Francis Wise, B.D.

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By Strickland Gibson

AMONG the manuscripts which Richard Rawlinson bequeathed to the Bodleian Library are voluminous collections for an enlargement of Wood's *Athenæ Oxonienses*. These were mostly contributed by the Athenians themselves, and have provided biographers of Oxford men with a mass of authentic though baldly expressed facts. The account of his early years which Francis Wise supplied to Rawlinson, since it cannot be supplemented from other sources, may therefore be given in the bleakness of the original—' Francis Wise was son of Francis Wise, Mercer of Oxford, born in the parish of All Saints' on June 3, 1695, educated in Grammar learning at New College Schole, admitted Commoner of Trinity College, Jan. 3, 1710. Matriculated 15 Jan., 1710. Scholar May 31, 1711. M.A. 16 Octob. 1717, elected Probationer fellow 12 June 1718, actual as usual 1719.'

The public career of Francis Wise began in 1719 when he was appointed Sub-Librarian of the Bodleian Library on the resignation of John Fletcher. The appointment is mentioned by Thomas Hearne[1] in his diary under the date December 14, ' Bowles put in Mr. Wise, A.M. of Trin. Coll. (a pretender to antiquities),' a not too unfriendly observation in the light of Hearne's estimate of Bowles, Bodleian Librarian, ' a breaker of his word, and a whiffling, silly, unfaithfull coxcombe.' As the salary was a very small one, £10 a year with a few fees, Wise found it necessary to undertake College tutorial work, in which he was fortunate to have as one of his first pupils, Francis North, son of the Earl of Guilford, with whom he remained on the friendliest terms throughout his life.

[1] Thomas Hearne was appointed Sub-Librarian in 1712, but, owing to his refusal to take the Oath of Allegiance in 1716, was unable to retain his office. He nevertheless maintained that he was still the rightful Sub-Librarian, and that his successors John Fletcher and Francis Wise were usurpers. From 1716 until his death in 1735 he regularly entered in his diary the amount of the half-yearly salary due to him. In addition to the ' usurpation ' he had an additional cause of grievance against Wise. Hearne notes on 29 June 1723, ' Beyond High Bridge . . . is a little House called Antiquity Hall, which one Wise of Trinity Coll. and one Tristram of Pembroke Coll. (both of them very conceited Fellows and of little Understanding, tho' both are Masters of Arts) have had a draught taken of and printed, with very silly, ridiculous things and words in it, for which they are much laugh'd at by all People, who cannot but look upon it as one of the weakest things ever done.' This satirical print, in which Hearne appears, is by Michael Burghers. See (Bodl). Gough prints 27 (100*b*) : Gough adds. Oxon a. 75 (1).

It is in the North correspondence that the most intimate details about Wise's career are found. The earliest letter, dated 21 February, 1722, is addressed to his pupil who was then about to go abroad 'in quest of adventures.' Wise, for whom archaeological pursuits had always a great attraction, recommended to his notice, 'all the Venerable remains of Antiquity . . . as Old Fortifications, Castles, Triumphal Arches, Aqueducts, Theatres and Amphitheatres, Columns, Statues, Busts, &c., Old Egyptian Hieroglyphs, Pagods, Lares, &c., Medals Egyptian, Grecian and Ægyptiaco-Grecian, Roman, &c.' At the end of the letter was the welcome news, 'All your Creatures are in good health and *Rake* is grown almost big enough to catch a hare.—N.B. I had a small rebuff with the V. President th' other day about bringing him into the Grove.'

Early in 1722 Wise issued proposals for printing by subscription a new edition of Asser's Life of Alfred the Great. The proposals were contained in a four-page leaflet stating that the work would be published from Camden's edition collated with that of Archbishop Parker and all the extant manuscripts, particularly with MS. Cotton Otho A XII, an appendix being added in vindication of a passage relating to the antiquity of the University of Oxford. The price of ordinary copies was to be five shillings, of those on large paper ten shillings, and no more copies than those subscribed for were to be published. The book was privately printed at the University Press and appeared towards the end of the year. Hearne described it as a 'most wretched edition . . . full of foolish and wild fancies' while his friend Mr. Taylour of University College told him that the work was not at all esteemed, the editor 'a confident fellow, full of pride and self-conceit,' having 'played most abominable tricks' in it. Hearne had already glossed 'Under Librarian' on his copy of the prospectus as 'Usurper.'

The edition is important as it is based on the lost Cottonian MS. and contains a facsimile of one of its pages. The Dictionary of National Biography describes it, quoting from an anonymous article in a periodical, as 'unusually careful,' and until recent years the work stood high in the estimation of scholars. A distinguished Anglo-Saxon authority, the late W. H. Stevenson, however, criticizes it severely. It appears that Wise never saw the Cottonian manuscript himself, but relied on collations supplied by his friend James Hill, who, in his turn, saved time by using the old printed text of Camden for purposes of collation. Although the facsimile is condemned as unfaithful and worthless, the vignettes with which Wise illustrated his book, and to which he proudly calls attention in his preface, secure Mr. Stevenson's unqualified approval.

On 6 April, 1726, Wise was elected Keeper of the University Archives by a majority of eight votes. Hearne again supplies an acid comment, 'the Whiggs striking in with Wise, it was carried for him, tho' he be a very conceited Man, much such as his Friend Bowles (tho' I cannot say quite so bad).' The Keeper

of the Archives was an important University officer. He was the chosen defender of the privileges of the University, and was required to be a person skilled in public archives and records. All the charters, muniments, and official registers of the University were in his custody, and he was responsible for keeping the catalogue up-to-date and for the production of documents when required by a proper authority. Wise, unlike his great predecessors Twyne, Langbaine, and Wallis, never undertook any original work on the Archives, nor was he ever called upon to fight any such battle as Wallis fought on behalf of the printing privileges of the University. His correspondence with Professor Ward of Gresham College[1] shows that he was prepared to take great pains in searching registers for the right kind of inquirer, but there is no reason to suppose that his office ever brought him into very close contact with the documents in his custody. On his death in October, 1767, the University immediately appointed a delegacy to examine the Archives and to report on their condition.

