and could from the shelter of his paper watch the street. Martin, in

the meantime, turned his raincoat inside out for a disguise, slipped out of a rear door, and hurried up the alleys to the post office building where he met Mercer and they went over the plans for the following day.

About ten o'clock, when Bratton felt sure Martin had returned, he left his place in the lobby and went upstairs to their room where they discussed the plans which Martin had previously gone over with the Inspector. Up at eight o'clock the next morning (March 6th), the officers found themselves again under Smith's scrutiny. At ten o'clock they went to the Globe Savings Bank to get the money. They requested their five hundred dollars in small bills so that it looked like a much larger roll. Returning to the hotel they met an old man whom they judged might have been one of the swindlers.

This man opened the conversation with them by picking up a Confederate bill which he had dropped, and pretending to have poor eyesight asked Martin to look at it and tell him what it was. He told the officers he was past eighty-two years of age but "felt in a mood to have some fun". In his earlier days, he said, when he lived in Iowa and brought cattle to Chicago to sell, he was familiar with the city and would be glad to show them around. As they evinced little interest in this suggestion, he was seized with a violent coughing fit. This was the signal for him to reach into his pocket and produce a tin box filled with a whitish powder. He took a pinch in his fingers and pretended to snuff it into his nostrils.

He offered some to Martin saying it would cure his cold, but Martin declined, saying his cold would be all right as soon as he got out into the country, and that he and Bratton were leaving the city shortly. Bratton, too, declined, and as both of the men apparently avoided the trap which had been set for them, there was nothing left for the old man

but to excuse himself and depart. As he left the room he was followed almost immediately by Smith, and the officers felt that the two were in collusion. A few minutes later Vogel walked through the office and by signs indicated that the Iowans should follow him. They did so, and reached Sixty-third Street as they had the previous day. The two officers had no way of knowing how many armed men might be lurking behind the doors in the offices of the swindlers. They had to go into the affair as innocents of the most verdant hue, but at the same time have their nerves and senses steeled for whatever emergencies might arise.

The first of these came as they were almost to the doors of the building in which the Vogels had their office. Young Vogel told them that it would be necessary for them to reverse the order in which they entered the office the previous day. This time Martin was to come first and if he still approved of the "goods" then Bratton would come in and close the deal. Since the calculations of the officers and their signals to the confederates who were hidden conveniently near by hinged upon their entrance into and exit from the Vogel office, this arrangement would have upset everything. They opposed Vogel's plan vigorously and at last he agreed to take Bratton in first for the final interview.

Fearful lest he might be slugged and robbed Bratton, in the presence of young Vogel, handed the five hundred dollars to Martin to keep while he went in to talk to the older man. He was relieved to see that the rooms were the same and apparently there were no others to deal with. It took but a short time to complete the arrangements to purchase the "green goods", and Martin was to pay over the money when he came in, if he found things to his satisfaction. These details over, the older Vogel inquired as to the plans the pair had for leaving the city.

Once again he offered advice, this time to the effect that

with all of the "goods" they would have, it would be dangerous for them to go back downtown. He suggested leaving from one of the stations in the immediate neighborhood and pulled an Illinois Central timetable from his desk. There would be a train leaving shortly that they could take, he said, and Bratton promised to leave on it. Vogel then told him that they were sure he was going to make a fine agent for their goods and that he was much pleased with his appearance and his zeal. Holding out his hand he wished Bratton "God speed and goodby and a safe trip home."

Back on the street again, the younger Vogel, Bratton, and Martin stood together while Bratton detailed to Martin all that had been said and done in the office. Vogel insisted that they move half a block farther and into an alley, saying that it was not safe to be seen talking too much on the streets. Bratton then finished his talk with Martin and told him that if he thought the "goods" were worth the money to buy them, and then meet him in the alley and they would hurry to the station and take the train for home. Vogel and Martin then left for the office.

As soon as they were out of sight, Bratton walked slowly back toward the Vogel quarters, trying to appear interested in the windows of the stores, but in reality making as much haste as possible to get into the building unseen by any of the gang's spotters. However, he saw Smith watching him from across the street. He continued and as he did so saw Smith leave his window and start over toward him.

At the same time another figure emerged from across the street and headed toward him. On the general details of this move agreed upon in advance, the reports of Mercer and Gray agree, but on some of the minor details they are at variance. Mercer recalled in his letter⁸ that he was read-

⁸ Mercer's letter praising Gray. See note six above.

ing a newspaper in a tailor shop, when he saw Bratton leave the Vogel building and Martin go in. Marshal Gray declared that Mercer, disguised as a countryman, with a faded slouch hat much out of shape on his head, pants tucked into his shoes and his clothes liberally splashed with mud, came across the street, eating a piece of bologna.

At any rate Mercer and Bratton met on the sidewalk and together walked rapidly toward the foot of the stairs. They arrived just ahead of Smith. Behind them was George M. Christian, another Deputy Marshal, and Post Office Inspector Stewart. At a nod from Stewart, officers grabbed Smith and held him. Bratton rushed up the stairs to the landing to await the signal from Martin who was inside the office. While they were waiting, a big man in dark clothes and a slouch hat, believed to have been another spotter, hurried up the steps and knocked at one door. Bratton growled at him that "those folks are not at home", but at that instant a door opened and the stranger disappeared.

Hearing the commotion, Martin demanded of the Vogels what it meant and accused them of putting up a deal to rob him. The situation became tense, as Inspector Mercer's letter described it. Gray knew that they would shoot at him if he forced the door open, fearing he was an officer, rather than shoot Martin who still appeared to be a customer, but in spite of this he looked to Mercer for the command to break down the door.

