

**The Louisville Grays'
Scandal of 1877
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“Terror” Devlin . . . “Gentleman George” Hall . . . “Butcher” Craver . . . “Slippery-Elm” Nichols. Names of baseball players, not to be confused with Ruth or Cobb or Mathewson, but four Louisville players who occupy a unique place in baseball history. These four were victims of the first concerted effort of organized baseball to purge itself of associations with professional gamblers. Though gamblers found baseball almost as soon as the game was developed in the 1840’s and 1850’s, disciplinary action against crooked players proved ineffective and made a mockery of efforts to present baseball as clean, honest entertainment. Devlin, Hall, Craver, and Nichols fell prey to the vigorous efforts of determined baseball men to restore integrity to the game.¹

The story of the Louisville Grays’ scandal of 1877 goes back to the founding of the National League in late 1875 and early 1876 by William A. Hulbert, president of the Chicago club, and Albert G. Spalding, club secretary, star pitcher, and field manager. Because of the bitterness which had developed during the 1875 season between professional clubs from the East, such as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, and those from the West, such as Chicago and St. Louis, and because of the increasing public awareness of the bad effects of gambling and unethical conduct in the game, Hulbert and Spalding decided to bring about the creation of a new, more highly organized league of professional baseball clubs. Hopefully, such a league would bring parity between East and West and improve the public image of the sport.²

However, to bring about this new league, a stronger Western representation would be necessary. Both Louisville and Cincinnati had strong local baseball clubs, and Hulbert determined that these two cities would constitute the balance of the Western bloc. Throughout the summer and fall of 1875, Hulbert corresponded

¹Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 3 November 1877. For discussion of gambling in early baseball, see Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The Early Years* (New York, 1960), pp. 52-54.

²Hulbert to Wood, 20 July 1875, Chicago Cubs Papers (hereafter referred to as CCP), Chicago Historical Society.

with Charles E. Chase, the Vice-President of the Louisville Grays, as they came to be known. Hulbert helped Chase obtain the services of John C. Chapman, an experienced field manager, and provided details of financing and player acquisition. In August, the Louisville club was formally organized and Walter K. Haldeman, the President of the *Courier-Journal*, became club president. Because of demands on Haldeman's time, Vice-President Chase carried on the day-to-day operations of the club.³

A similar organization was built in Cincinnati, and in December, 1875, a secret meeting in Louisville among representatives of the four Western teams (Chicago, St. Louis, Louisville and Cincinnati) resulted in general agreement that a new league be formed and in the designation of Hulbert and Charles Fowle, of the St. Louis club, to go to New York and present what amounted to an ultimatum to the Eastern clubs.⁴

Economics and efficiency in scheduling were clearly important in the formation of the new league, but it is equally clear that the integrity of the game was a very strong consideration in Hulbert's mind. In November, 1875, he wrote to G. W. Thompson, president of the Philadelphia Athletics, that the pool box and pool sellers (similar to contemporary bookies) were ruining the game, and that the open revelation of dishonest actions by players was a necessary reform. Also, the unethical "stealing" of players from a rival club was a problem deserving of attention. As Hulbert wrote to Nick Young, a longtime baseball man who would become secretary of the new league, "We do not want to do anything that could by anybody be construed into an attempt on our part to seduce a player to break a contract We wish to be very careful to keep our skirts clean in this respect."⁵

In early February, 1876, Hulbert and Fowle met in New York with representatives of clubs from Boston, Hartford, New York, and Philadelphia. The Eastern Clubs agreed to the league concept presented by Hulbert and the National League was born. Considerable police authority was given to the directors of each club, including the power to expel from baseball for life any player found engaging in dishonest acts. Restrictions were

³Chase to Hulbert, 21 August 1875, CCP; Hulbert to Chase, 24 August 1875, CCP; Chase to Hulbert, 27 August 1875, CCP; Hulbert to Chase, 30 August 1875, CCP; Chase to Hulbert, 31 August 1875, CCP.

⁴Chase to Hulbert, 7 October 1875, CCP; Hulbert to Chase, 15 October 1875, CCP.