The office of Keeper added £40 a year to his modest salary as Bodleian Sub-Librarian. In the same year he accepted the living of Harlow in Essex, but resigned it a few months later. He had been ordained priest in 1721 and had already received the curacy of Wroxton by the gift of the Earl of Guilford, as well as the donative of Elsfield. So far his career had been one of uniform success: his first serious rebuff cannot be better told than in the words of Hearne, 'Dec. 3, 1729. Yesterday, at two Clock in the afternoon, was a Convocation, for electing a Librarian. Candidates were Mr. Wise, B.Div. and Fellow of Trin. Coll., and Custos Archivorum of the University, who hath usurped my place of second Librarian these ten years, Mr. Bilstone, chaplain of All Souls, Janitor of the Library, who hath got the new keys made in opposition to the old ones I have by me (for I never resigned, though they debarred me for not taking the Oaths), and Mr. Rob. Fysher, B.M. and Fellow of Oriel College. Bilstone desisted, so the struggle was between Wise and Fysher, and Fysher carried it by a majority of fifteen votes, to the great mortification of Wise, Bilstone, the Vice-Chancellour, and many others, who had taken strange methods to get Wise (an half-strained, conceited man) in; but their Tricks would not do, to the great content of such as hate such undermining, wicked doings. Wise seemed to be very sure of success and expressed a concern that his antagonist was his junior, and vaunted much of his own service in order to lessen Mr. Fysher's interest, but (maugre all these methods) he was, as he deserved, baffled.' There is little information about Wise's career in the Bodleian. Some letters written in the early years of his appointment refer to help given to scholars in searching

[1] Gresham College was founded and endowed by Sir Thomas Gresham (d. 1579) to provide lectures in astronomy, divinity, geometry, law, music, physic, and rhetoric. The College is now in Basinghall St., E.C. 2., where the lectures are still delivered.

for particular books both in the library and in College libraries, and payments are entered to him in the library accounts for arranging and cataloguing the books bequeathed by Nathaniel Crynes.

Wise's ambitions, checked by his defeat for the librarianship, revived again in the spring of 1731 when the Fellows of Trinity were looking round for a new President. The strongest candidate was George Huddesford, then a young man of thirty-two. Wise, who had no chance of being a first choice, thought that if there should be any dissension among the Fellows he might possibly 'slip in between' as a second choice, and be returned as a candidate to the Visitor of the College, the Bishop of Winchester. Then if sufficient influence could be brought to bear on the Bishop, he hoped that his election might be secured. Unfortunately Wise's chief enemy was the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Shippen, 'reckoned the deepest headpiece in Oxford.' He therefore wrote to his patron the Earl of Guilford, and suggested that this fact might be 'warily and opportunely mentioned to the Visitor,' and that my Lord Tyrconnel might also be asked to approach him as secretly as he could. The final step suggested was that the Earl should request the Heir Apparent to intervene on his behalf. A few days later Wise discovered that a second person, a Mr Stockwell, had already been chosen to be returned to the Visitor. This alarming news called for immediate action and led Wise to unfold to the Earl of Guilford an elaborate conspiracy. He believed that if he could secure the vote of Dr. Wilkes, one of the Fellows, he would almost certainly be returned as a candidate. In exchange for the vote Wise thought that Dr. Wilkes might be willing to accept the curacy of Elsfield which was in the Earl's gift and about to become vacant. To encompass this the Doctor was to be told of the vacancy and induced to ask Wise to use his influence on his behalf. Wise would then inform his Lordship who, in his turn, would write to Dr. Wilkes and recall their previous acquaintance, saying that he would gladly serve him in things of greater moment and willingly nominate him to the vacant curacy. After having carefully instructed the Earl what to say in the event of Dr. Wilkes' becoming implicated, Wise thoughtfully added that it would be as well, at the beginning and end of the letter, to write about 'other things relating to other subjects—of any kind.' The plot was laid to no purpose. The next President of Trinity was young Mr. Huddesford. No ill-feeling seems to have resulted since Wise soon afterwards is found in the role of a busy College official, balancing the accounts, work requiring the utmost attention, 'troublesome, but gainful.'

It was about this time that Wise began to take an interest in the White Horse on the Berkshire Downs which resulted some years later in *A Letter to Dr. Mead concerning some antiquities in Berkshire, particularly shewing that The White Horse . . . is a Monument of the West-Saxons, made in memory of a great*

Victory obtained over the Danes A.D. 871. The arguments put forward are concerned with the identification of place-names and with the contention that the horse was the Saxon standard, ' No one can be ignorant, that the Horse was the Standard which the Saxons used, both before and after their coming hither. . . . Alfred therefore in *Setting up his Banner for a Token*, did nothing, but what was exactly agreeable to ancient practice. And might probably in so doing, have a further regard to Antiquity ; a *White-Horse* itself being no improper emblem of victory and triumph ; according to the Poet

> Ergo erit illa dies, qua tu, pulcherrime rerum,
> Quatuor in niveis aureus ibis equis. (*Ovid. De Art. Am. Lib.* 1).'

One of the most striking passages in the *Letter* is the description of the Horse, ' The Horse at first view is enough to raise the admiration of every curious spectator, being designed in so masterlike a manner, that it may defy the painter's skill, to give a more exact description of that animal : which were it not so apparent, would hardly gain belief with an antiquary, who considers to how low an ebb the art of drawing was sunk at that time ; as appears from the works of their best masters, the Saxon coins, and the jewel of King Alfred. . . . If we consider it further, we must likewise allow, that no small skill in Opticks was requisite, both for the choice of the ground, and for disposing rude lines, as they appear to a person upon the spot, in such a manner, as to form so beautiful a representation,' extraordinary words indeed to describe that long serpentine creature whose sinuous body undulates so well with the folds of the hill which bears its name. That the Horse depicted in one of the plates with which the work is illustrated should represent a perfect figure of that animal merely shows that when questions of art were concerned the antiquary and the artist saw eye to eye.

The only valuable part of the pamphlet is contained in a single paragraph about the long barrow which is known to-day as Wayland's Smithy,[1] ' Whether this remarkable piece of Antiquity ever bore the name of the person here buried, is not now to be learned ; the true meaning of it being long since lost in ignorance and fable. All the account, which the country people are able to give of it, is ' At this place lived formerly an invisible Smith ; and if a traveller's Horse had lost a Shoe upon the road, he had no more to do, than to bring the Horse to this place, with a piece of money, and leaving both there for some little time, he might come again and find the money gone, but the Horse new shod.' The stones standing upon the *Rudge-way* as it is called (which was the situation, that they chose for burial monuments) I suppose, gave occasion to the whole being

[1] See *Wiltshire Archæological Magazine* VII (1862), 321 ff. ; *The Antiquaries Journal*, I (1921), 183 ff.

called Wayland-Smith : which is the name it was always known by to the country people.' Wise was the first to record this invaluable piece of folklore which connects Wayland with the legendary Weland of Saxon mythology, and it constitutes perhaps, although he never suspected its importance, his most enduring contribution to antiquarian knowledge.