Mercer nodded and Bratton, now in his real character of Marshal Gray, stepped back from the door and then lunged into it, breaking it down. As Mercer and Gray had expected, he stood facing a drawn revolver held by the older Vogel who stood in the doorway between the rooms. Gray drew his gun and Vogel jumped back. Richards (Martin) sprang upon him and threw him into the corner of the room, where they wrestled for the possession of the revolver. In

the meantime, with the younger Vogel covered by the officers, Gray rushed to help Richards. He ordered Vogel to drop the gun, which he did. Richards then kicked it out of Vogel's reach, recovered it, and helped cover the pair. Handcuffs were snapped on the men and the officers marched the men to the sidewalk where Deputy Marshal Christian was holding Smith. They delivered the prisoners to Inspector Stewart who ordered them taken to the post office.

It was the custom prior to this case to prosecute all offenders at the place where letters were deposited in the mail, which in this case was Chicago. Realizing that the chances of conviction in Chicago were not so good (probably swindling "suckers" from the country was not considered much of a crime there), Charles D. Fullen, U. S. Attorney for the Southern District of Iowa, raised the question that the violation was continuous and existed where any post office official in the discharge of his duty handled the unlawful letters. He asked to have the case transferred to the Iowa jurisdiction.

Indictments were accordingly returned in the United States District Court at Council Bluffs, where mail was transferred, against Charles Hurd (indicted as Frank Vogel), Albert Gray (indicted as Albert Vogel), and Frank Smith, charging them with using the mails to defraud.⁹ The case was transferred to Keokuk and on April 25, 1896, the defendants entered a plea of not guilty on three charges.

The judge who presided over the trial was John S. Woolson. Charles D. Fullen was the United States Attorney in charge of the prosecution, assisted by Henry M. Eicher of Washington. J. J. Steadman was Clerk of the Court and Charles J. Smith was his deputy at Keokuk. Frank P. Bradley was the United States Marshal and Thomas P.

⁹ *United States Statutes at Large*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 465, 466.

Gray, one of the captors of the gang of swindlers, served as Deputy Marshal. The defendants brought lawyers from Chicago and it appeared that the case would be fought to the end.¹⁰

The trial opened on April 28th and the prosecution presented its evidence. Then on April 30th Attorney Shaffner for the defense suddenly reported that his clients were ready to plead guilty and Judge Woolson instructed the jury to bring in a verdict of "guilty as charged". The trial was over.

Judge Woolson immediately pronounced sentence. All three men were given fifteen months in prison on each of two counts, the sentences to run consecutively, and twelve months on a third charge, this to run concurrently with the first one. Charles Hurd was also fined a total of \$2000; Albert Gray and Frank Smith received fines totalling \$1000 each. The court fixed the Iowa Men's Reformatory at Anamosa as the place of imprisonment. No record appears of the payment of these fines, so it seems that the punishment of these swindlers was thirty months in prison at Anamosa with whatever deductions were allowed on the sentence. All the defendants are said to have admitted to reporters that they escaped with less than they expected.¹¹

An amusing incident of the trial was the testimony of a man named August A. Otto of Lincoln, Nebraska, who claimed that he had been swindled out of \$650 he had borrowed to purchase what he thought to be \$10,000 in counterfeit money. On the way home he discovered he had only pieces of old newspapers and lumps of coal. The swindlers told a newspaperman that they thought he was worse than

¹⁰ Federal Court records at Keokuk, Record Book, No. 6, pp. 134, 135; letter from Miss Florence M. Wahlgren, Deputy Clerk, United States District Court, Keokuk, dated January 30, 1940.

¹¹ Letter from Miss Florence M. Wahlgren, dated Keokuk, January 30, 1940; *The Weekly Gate City* (Keokuk), May 7, 1896.

they were, for they planned to swindle strangers, but he intended to give the counterfeit bills to his neighbors.¹²

The case naturally attracted a considerable audience in the courtroom at Keokuk. Reporting the case, *The Weekly Gate City* added that there was considerable speculation as to "the mysterious and beautiful blonde" who occupied a seat in the courtroom. She had "received telegram after telegram from Chicago, was registered at the hotel as Mrs. Richardson, and wore all kinds of diamonds. The universal opinion is that she is a 'chemical blonde'."¹³

Following the passing of sentence on the three men, arrangements were made for their immediate delivery to the prison. The marshals and their prisoners left Keokuk on the train at 6:10 o'clock in the evening. On the way to Anamosa, Richards said to the older Vogel, "now that the matter is all over, there is one question that I want to ask you as the matter has been a mystery to me. How did you intend to arrange matters so that I would carry away the grip with nothing but paper or coal in it, and not the one you put the money in?"

Vogel replied in effect, "The green goods scheme as it is commonly called, is a drama, and is presented to the public in four acts. You and your friend Bratton paid the price of admission to three of these acts only. Now you should not ask to see the other act."¹⁴

To Gray the men extended their hands as they left the train, and invited him to come and see them when they were released.

FREDERIC C. SMITH

KEOKUK IOWA

¹² *The Weekly Gate City* (Keokuk), May 7, 1896. Otto tried to levy on some cash assets in the possession of the swindlers when they were captured, but the \$800 so seized was ordered returned to the jurisdiction of the court.

¹³ *The Weekly Gate City* (Keokuk), May 7, 1896.

¹⁴ Thomas P. Gray's notes on the case.