⁵Hulbert to Thompson, 5 November 1875, CCP; Hulbert to Young, 6 November 1875, CCP.

placed on clubs wishing to acquire a player from a rival, and many of the difficult problems concerning scheduling and revenue sharing were worked out. League officials were given disciplinary power over individual clubs which did not meet their obligations.⁶

Chicago, which had raided rival teams and built a strong club before the new league was formed, won the 1876 championship. More interestingly, the league directors showed their new authority by expelling New York and Philadelphia from the league for failing to make a scheduled Western road trip near the end of the season. This was a rather surprising move by the league, because both the expelled teams were good draws both at home and on the road, and their expulsion meant a certain reduction of profits for the other clubs.⁷

In 1877, the league opened the season with six teams. However, soon after the league play began, Cincinnati, with a dismal 3-16 record, disbanded. Although the team was soon reorganized and continued to play its scheduled games, no one knew whether or not they would count in the official league standings. Consequently, newspapers had to print three separate standings, one counting all Cincinnati games, one counting only the old team's games, and one counting no Cincinnati games. After the season, at the annual league meeting, it was finally decided that no Cincinnati games should count. Another problem arose that year when Hartford proved to be a bad draw at home, and at mid-season started playing its home games in Brooklyn.⁸ Through all of this, the Louisville Grays were playing excellent baseball. The management had picked up some first-rate players over the past two years, including ace pitcher Jim Devlin from Chicago, and hard-hitting outfielder George Hall, the team captain, picked up from the expelled Philadelphia team. By mid-August, Louisville seemed to be pulling away from the rest of the league. As of August 13, the Grays owned a 25-13 record and a three-and-a-half game lead over second place Boston with just over one-third of the sixty-game season to be played.

About August 15, the Grays left Louisville for a long road trip east, with important series against both Boston and Hartford. On August 17, they lost to Boston, 6-1, with pitcher Devlin, normally a fairly good hitter, striking out four times. Games the next two days were rained out, but on August 20,

⁶Hulbert to Fowle, 10 January 1876, CCP; Spalding to Chase, 10 February 1876, CCP.

⁷Seymour, pp. 80-85; David Q. Voigt, *American Baseball: From Gentlemen's Game to the Commissioner System* (New York, 1966), pp. 69-70.

⁸Voigt, p. 70.

fourth-place Hartford upset the Grays, 5-1, prompting the *Courier-Journal* to note that the team seemed “too anxious for success to be sufficiently nerved for such a contest,” although the Boston *Daily Globe* reported that they “played a splendid fielding game.”⁹ But the next day was even worse, as Hartford shut out the hapless Grays, 7-0. A game with Hartford on August 23 ended in a 1-1 tie, but two days later, back in Boston, the Grays lost again, their fourth straight, 3-2. Suspiciously, perhaps, all of Boston’s runs were scored in the final two innings.

On August 27, Louisville again lost to Boston, 6-0, and the *Courier-Journal* lamented: “Mythology mentions Lethe as a river of the lower world whose waters caused a total forgetfulness of the past. Let’s all get up an excursion and take a real good bathe in the Lethe.”¹⁰ Unfortunately, the next day was reminiscent of the past days as Boston won again, 4-3, winning the season series from Louisville, eight games to four. The *Courier-Journal* noted that Louisville’s three runs were the most the team had scored since August 17. On September 1, the Grays extended their losing streak to seven with a 6-3 loss to Hartford. The trip back west could not have been cheerful with the knowledge that Boston was now in first place.¹¹

On the way back home, Louisville’s losing ways continued. Playing what turned out to be an unofficial series with lowly Cincinnati, winners of only 9 of 46 games in the season, the Grays could win only one of three. During the Cincinnati series, the *Courier-Journal* reported that pitcher Devlin, and his battery-mate, Charles Snyder, as well as shortstop Bill Craver and third-baseman Bill Hague would all be leaving the team after the season, Devlin and Snyder to St. Louis, and Craver and Hague to Hartford. A short time later, it was learned that outfielder Hall was also going to St. Louis. At the same time, there was speculation that Hartford would drop out of the league, and Louisville’s directors publicly announced that Louisville would not drop out.¹²

The team returned to Louisville on the eleventh and were taunted by the Louisville *Evening News*, whose writer was either

⁹Voigt, pp. 70ff.. *Boston Daily Globe*., 19 May and 13 August 1877.

¹⁰Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 18, 21, 22, 24, and 26 August 1877, *Boston Daily Globe*, 21 August 1877.

¹¹Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 28, 29 August and 1 September 1877, *Boston Daily Globe*, 28 August 1877.