The *Letter to Dr. Mead* was printed at the end of 1738 and was ready for distribution in January 1739. The edition consisted of about 800 copies, the price being eighteen-pence. Wise decided to market the copies himself as he had no confidence in booksellers who, he said, would give him hardly five guineas for his manuscript. The preparation for publication was expensive. Wise spent about £22 on his journeys into Berkshire and Wiltshire. The cost of the drawings was nearly £5, and the paper and printing came to £20. The total sum reached nearly £60. The pamphlet was illustrated with two engravings by Vertue, one of Ashdown and Wayland-Smith, the other of White Horse Hill, presented by Dr. Mead and Lord Craven respectively. The author had waited on the Earl of Craven[1] in October and by skilful flattery had interested him in the *Letter*. When his lordship was informed that the work would be incomplete without an engraving of the Horse, he generously offered to be at that charge. Thereupon Wise immediately produced the sketch which had been taken the day before by a limner from Oxford and accepted the offer forthwith. Wise told Thomas Carte that he ' had not the face ' to ask the Earl to present also an engraving of Wayland-Smith. For that favour Carte was requested to be good enough to approach Dr. Mead. Shortly before the work was ready for publication Wise was much distressed to hear of the illness of Lord Craven which raised the question whether my Lord would hold out until Vertue had completed the engraving. There was no immediate cause for alarm : Lord Craven survived publication by the respectable margin of six months.

The marketing of copies was not easy. Dr. Rawlinson had recommended Wise to get his friends ' to take off large numbers, and disperse them among their acquaintances.' Wise therefore asked his friend, Dr. Ducarel, if he would take two or three hundred copies to be dispersed among such friends and others who might be pleased to encourage the sale of it. The Doctor's kind acquiescence was almost rewarded with a consignment of four hundred, which Wise hoped would be taken off his hands by dozens, at the same time expressing

[1] The following statement appeared in *The Times* (19 May, 1936) : ' Berkshire County Council have adopted a report presented by the finance committee which stated that negotiations have been proceeding for some time with the solicitors of Cornelia Lady Craven with a view to an agreement being reached for the preservation, under the Town and Country Planning Act, 1932, of certain land forming part of the Craven estate. These negotiations, the report went on to say, have reached a successful conclusion, and an agreement has been entered into with Lady Craven which will preserve for all time the character and amenities of White Horse Hill and of adjoining land.'

confidence in the zeal of his friends. As this number was thought to be too large, Wise decided to trouble him with only one hundred. He hoped to sell another two hundred in the Vale of White Horse. The enterprise was pushed forward enthusiastically, ' I shall not be wanting,' he wrote, ' to myself in pushing the sale to the utmost ; and advertising shall be called in as the last resort. I am determined to set fire to the remaining cargo, to prevent its falling into the pirates' hands, for waste paper.' A few copies were printed on superior paper as gifts for superior persons, but Dr. Ducarel was begged not to disclose the names of the favoured recipients in case the less fortunate might think themselves slighted.

About six weeks after publication Wise had succeeded in disposing of just over one hundred copies. He then decided to advertise. By May disillusionment had begun to set in. Only about three hundred had been sold, and the run of the sale was over. Wise wrote that this ill success was a sensible mortification, and that it had been better if he had employed a bookseller. He destroyed one large parcel, reserving one hundred copies to give away to friends.

Far worse was to come. In the following month a disturbing whisper reached him that an answer to his *Letter* was being undertaken by an anonymous writer (see p. 180) who set the antiquity of the Horse much higher than he did. The attack came in the form of a pamphlet entitled *The Impertinence and Imposture of Modern Antiquaries display'd. Or, A Refutation of the Rev. Mr. Wise's Letter to Dr. Mead. . . . By Philalethes Rusticus.* The pamphlet is dated at the end, 3 September, 1739, and was published before 24 May, 1740, on which day George North, who will be mentioned later, bought his copy. It is written in a scurrilous style not without humour. Naturally Wise's eulogy of the Horse as a work of art came in for ridicule, ' I have been to see the Horse myself,' writes the author, ' and view'd him both at a distance and at hand: Tho' he has resemblance enough to be call'd a *Horse* as properly as any other *Quadrupede*, yet I cannot say he is a *perfect Picture of a Horse*. And were not our Author a Divine of unquestionable Veracity, he would hardly gain belief when he tells us, " he is design'd in so masterlike a Manner, that it may defy the Painter's Skill, to give a more exact Description of that Animal." In this he may be thought for once, a little too indulgent to his Fancy ; especially if it be consider'd the *Horse* has been Curried for some Centuries, by a sort of Grooms who are not so perfectly skill'd in *Opticks* as our Author's *Saxon Operators* might be : These *Scourers* (to give them their proper Title) set heartily about him with their Mattocks and Spades, but dress him over something in a Hurry, as being in hast to receive their Recompence of Reward, which is a good Belly-full of Ale.' Then again he criticizes Wise's insistence on the significance of colour, ' the *Horse* we are now upon happens to be a *White One*,

only because his Native Soil abounds with Chalk, or a sort of white Lime-Stone: just as that other Nag of Renown, from whom the Vale of *Red-Horse*[1] is denominated, happens to be *Red*, only because he is cut in a ruddy Soil . . . In a Word, whoever will have such sort of Horses, must be content with such sort of *Colour* as the Country affords, however he may blazon his own Arms.' The anonymous author's parting shot was that by way of making an *amende honorable*, Wise should 'once more get upon the Back of Rosinante, and thence . . . make his publick Recantation at the next Scouring.'

The pamphlet was without doubt inspired by political and personal prejudice under the influence of which and in a sheer spirit of opposition the writer was prompted to make the brilliant guess that the Horse was British, and that its figure and posture were exactly the same with what may be observed on some British coins. This is the view of modern antiquaries, who assign the Horse to the Early Iron Age. That Wise, a professed numismatist, should have overlooked the resemblance shows how ill-prepared he was in the science of applied archæology. In his own cabinet of coins he doubtless held the essential clue. Some years afterwards Wise confessed that he had treated the White Horse at Bratton with too scant respect since he had declared that it was cut within memory. The *amende honorable* was on this occasion made in a letter to Dr. Lyttleton, 'I have often,' says he 'taken great shame to myself for having done so much injustice to that noble monument. Our friend Mr. Lethieullier has convinced me that it is a true Saxon Horse, and if so, must be of K. Alfred's breed, all this I have denied partly through ignorance, and partly through misinformation.' Wise goes on to say that he had desired his friend to correct this statement either in a magazine or in some learned Transactions, a request which deserves to be commended.

