

THE "GREEN GOODS GAME" IN 1815.

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Writers on Confidence Frauds—familiarily called "Con."—are wont to attribute the origin of the "Green Goods Game" to the rascals of the United States during the Civil War and shortly thereafter.¹ At that time the circulation of paper money was enormously expanded, and in many parts of the United States specie was for the first time displaced by bank notes and treasury certificates. The unwary were easily led to believe in the facility with which counterfeit bills could be made, the great precautions taken in their production being known to very few. Many were led to buy counterfeit which as they thought could be passed without difficulty or danger. Sometimes these gullible purchasers were got by cunningly worded advertisements, sometimes by "go-betweens," "come-on men" — in the end they paid away their good money for worthless counterfeit—or in the later development of the swindle, for blank paper.

This "fake," which is generally supposed to have begun after the middle of the 19th century is, at least in its earlier form, much older: it is a hardy perennial—for "the thing that hath been, it is that which shall be: and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun."

The purpose of this paper is to tell of a swindle of this character early in the 19th century in Upper Canada, which nearly had fatal consequences.

¹ Major Arthur Griffiths, the Scotland Yard expert, from information obtained from Detective Chief Thomas Byrnes of New York, and from the well-known Lexow enquiry, considers James "King" McNally as the originator—and beyond question "King" McNally was the first large operator at the time. A popular account is given by W. C. Crosby (himself an old "Con" man) and Edward D. Smith in the *Saturday Evening Post* for January 24, 1920.