¹²Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 7, 8, 9, 11 September and 3 October 1877. Reports concerning the Grays not playing in 1878 had circulated as early as July, when it was first rumored that Devlin and Snyder would be playing for St. Louis. Louisville *Courier-Journal*, July 13, 1877.

ironic or knowledgeable : “The Louisville Grays, alleged baseball players, have returned from their triumphal tour . . . and will play the Amateurs on the Louisville grounds this afternoon. It will scarcely be profitable to throw the game to the Amateurs, as the pennant does not depend on it”¹³

League play resumed September 14 with a heartening 12-6 Grays win over Cincinnati. The *Courier-Journal*, still apparently wanting to believe the best, noted that in the last eleven games, the Grays had averaged 5.55 errors, about average for league play in those days. The paper blamed the team’s recent problems on a lack of timely base hits and implied that it was mostly just bad luck.¹⁴

Evidently, too, there was as yet no serious concern among the club’s stockholders, who held their annual meeting on September 15. The stockholders all agreed to operate a club in Louisville in 1878 and expressed their willingness to subscribe their financial support. The treasurer’s report revealed that team expenses were running some \$2900 under the previous year.¹⁵

A long series with Cincinnati continued through mid-september, with Louisville winning just two of the four games. Boston, meanwhile, was enjoying a successful road trip to St. Louis and Chicago, and their win over Chicago on September 21 virtually clinched the league title, giving the Red Stockings a four game lead with just five to play.¹⁶ The official pennant clinching came September 30, and, aware of rumors concerning the presence of gambling in the game, the Boston *Globe* declared that “Boston has clinched the championship . . . with no underhanded work never a hint at Boston’s selling a game, as they have played so squarely as to give no-one a chance to even think of crooked playing on their part.” Now that the pressure of the pennant chase was over, the Grays began winning. After a 9-6 loss to Chicago on September 27, the team won all but one of its remaining games to clinch second place, and, with a 30-20 record (not counting the Cincinnati games) finished two games behind Boston.¹⁷

Final season statistics revealed that Louisville players fared quite well both individually and as a team. Any poor play

¹³Quoted in Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 12 September 1877.

¹⁴Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 15 September 1877.

¹⁵Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 16 September 1877.

¹⁶Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 18, 19, 20, 21 September 1877; Boston *Daily Globe*, 1 October 1877.

¹⁷Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 27, 28, 29, 20 September and 2, 5, 6, 7 October 1877. The final league standings are as reported in the *Courier-Journal*. Modern changes in baseball record-keeping concerning the legitimacy of Cincinnati games usually give Louisville a 35-25 record and place (the team seven games behind Boston. See *The Baseball Encyclopedia* (New York, 1969), pp. 86-87.

during the losing streak was not reflected in the full season records. The team fielding average was .878, first in the league; the team batting average was .273, second in the league. The *Courier-Journal* used the final statistics to rate all the Grays' players by position and added their own often revealing editorial comment.

Jim Devlin, who pitched in every one of Louisville's games, was rated second among the league's pitchers, due largely, said the paper, to his teammates' effective fielding. Devlin's best pitch was a "ground-shoot," similar to a modern-day sinker, which opposing hitters could never handle successfully. However, Devlin chose not to use his best pitch all the time and the newspaper wondered why.¹⁸

Of the other Louisville players, Bill Craver, the shortstop, rated the bitterest criticism, although he stood second among the league's shortstops. Comparing Craver and St. Louis shortstop Davy Force, the paper said: "They are both slippery roosters, artful dodgers, eels of a superlative degree of lubrication, little jokers whom now we see and now we don't, algebraic problems with two unknown quantities; a bad crowd."¹⁹

The paper also raised suspicions about third baseman Hague. "Bad muffs on easy chances did much to mar his playing and spoil his club's chances for several victories, noticeably one or two at Boston where the Grays had things all their own way up to the very last of the game, at which point Hague stepped in and switched the cars to a side track."²⁰

Outfielder George Hall, one of the top hitters in the league with a .334 average, ranked third among left-fielders with an .895 fielding average. But Hall and the other leading left-fielders were all "first-class men and will not hurt any nine they play on."²¹

On October 18, about ten days after the end of regular season play, the *Courier-Journal* reported that it had learned some "interesting things" about the Grays which would "make good reading in time and will not have to be looked at through spectacles to be made distinct and convincing." Specifically, the paper took out after Devlin, who "jumps into the arena and sports

¹⁸Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 9 October 1877. Similarly, changes in individual baseball statistics have altered pitching, batting, and fielding records as reported in the contemporary press.