The circumstances of the publication of *The Impertinence of Modern Antiquaries* remain unknown. In a letter to George North, written in 1745, Wise gives the names of five persons who had been credited with a hand in it. They were Mr. Gilbert, William Bumpstead, William Asplin,[2] Sir J. Eyles and Mr. Gould of Bristol. Although Gilbert denied having had any share in it, Wise believed that he was at least the author of the Preface, and that Asplin possibly drew up the body of the book wtih Bumpstead as a potential instigator. If Sir J. Eyles had any share in it Wise supposed it must have been in the printing. Gould of Bristol was unknown to him. Two years later, in 1741, a reply was

[1] The Red Horse, which was cut in the hill-side near Middle Tysoe, has now disappeared although some guide-books refer to it as still existing. Its origin is doubtful (see J. Lisle, *Warwickshire* (1936), pp. 275–6).

[2] Richard Rawlinson believed that Asplin was the author of *The Impertinence* ([Bodl.] MS. Ballard 2, f. 250v. See also Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, v, 528).

made in an anonymous pamphlet entitled, *An answer to a scandalous libel, Entitled, The Impertinence and Imposture of Modern Antiquaries display'd.* The author was George North, son of a pewterer of London, and unacquainted with Wise personally. There is no clear reason why he took upon himself the task of defence. He was neither connected with the Earl of Guilford's family nor was he an Oxford man. North devotes much space to the personal side of the attack, and, while agreeing that friendly opposition is the life of conversation, strongly denounces the author's indecent language. He demolished to his own satisfaction the argument that the Horse was British by saying that if that were so it would certainly have been destroyed by their avowed enemies, the Romans. The most remarkable feature about the championship of George North is that on 5 May, 1740, three weeks before he bought his copy of *The Impertinence*, he addressed a letter to Browne Willis entitled, *Some observations on Mr. Wise's Letter to Dr. Mead*, in which he attacks Wise's whole position. At the beginning of his letter he says, ' I have not the pleasure of knowing Mr. Wise, but conceive the highest opinion of his learning and abilities even from that letter, which, notwithstanding, I must beg leave to dissent from. I wish he had happily been in the right, for from a person that can render a mistake so plausible and agreeable and give such fine embellishments to it what might we not have expected, if he had not been misled.' In North's opinion the Horse was made in the first ages of the Saxons. A fair copy of the letter, prepared as for publication, is in the Bodleian Library : it was never printed.

Evidently encouraged by the unexpected support contained in the *Answer* Wise published in 174$\frac{2}{3}$ *Further Observations upon the White Horse* in which he enlarged his field of investigation and dealt with Whiteleaf Cross, the Red Horse in Warwickshire, and other hill-side monuments. He advanced his theories little further. He elaborated his views about the white Saxon standard and supported his conjectures on the Saxon origin of the Cross by numerous references to coins. The printing of the *Further Observations* was begun at the beginning of January, 1743, and finished in a few weeks' time. Owing to the ill-success of the *Letter* Wise decided to print a smaller number of copies. He informed Dr. Ducarel that he hoped himself to sell 300 copies, and that it would ' run like wild-fire at Oxford.' It was ready for distribution in February ; at the end of the month no considerable sale had been effected. ' As my acquaintance is chiefly among Antiquaries ' wrote Wise, ' and pretty universal in that respect, I might have given away the whole impression in presents.' By the middle of March hope had gone, and Wise was willing enough ' to truck the remaining copies ' of his pamphlets, about a hundred of each, with the booksellers. At a much later date he writes that the remaining parcels of both pamphlets had been sold to an Oxford bookseller. The *Further Observations*

marks the end of Wise's active interest in White Horses although later he was to mount Rosinante again and ride, with no less intrepidity, into the still obscurer regions of the Cimmerian wilderness.

For the next few years a more pressing matter was to monopolize Francis Wise's attention. The cause of this preoccupation is first mentioned with caution in June, 1737, in a letter addressed to Professor Ward of Gresham College. ' My friends,' says Wise ' put me upon the pursuit of an affair, having more interest and profit in it than learning ; and which they told me was as necessary to be minded, as the other.' The ' affair ' was the Radcliffe Library, the foundation stone of which was laid in 1737 and which some day would need a Librarian. For the next eleven years Wise pressed forward towards the goal with commendable single-mindedness. Dr. John Radcliffe had died in 1714, and by one of the clauses in his will had made provision for a library to be erected and equipped. After considerable delay the Trustees decided to build a library on property lying between All Souls and Brasenose. Some time in 1740, or rather later, Wise had already begun to solicit the electors of the librarian. His appeal to the Duke of Newcastle is preserved at the British Museum. It states that ' Mr. Wise, fellow of Trinity College in Oxford, a man of known learning and abilities, who has served upwards of 20 years in an inferior post in the Bodleian Library, desires the D. of Newcastles vote for him to be first Librarian of Dr. Radcliffes new Library, when the Drs. Trustees shall apply for a nomination.' The nominators were the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, the Chancellor of the University, the Bishops of London and Winchester, the two Lord Chief Justices, and the two Secretaries of State. Wise added that he was personally known to the three bishops and referred the Duke to them for a more particular account of his character and fitness for the office. One piece of information, however, caused him both surprise and uneasiness. He had been informed by a friend that the only obstacle to his success was Dr. Mead himself, who was sponsoring some unknown person, said to be a distant relative of Dr. Radcliffe. Wise immediately wrote to his friend Professor Ward, and asked him to make discreet inquiries and report as soon as possible. He afterwards found out from another source that his rival was a Mr. Green who was supported both by the Earl of Oxford and Dr. Mead, 'so that my chance, I fear,' he continues, ' is but very indifferent against such powerful interest. My friends indeed perswade me, not yet to despair; but I must own I have but little hopes of success for my own part.'

For the next few years there is no additional information about the pursuit of the librarianship. Further Church preferment came in 1745, when Wise accepted the College living of Rotherfield Greys, ' the worst in our College's gift,' welcome nevertheless because confinement to a College life no longer had

any great attraction. Then, in 1746, his resignation of his Bodleian post shows that he was at last assured of the Radcliffe appointment. This was officially announced in 1748. The formal opening of the library in the following year was an occasion of great ceremony. Dr. Rawlinson wrote on April 1 to his friend, Thomas Rawlins, 'On the 13th instant is to be great day for opening Dr. Radcliffes Library, and Mr. Cartes History [of England] will be first book placed in it. I am told it is designed for the most modern books in all faculties and languages not in the Bodleian Library. Mr. Wise Cust. Archiv. is by one majority chosen Keeper, which will be for some time a fat *sine curâ*.' On April 13 the University attended at the Library when the Duke of Beaufort, one of the Trustees, handed the key to the Vice-Chancellor. The proceedings were then continued in the Sheldonian Theatre where Dr. King, the Public Orator, made a memorable speech in which his frequent use of the word *redeat* was generally understood to refer to the Pretender, and greatly inflamed the minds of the audience. Wise thus became, at a salary of £150 a year, the custodian of a magnificent library which for some years was little cumbered by books and almost entirely unencumbered by readers, and which became literally a sinecure for life.

One of the immediate results of Wise's new appointment was the publication in 1750 of his most ambitious work *Nummorum antiquorum scriniis Bodleianis reconditorum Catalogus cum commentario, tabulis aeneis, et appendice*. The study and the collecting of coins, especially of the Anglo-Saxon period, was one of Wise's chief hobbies. In 1736 he had published a small tract entitled *Epistola ad V. Cl. Ioannem Masson de nummo Abgari regis* and dedicated to the Earl of Guilford, to which, curiously enough, no reference is made in his correspondence. There are references in his letters to Ballard about the purchase and exchange of coins, and he also corresponded with Lethieullier on the same subject. Wise made some important gifts of coins to the Bodleian, and at his death his sister presented his valuable cabinet to the Radcliffe Library. The *Catalogus*[1] had been planned about thirty years previously, and subscriptions had been collected for a long time before publication. The Preface states that

[1] Dr. J. G. Milne, Deputy Keeper of Coins in the Ashmolean Museum, has kindly supplied the following note on the numismatic work of Francis Wise: 'The *Catalogus* is Wise's main contribution to numismatic knowledge: and it justifies us in ranking him high among his contemporaries. To some extent it was based on lists prepared by earlier students of the collections: he probably did not know Hearne's catalogue, which only came to the Bodleian with the Rawlinson bequest in 1755, and which might have enabled him to correct some doubtful readings, as Hearne's transcripts are very accurate: but he acknowledges a debt to Ashmole as regards the Roman coins, and he may have had access to Hearne's drafts and papers by Wanley and others which seem to have been at the Bodleian from the time when they were written. The arrangement of the Catalogue, however, was his own, and the care bestowed upon it is evident from his notes and from the corrections of some proof-sheets which have been preserved. The commentary which follows the Catalogue shows that he was well acquainted with numismatic literature, and also had examined other collections that were accessible to him. In short, the book contains a great deal of valuable material, which has not received the notice it deserves from later writers: Mionnet made some

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when the Bodleian Catalogue of 1738 appeared it had been suggested, at the urgent request of scholars, that a catalogue of Bodleian coins should be issued as a supplement. Although some kind of promise that this should be done seems to have been made, nothing came of it, either because the task was too great or because more pressing matters demanded attention. Wise states that owing to increasing expense and the paucity of subscribers, it was long uncertain whether the book would prematurely die or be issued in a mutilated form. Then having been called 'ad munus literarium, amplum satis et honorificum' he thought that he should no longer disappoint the expectations of the learned. Ten years before the *Catalogus* was published Wise had written to Professor Ward, 'I know you will be apt to enquire, what will become of my book? I answer it must retire to obscurity with its author; the plan which I had laid down being too expensive to be executed by one in my circumstances, without any other assistance. My subscribers need not be uneasy, for they shall be satisfied every one. The damage, and that I can assure you, a very considerable one, will be only to myself.' The reason for publication, he explained to Dr. Ducarel, was 'for the reviving of this sort of study among the people of this place; and, if my intention succeeds, that will be my only reward.' The expense of pubication was very heavy, the copper-plates alone costing £200. Copies sold very slowly, and even twelve years later a considerable number of copies remained on the author's hands. The total loss on the book was over £250.

The two large vignettes with which the work is illustrated have a very personal interest. They represent views of Wise's garden at Elsfield,[1] a small village

use of it, but for nearly the whole of the nineteenth century most numismatists, both in England and abroad, seem to have been unaware of the existence either of the Oxford coin-collection or of Wise's catalogue, and coins published by Wise are still ignored in some compendia.

'Wise's own collection of coins, which went to the Radcliffe Library, passed thence to the Bodleian about a century later. Unfortunately the Radcliffe coins do not appear to have been kept distinct in the Bodleian, and no list of them exists: so that it is only possible to identify, as having belonged to Wise, two or three specimens which he illustrated in his notes on the Bodleian catalogue.'

[1] The two views of Wise's garden (*J. Green del. et sculp.*) were also issued in a separate form. The later engraving of the pond shows a Chinese pagoda erected in it. The view with the cascade, engraved by C. J. Smith after Green, was published by John Murray in 1836 with a facsimile of part of a letter of Wise to Dr. Ducarel, dated 18 Nov., 1742. The garden was evidently well known as it is mentioned in the *Pocket Companion for Oxford* of 1761. Wise's house at Elsfield was for many years the residence of Mr. John Buchan, now Lord Tweedsmuir. The pond still retains its tea-house. See (Bodl.) Gough maps, 26, f. 65^{b}: Oxon a. 42 (35): Oxon a. 77 (12^{a}).

A probable tribute to Wise's interest in, though not perhaps to his knowledge of, antiquities is the inscribed altar to Jupiter still standing in this garden. Though the altar itself may be ancient, the inscription is certainly a forgery, as is patent from its character and the form of the letters. The inscription was, no doubt, inspired by the Roman altar to Jupiter found at Dorchester in 1731 (*C.I.L.*, VII, no. 83); the dedicator is in each case a *beneficiarius consularis*, and in each case also the less usual abbreviation B.COS. is used. See Haverfield, *Arch. Journ.* XLIX (1892), 187, no. 89: *Ephemeris Epigraphica*, IX (1913), 681, no. 1365, 'descripsi et damnavi; damnavit ectypo viso Mommsen.'

three miles from Oxford situated on a hill overlooking the Thames Valley and approached through Marston by a straight and rather steep road which, on reaching the village and its purpose fulfilled, winds bracken-margined along the side of the hill. Elsfield lies as peacefully in its sylvan setting as it did a century and a half ago, but Marston is already doomed. Thrusting roads from the direction of Oxford converge on all sides, and the low-lying meadows which in spring were once yellow with cowslips, and thickets which but two or three years since were the haunt of the blackcap and the nightingale, are now being reclaimed and devoted with all possible speed to the higher purposes of man.

Wise first became interested in Elsfield about 1738, and obtained a lease of some land from the Earl of Guilford. What Wise particularly valued was ' a little piece of ground, which had formerly been a garden, with two ponds in it,' and in a less degree ' a marshy bit of ground heretofore a pond, now a spinney, lying at the bottom of Homestead Close.' This little piece of ground, which belonged to property leased to a certain William Morris, ' it was thought no injury to defalcate ' and include in Wise's lease. Some peddling attorney, however, had ' unadvisedly ' made its reversion expectant on the death of Morris. Wise therefore asked his Lordship that when a new lease was drawn up, the piece of land might be attached to it unconditionally. This seemingly unpromising property was gradually and lovingly developed into an elaborate garden. The merits of the defalcation are not to be determined, but all true gardeners will share Wise's distaste of reversions expectant since any limitation of years is intolerable to those who, ever hopefully looking forward from season to season, feel in themselves ' bright shoots of everlastingness.'