¹⁹Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 12 October 1877. Force was strongly suspected of crooked play by St. Louis partisans, but nothing was ever proven against him.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 14 October 1877.

around as gay and lively as the chimpanzee in his native wilds You are not politic, Sir James, not politic, sir, by a large jug-full.”²²

The suspicions of the *Courier-Journal* were reflected in a series of secret meetings of the Grays’ directors held throughout the latter part of October. The result of these meetings was the expulsion from professional baseball of Devlin, Hall, Craver and Al Nichols, a little-used substitute who had joined the team in mid-season. The *Courier-Journal* naturally defended the decision: “As may well be imagined, the directors felt they had a most unpleasant task to perform but their duty to the League, to their own club, to themselves and to the integrity of the game left them no alternative.”²³

According to the *Courier-Journal*, which claimed much of the credit for uncovering the scandal, suspicions about certain players arose during mid-season, but not until the seven-game losing streak did these suspicions become convictions. A major point of distrust showed up in the “royal style” which some of the players began affecting. Many of them, including Hall, Nichols, and Craver, suddenly started wearing diamond pins and rings. Such conspicuous consumption provoked inquiry and investigation. Another clue was seen in Chase’s receipt of two anonymous telegrams from Hoboken, New Jersey, during the losing streak. The first telegram intimated that something was wrong with the Louisville players, since the gamblers were betting on the inferior Hartford team. A second telegram predicted a Louisville loss the next day, and indeed, the Grays did lose the game because of some key errors at crucial points.²⁴

By the time the team returned from the road trip, the newspaper and the directors were convinced of crookedness among at least some of the players but did not know how to prove it. John A. Haldeman, a sportswriter who served as team scorer, began to unravel the scandal by placing insinuating articles in the *Courier-Journal* which made the players think that the directors knew more than they really did. Haldeman, who was also the nephew of the club president, pressured individual players and finally, in Indianapolis, outfielder Hall “unwittingly gave me the key move to the problem to work on.” Halderman

²²Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 18 October 1877.

²³Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 31 October 1877.

²⁴Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 2 December 1877; Preston D. Orem, *Baseball, 1845-1881* (Chicago, 1961), pp. 274-275. Orem’s book is a popular account of early baseball; his facts are undocumented and should be treated with caution by the researcher.

relayed the news to Chapman and the directors and told them that if they refused to investigate, he would “take the matter into his own hands” and let the public know.²⁵

The directors did investigate and confronted Hall and Devlin, two players accused by Haldeman. At first Devlin and Hall denied any involvement, although Devlin did admit he played carelessly in non-league games. Hall was led to believe that Devlin had confessed and so confessed himself, telling Chase that he’d been doing wrong but insisting that he’d never thrown a league game. Hall asked Chase for leniency in return for a full and detailed confession, but Chase refused, implying that he’d learned all the details from Devlin. Hall then confessed anyway and implicated Devlin and Nichols.²⁶

Devlin, confronted with Hall’s confession, likewise told what he knew and centered the blame on Nichols. As the story was pieced together, it turned out that Nichols knew a pool-seller named James McCloud, and through Nichols, McCloud paid both Devlin and Hall \$100 to throw a game at Cincinnati, which they did. They next agreed to throw a non-league game at Indianapolis, which the Grays lost 7-3, but the conspirators claimed never to have received any money for their efforts. Hall stated that he and Nichols had planned to throw another non-league game against the Lowell, Mass., club, but that he’d never been paid for that either. The outfielder said he’d been encouraged by his brother-in-law, who had told him he was a fool for not making money. In all of the testimony printed by the *Courier-Journal*, none of the players admitted throwing any of the crucial games during the seven-game losing streak at Boston and Hartford.

Since the players had corresponded with McCloud by telegraph, the directors requested each team member’s permission to examine Western Union records. All the players but Craver gave that permission, and Craver’s refusal brought about his expulsion, although he was never proven to have thrown games. The telegrams confirmed the illicit gambling associations of Devlin, Hall, and Nichols but implicated none of the other players although suspicions remained strong about some, especially Snyder, the catcher, who had been outspoken in his defense of Devlin, and Hague, the third baseman, whose crucial errors were well-known.²⁷

²⁵Orem, pp. 277-278; Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 3 November 1877, New York *Clipper* 10, November 1877.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*