In the *Life of Hearne* (1772) it is stated that Wise as an amusement spent his time ' in forming an elegant Garden, which, though a small piece of Ground, was diversified with every object in Miniature that can be found in a larger Scale in the most admired Places of this Kingdom.' The garden is described by Thomas Warton as fitted up in a singular manner, but with great taste ; and more particularly by Dr. Huddesford who, after stating that it was laid out in a whimsical but pleasing manner, continues, ' In this little spot, of a few acres, you was surprized with ponds, cascades, seats, a triumphal arch, the tower of Babel, a Druid temple, and an Ægyptian pyramid. Those buildings which were designed to resemble the structures of antiquity, were erected in exact scale and measure, to give, as far as miniature would permit, an exact idea of the edifices they were intended to represent.' Fortunately the engravings which Wise included in his *Catalogus* reveal a more attractive prospect. One represents a ruined arch through which a cascade falls into a pool enclosed by stone pavements and bordered on either side by plants and shrubs. The other shows a natural pond fringed with trees between which, in the valley, can be seen the

spires of Oxford with the dome of the Radcliffe Library conspicuous among them.[1]

It was at the Hermitage at Elsfield that Wise entertained at various times Samuel Johnson. Thomas Warton, in a communication to Boswell, refers to its beautiful situation, and says that Johnson was much pleased with Mr. Wise and his library which was well stored with books in Northern literature. He records that 'one day Mr. Wise read to us a dissertation which he was preparing for the press, intitled, 'A History and Chronology of the fabulous Ages.' Some old divinities of Thrace, related to the Titans, and called the Cabiri, made a very important part of the theory of this piece; and in conversation afterwards, Mr. Wise talked much of his Cabiri. As we returned to Oxford in the evening, I out-walked Johnson, and he cried out *Sufflamina*, a Latin word which came from his mouth with peculiar grace, and was as much as to say, *Put on your drag chain*. Before we got home, I again walked too fast for him; and he now cried out, 'Why, you walk as if you were pursued by all the Cabiri in a body.'

The first visits of Johnson were made in 1754 at a time when his Dictionary was almost ready for publication. Johnson had entered Pembroke College in 1728 where he remained in continuous residence for one year only. Owing to poverty his University course was not completed, and he never proceeded to a degree. The publication of the Dictionary was eagerly awaited by the literary world, and it was thought in learned circles that the University ought to confer the degree of M.A. on Johnson by diploma. In this matter Wise took a prominent part, and on 14 December, 1754, wrote the following notable letter to his friend Thomas Warton:

> 'I have considered on what you mentioned to me at the President's, and think that it would be more apropos, and more to Mr. Johnson's good liking, if the University honours were sent him before his book is published, that he may be able to write himself A.M. in the title page. I wish you would hint this to him as soon as you can, and enquire in what forwardness his work is. I shall hardly be in Oxford till after the holidays now coming on; but when I return, will sollicit the affair to the utmost, and draw up the form of Diploma, unless you choose to do it. It is in truth doing ourselves more honour than him, to have such a work done by an Oxford hand, and so able a one too, and will shew that we have not lost all regard for good letters, as has been too often imputed to us by our enemies.'

[1] It is this view of Oxford from Wise's garden that has been adopted as the cover-vignette for *Oxoniensia*, the Society having been given gracious permission by Lord Tweedsmuir to reproduce it from a book-plate made for him by the late Mr. E. H. New.

The degree was conferred by diploma, dated 20 February, 1755, and Johnson requested Warton ' to pay to Mr. Wise such returns as I ought to make for so much kindness so little deserved.'

Long afterwards the friendship of Warton and Wise was to have a very unfortunate sequel. In 1772 Warton published a life of Sir Thomas Pope, founder of Trinity College, and quotes from certain contemporary documents, some of which he states were transcribed by Strype and copied by Wise, others transcribed by Wise himself. The President of Trinity, Dr. Blakiston, in an article contributed to the *English Historical Review* in 1896 comes to the conclusion that both the Strype and the Wise transcripts were fabrications of Warton. Even if Wise had not been an honourable man it is quite safe to say that he had neither the historical knowledge nor the literary skill to perpetrate that kind of fraud. Thomas Warton, Professor of Poetry and Camden Professor of Ancient History, had the necessary qualifications.

Wise's interests henceforth were to be divided between linguistic and mythological studies. His preoccupation with King Alfred had naturally attracted him to the study of Anglo-Saxon, and there were in the Bodleian some famous Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, the chief of which was Caedmon. This particular interest is shown in his correspondence with two well known scholars of that time, Charles Lyttleton, Dean of Exeter, and Edmund Lye, the author of *Dictionarium Saxonico et Gothico-Latinum*. In his general correspondence Wise shows no trace of diffidence : it was to Dr. Lyttleton alone that he confessed to any shortcomings in scholarship. Speaking of Anglo-Saxon, Wise says, ' My own knowledge of the Saxon is very superficial, for when I learnt it I was in too great an hurry to study it grammatically, a fault I am too sensible of at present. And besides I am an utter stranger to the kindred languages, viz., Gothick and Cimbrick ; without which a person can never be master of the other. . . . I will look over it once more and will send you my own translation, which may possibly be of some use. But you shall promise not to be too severe upon me, or to expose my blunders to any body else, for whoever blunders in translating the Saxon, must necessarily blunder more egregiously, than in any other language I am acquainted with.' As regards Anglo-Saxon studies at Oxford in 1744 Wise regretted to say that there was then no one in the University who professed to understand ' our ancient mother tongue.' Just ten years later Wise was able to report to Edmund Lye a change for the better. ' There is a good disposition,' he writes, ' in some of the young people of the place towards the Northern languages ; tho' they have as yet made but little progress in them, but without doubt would make a great deal, if they had but the countenance of two or three leaders here, to keep them from being laughed out of the study. As you are at the head of this sort of learning, it would be but kind in you to

spend a few weeks among us now and then, and set us forward by your example.'