On October 30, 1877, the directors of the Louisville Grays formally expelled Hall, Devlin and Nichols for "selling games, conspiring to sell games, and tampering with players." The directors also expelled Craver for "disobedience of positive orders, general misconduct, and suspicious play in violation of his contract and the rules of the league." Craver's case is interesting in that he was never proven to have associated with gamblers. Rather, he was thrown out of the game on suspicion of misconduct, strengthened by his refusal to have his telegraph records examined, and on the testimony of other players that he had purposely "rattled" them so that they made key errors. Craver had a past history of misconduct and was well known to be difficult to get along with and it seems that the club seized a good opportunity to rid itself of a malcontent.²⁸

The Boston *Globe*, representing the attitudes of the league champion city, expressed indignity at the exposure of the "Louisville frauds." The scandal, noted the paper, should convince skeptics of the evils of pool-selling. A *Globe* reporter interviewed McCloud, the pool-seller, who denied paying money to either Devlin or Hall, despite their "overtures" to him. He asserted that Louisville, like most clubs, played "crooked games," but that they "sold out to someone else." Boston manager Harry Wright denied that his team had thrown any games and said he did not believe McCloud's statement that most clubs were corrupt.²⁹

League President Hulbert felt that the Louisville scandal was an opportunity to prove to the general public that the league was a paragon of honesty and integrity. Shortly after the announcement of the Louisville expulsions, he wrote to the Hartford manager, Bob Ferguson: "Certainly nothing can be lost to the legitimate game by the conviction and punishment of the thieves and scoundrels who infest it and (who) by their presence as players bring disgrace and contempt upon it . . . Now it strikes me, the exposure and conviction upon their own confession of the four men named, makes our forthcoming League meeting an excellent time and place to strike an effective blow."³⁰

The annual league meeting was held in Cleveland during the first week of December, and league officials quickly ratified

²⁸Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 3 November 1877. Craver had been expelled by the Chicago club in 1875 for mysterious reasons, and, in 1876, he was suspected of gambling connections while playing for the New York Mutuals. See Chicago *Tribune*, 4 November 1877, New York *Clipper*, 29 December 1877.

²⁹Boston *Daily Globe*, 4 and 9 November 1877.

³⁰Hulbert to Ferguson, 8 November 1877, CCP.

the expulsion of the Louisville players. At the same time, they accepted the resignation of St. Louis from the league. Beset with financial problems, the Browns had hoped to revive their fortunes in 1878 with Devlin, Snyder and Hall, all of whom had contracted to join the St. Louis club the next season. Not surprisingly, there was a good deal of bitterness in St. Louis at the expulsion of Devlin and Hall; many felt that it had been done simply to wreck the St. Louis franchise, which is indeed what happened — St. Louis did not return to the league until 1883.³¹

The scandal also was responsible for the disbanding of the Louisville franchise. Hulbert had written them off as early as November 15, when he wrote Ferguson about the league line-up for 1878 and made no mention of Louisville. Similarly, in a letter to Josiah Butler, owner of the Lowell, Massachusetts team, Harry Wright, manager of the Boston team, did not list Louisville among cities he expected to be in the league the next year and suggested that Lowell might be a likely entrant. But Vice-President Chase of the Grays participated fully in the annual league meeting and there gave every indication of playing baseball in 1878. However, for two months after the meeting, as other teams were announcing player acquisitions and club plans, no news at all came from Louisville.³²

Finally, in February, manager Chapman was reported in Brooklyn recruiting amateur players for the Grays. Evidently, the amateur ball players Chapman was able to locate were not very promising, and this, combined with the club's other problems, pushed the directors into a hard decision. On March 8, Chase sent Hulbert Louisville's resignation from the league, stating that the group had been "unable to secure a team sufficiently strong to cope with other nines."³³

Chase's brief letter did not tell the whole story. The Louisville *Commercial* asserted that the team dropped out of the league because "our people were so thoroughly disgusted with the conduct of the players last season that a call upon them

³¹Chicago *Tribune*, 2, 5, 4, and 9 December 1877, Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 5 December 1877. The *Courier-Journal* reprinted several articles from the St. Louis *Times* and the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* regarding the St. Louis attitude. See the *Courier-Journal* for 1, 2, and 4 November 1877, and the Boston *Daily Globe*, 11 November 1877.

³²Hulbert to Ferguson, 15 November 1877, CCP, Harry Wright to Josiah Butler, 28 November 1877, A. G. Spalding Papers, New York Public Library, Chicago *Tribune*, 9 December 1877. Louisville's inactivity prompted one Tribune reader to write and ask: "Can the Louisville Club remain a member of the league without placing a team on the field?" The *Tribune* answered "It is a curious question, but the writer's impression would be that unless it was a ball club it couldn't belong to a League of ball clubs." Chicago *Tribune*, 24 February 1878.