The new interest in Anglo-Saxon studies is shown in the re-issue at Oxford of some of the original sheets of Junius's edition of Caedmon's *Genesis* (1655) with two pages of notes dated March, 175$\frac{8}{9}$, and ascribed to Edward Rowe Mores. The originator seems to have been Richard Rawlinson who, in a letter to George Ballard dated 23 January, 1754, states, ' The little regard paid to the specimen of Caedmon, shewn at the Society [of Antiquaries] soon after Christmas 1752, made me throw it aside, and I am yet convinced, however prepossession in favour of any thing may carry a person, yet that it will not be accomplished any ways.' Arrangements were also made for the engraving of the plates, but at the end of February Rawlinson informed Ballard that the affair was over so far as the Society of Antiquaries was concerned. It was then suggested that Edmund Lye, ' the properest man living ' for the task, should undertake the publication of the text with a translation, a project much favoured by Wise. The proposed edition, however, was never published. A more hopeful sign of the revival of English studies was the endowment by Rawlinson of a chair in Anglo-Saxon, but, as one of the conditions was that no appointment should be made for forty years from that date, Wise never lived to see its realization.

In 1756 pessimism was again dominant. Wise wrote to Dr. Lyttleton that it was ' a melancholy consideration to be left alone in a place of learning to keep up the face of Saxon literature.' He deplored that Dr. Hickes had often erred in his translations of Caedmon which were moreover ' paraphrastical as if he designed that young beginners should be but little the better for them.' He urged Edmund Lye to translate Caedmon ' strictly verbatim by setting every Latin word over against the place of the Saxon,' and threatened that if Lye did not translate Caedmon he would do it himself. Wise had so far forgotten his own slender knowledge of Anglo-Saxon as to tell Dr. Lyttleton that when Lye's translation appeared he proposed to publish with it something of his own, a sort of Critique upon the Saxon Poetry. About four years later the prospect was so depressing that Wise looked upon himself as the last of a line, and informed Rowe Mores that when he died the study of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford would probably die with him, and that his executors had been instructed to make the disaster complete by using his Anglo-Saxon collections as a funeral pile. It must be added that Wise's linguistic studies were not confined to Anglo-Saxon : he surveyed a much wider field. He held that the language of the Goths, who were certainly of Asiatic extraction, was the old Cimmerian ; and that, as all languages derived from Noah, there was no difficulty in establishing affinity between the Chinese, Darien, and Irish-Scots languages—which only means that Wise willingly accepted the linguistic theories popularly current in his day.

In 1759 Wise published his sixth work, *Some enquiries concerning the first inhabitants, language, religion, learning, and letters of Europe. By a Member of the Society of Antiquaries in London*, signed at the end, F.W.R.L., *i.e.*, ' Francis Wise, Radcliffe Librarian.' The pamphlet sets out to prove that Europe was peopled from Scythia, and that the first colonists were the Cimmerians. There is also a long discourse on the Cabiri, those mysterious Grecian deities about whom nothing certain is known even to this day. Wise believed them to be the Gods who took the oath of confederacy when Jupiter levied war against the Titans. He also notes that ' our own language, which still retains great marks of antiquity, will afford us a word, not yet quite disused, of the same sound and meaning, and evidently a relick of the Pelasgic ; *viz.*, Gaffer or Fellow, from the Saxon Geferia socius, and that from the Hebrew Chabar, or Chavar, by an usual change of the labial letter.' As modern research has got no further with the identity of the Cabiri this simple choice, Gods or Gaffers, still remains. Wise also advanced the theory that all languages were derived from Hebrew, that the Titan language was universal in Europe, and denied man the credit of inventing letters since these were ordained by some secret decree of Providence.

The book was reviewed in *The Monthly Review* of December, 1758, by no less a person than Oliver Goldsmith, who grants the author extensive learning adorned with candour, good sense, and modesty, but he has to add, ' we see through what regions of conjecture, doubt, and palpable obscurity, our truly inquisitive Author has explored his way. He catches every gleam of light that an extensive acquaintance with the antients can afford him, but he often, however, seems to have a favourite hypothesis in view, by which, we doubt, he is biassed somewhat from that truth he professes to investigate.' The writer in *The Critical Review* was not so favourably impressed. ' What then are we to expect ' he writes, ' from such a performance as that which now lies before us ? At best, but an unnecessary profusion of learning, and a series of ingenious conjectures ; lights that serve only to render the darkness more visible.' His general opinion was that the author was overspread with Cimmerian darkness, and had taken a great deal of pains to very little purpose.

Warned by past experience Wise had no illusion about a great sale. He modestly stated that he hoped to get sufficient subscribers to pay for the paper. Notwithstanding that the work was published at the rather high price of six shillings, the sales showed a loss of £28. Wise informed a correspondent that he was determined never to appear in print again. ' Booksellers ' he lamented ' will not meddle with any book of deep learning, because it will not sell ; and I am resolved to publish nothing more at my own expense.'

Wise had now been Radcliffe Librarian for ten years. Very little is known

about the early growth of the library. The first accession of any importance appears to have been a collection of pamphlets presented in 1749 by Mr. Bartholomew of University College. Rawlinson refers to the gift in a letter to Humphrey Owen, Bodley's Librarian, 'We heard a report here' he writes 'of an offer to Dr. Radcliffe's Library of 50,000 pamphlets, but I suppose the Trustees will not accept of such trash.' In 1754 a collection of printed books formed by James Gibbs, the architect of the Radcliffe Library, was received by bequest, and the valuable Fraser Collection of Oriental manuscripts was purchased in 1758. The acquisition of the Fraser Collection, which is particularly rich in Persian manuscripts, was suggested by Gregory Sharpe to Thomas Hunt, Laudian Professor in Arabic. Sharpe in the preface to his edition of Hyde's *Dissertationes* (1767) refers in warm terms of thanks to the Trustees who had secured such Eastern treasures for the University. The Sale Collection of Sanskrit manuscripts was purchased in 1760, and a miscellaneous collection of printed books was received from Richard Frewin by bequest the year following.

The acquisition of the Bartholomew, Gibbs, and Fraser collections seems to have resulted in little activity on the part of the Librarian, and protests began to be made. The acting Trustee at this time was Mr. Cartwright, a friend of the Earl of Guilford. In August, 1758, Wise wrote to the Earl saying that he proposed to make Mr. Cartwright a present of a copy of *Some Enquiries* whether he was a subscriber or not. This generous gesture was to give visible proof of the Librarian's intellectual activity and to indicate that he was really fulfilling Dr. Radcliffe's intention much better by writing learned works than by having 'the charge of a Library full of books that no body will read.' The great empiricist's independence of book-learning is well known, and has inspired at least one biting epigram. Nevertheless he might have preferred that his first Librarian should fulfil his obligations rather than add to the number of books already in existence.