³³Chicago *Tribune*, 24 February and 10 March 1878.

now would meet with a cold response.” The *Courier-Journal* agreed, stating that the causes for the Gray’s disbanding concerned “the rascality of last year’s players and the general conviction that dishonest players on other clubs were more the rule than the exception . . .”³⁴

The Grays may also have had other problems in the offing. In early March, the Chicago *Tribune* revealed that at the annual league meeting, the league directorate had ordered the Grays to pay catcher Snyder \$254 in back pay. Apparently this had not been paid as of March and the club was subject to league disciplinary action. There were strong suggestions that a number of other players had not been paid their full salaries either, and the *Tribune* suggested that the directors and stockholders of the Grays were unwilling to enter into new contracts while old ones were still unsettled. The *Tribune* writer placed the blame for the financial dilemma on the scandal. If the club had won the pennant in 1877, he noted, there would have been ample money available to pay all the club’s obligations.³⁵

As for the expelled players, Devlin and Craver both made repeated efforts to get back into baseball. Devlin wrote semi-literate letters to league officials and made a pathetic personal plea to Hulbert, appearing at the league president’s office in threadbare clothes and worn-out shoes. Hulbert was visibly moved and gave Devlin \$50 but would not consider letting him play again. Devlin became, ironically, a Philadelphia policeman before his premature death in 1883 at the age of 34. Craver wrote a letter to the *Courier-Journal* protesting his innocence and included supporting letters from fellow infielders on the Grays. That was futile, however, as were his subsequent applications to league directors for reinstatement. Craver, too, became a policeman, serving in the Troy, New York department until his death in 1901.³⁶

Less is known of Hall and Nichols. Hall wrote to Harry Wright in November asking about his chances for reinstatement and a possible baseball future in Boston. Wright replied that while he would be happy to see Hall reinstated, he thought the likelihood was very slight. Later, Bob Ferguson, who became

³⁴Quoted in Chicago *Tribune*, 10 March 1878.

³⁵Chicago *Tribune* and 10 March 1878. The *Tribune* writer may have been overly optimistic. The Boston *Daily Globe* reprinted a Chicago *Post* article alleging that all clubs lost money. In 1877, ranging from \$1500 by Boston to \$8000 by St. Louis. Louisville loss was estimated at \$2000. Boston *Daily Globe*, 4 November 1877.

³⁶Albert G. Spalding, *America’s National Game* (New York, 1911). pp. 227-229; Voigt, p. 84; Louisville *Courier-Journal*, 4 November 1877, Orem, p. 271.

Hulbert's field manager in Chicago in 1878, appealed to Hulbert for Hall's reinstatement, no doubt fully aware of the outfielder's skills on the field and anxious to add him to his roster. But Hulbert remained adamant, accusing Hall of calculating "to stab his employer, the clubs of the league, and his fellow players. For a paltry sum, which he did not need, he sold not only himself, but you and me." Nothing more is heard of Hall, or of Nichols, who had been just a marginal player at best.³⁷

The Louisville Grays' scandal of 1877 was not just another manifestation of the well-documented moral collapse of the Gilded Age. Gambling had been present in baseball well before the Gilded Age and would continue long after the period — at least until 1919 and the famous Black Sox scandal. But the Grays' scandal does represent the first documented case of player crookedness after the founding of the National League. To their credit, William Hulbert and the league directory tried to deal firmly with the problem in order to identify the league with honesty and clean entertainment. They expelled the Louisville players and made further efforts to keep ball players and professional gamblers apart. But Hulbert died in 1882 and subsequent league leaders ignored the lessons of Louisville. Significantly, the best full-length work on the famous Black Sox scandal, *Eight Men Out*, by Eliot Asinof, makes only a brief error-laden mention of the Louisville Grays' scandal in a background chapter, and the scandal seems to have had no impact on the Black Sox decisions made by Judge Landis and his advisors.³⁸

³⁷Hulbert to Ferguson, 13 December 1877, CCP; Harry Wright to George Hall, 28 November 1877, A. G. Spalding Papers.

³⁸Eliot Asinof, *Eight Men Out* (New York, 1962), pp. 21-22. Asinof dates the scandal in 1876 instead of 1877 and identifies Hall instead of Devlin as the player who made the pathetic appearance in Hulbert's office.