Eight months later the situation had developed into a general quarrel. Wise held that the Trustees were concerned only with the building, and that nobody yet had anything to do with the library but himself. The Vice-Chancellor looked upon the Radcliffe Library as a University institution which should be freely accessible to its members. Wise, well aware of the inconvenience of admitting readers, naturally determined to keep them out. In this attitude he was surprisingly supported by the Lord Chief Justice, one of the Trustees, who advised him to put a padlock on the library, which he accordingly did. The Vice-Chancellor immediately ordered it to be removed by the locksmith, who, bending before superior authority, obeyed. Wise then employed another smith to replace the padlock and sent word to the Vice-Chancellor's man that he would take legal action against anyone who should break it open. The threat

was met by the Vice-Chancellor's breaking it open himself and sending it back to Wise. The padlock was accompanied by a letter :

> ' Revd. Sir,
>
> I was informed this morning that you had clapt a Padlock on *our* Radcliffe Library. I sent to you to desire you to come to me : and you refused to obey. This is to acquaint you, that if you dont come, and ask my pardon for this strange, and unprovok'd Insult on me, and the whole University, I shall cite you into my Court next Term. I am farther told that you threaten'd to bring an action against any one who should break open your padlock, be pleased to look into Statute XXI §1. I have done it by my authority.
>
> I am Yours
>
> Tho. Randolph, Vice-Chan.'

' Written in the true style of a Vice-Chancellor,' remarked Mr. Wise.

The Radcliffe Librarian had certainly one good excuse for his passive attitude in that there were as yet no statutes governing the Library. The Trustees desired Mr. Cartwright to negotiate the affair, an acceptable suggestion to Wise who believed him to be more favourably disposed towards himself than were some of the others. No statutes were promulgated in Wise's lifetime. Their prefiguration exists in a volume in the University Archives entitled *Statuta Bibliothecae Radcliffianae*. They consist of the Bodleian statute altered to suit the needs of the Radcliffe. One interesting detail is that ' if a Bell should be placed in the new library, the original [statute] may be preserved. If not, the Bodleian Bell might serve both Libraries.' It is true that the Bodleian bell, which was presented by Sir Thomas Bodley, and which is now rung daily at 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., can be heard distinctly in the Radcliffe Camera. Wise was particularly anxious to know whether the Statutes would exact a rigorous attendance on the part of the Librarian because his age and infirmities would not permit him to perform the duty of a younger person. Mr. Cartwright thought that the sum of £15 might be assigned to the appointment of a Sub-Librarian. To this welcome offer Wise replied that he would not grudge to add as much more to provide a second deputy, ' for constant attendance is too much for any one person.' The deputies were never secured ; there are limits even to the self-sacrifice of Sub-Librarians. The situation was summed up in a satirical announcement which appeared in some of the London papers :—

> ' Dec. 9, 1762, died the Rev. *Solomon Wise*, greatly regretted by the studious part of the University of Oxford. His death was occasioned by a violent cold, contracted by too close attendance on the duties of his respective offices in the Bodleian and Radcliffe libraries.'

In a letter dated 6 July, 1763, Wise complained to the Earl of Guilford that a cry was going up at Oxford, 'We want to see the Books!' and expressed his regret that Sir Walter Bagot, one of the Trustees, gave support to it. Wise very reasonably and moderately observed that if persons wanted to see books there were plenty in the Bodleian to satisfy their curiosity. As regards regular personal attendance he had already stated that this could not be undertaken by him, and had informed the Vice-Chancellor that he had no power to appoint even a doorkeeper to the Library, much less a deputy; nor could he know who had the power till they were pleased to give him some statutes. Nevertheless it may fairly be conceded that as the Radcliffe could be plainly seen from the Librarian's hill-side retreat at Elsfield he was in a good position to give it just the amount of supervision circumstances demanded. Some sixty years later a distinguished orientalist, August W. von Schlegel, gave the learned world a glimpse of the Fraser Collection. He had made a fruitless inquiry at the Bodleian about a manuscript of the *Ramayana*. It was then suggested that the search should be extended to the Radcliffe. 'There,' Schlegel continues, 'some scattered and torn sections of a manuscript, covered with dirt, the leaves all in confusion, were at length produced from some long forgotten press. Alas! what disorder was there. Nothing in greater confusion could have come forth from the Sibyl's cave when the leaves on which her oracles are written have been swept by a sudden gust of wind into every quarter of the sky.' Among the debris was a portion of the *Ramayana*, 'exemplar unicum et rarissimum in litteris Sanscritis.'

Industrious antiquary as he was Wise found that his determination to publish nothing more could not be maintained. In October, 1763, he informed Edmund Lye that friends had prevailed upon him 'to print another (book) of the same size with the last, upon promise of being indemnified.' 'They propose' he continued, 'to contribute a Guinea each, for which they are to have two books; the one bound, the other stitched, and that but a few shall be printed, about Fourscore. So that there will be none to be given away; nor any to come into the hands of booksellers.' He had, however, offered it to the booksellers, who told him, 'They durst not venture upon any work of deep learning, but if I would write such a book as *Tristram Shandy* they would be very glad to publish it,' an answer which Wise said he found to be unanswerable. 'The decay of learning' he informed the Earl of Guilford, 'is not to be ascribed wholly to the indolence of students, but in great measure to the corrupt taste of the age, which is turned to Pamphlet reading, Novels, Magazines, and the like: whereas true learning must be drawn from antiquity, the fountain head. And this is what an University ought to encourage.' Such a dismal state of affairs turned Wise's thoughts to the endowment of research. 'It is observed,' he

writes 'by an author now living, "That no people give greater rewards to men of learning than the English; at the same time, none are so injudicious in the distribution of them" some being overloaded with rewards, while others receive none at all. Munificence to learning is certainly the greatest honour of a king; but with submission I think His Majesty overdid the matter, when he subscribed £200 towards collating the Hebrew MSS.[1] What I propose is of a more private nature, *viz.*, That Ld. L—— should obtain from the King £100 by way of a privy purse, to assist Two or Three ingenious scholars in publishing their books; I dont mean new editions of old authors, for that is the province of booksellers, but such pieces as contain some new discoveries, in any branch of literature. This I think would raise a spirit of emulation in our youth; and we might hope to see them every year exerting their talents one way or other.' He then introduces to his Lordship's notice his new book, *The History and Chronology of the fabulous ages considered*, and explains, 'The Fabulous History is well known; but has all the appearance of a wild, uncultivated desert, for want of the Chronology, which was never yet settled. For what Sir Isaac Newton has done in this way, is not at all regarded by true scholars.' The book, which was published in 1764, was not reviewed in any of the magazines. The Preface states that it was rejected by the bookseller; was below the patronage of the great; and above an eleemosynary subscription; and, it is to be feared, beneath the notice of the public.

The intellectual activities of Wise cease with *The Fabulous Ages*. Though little of his work had the quality of permanence, his edition of Asser was accepted until recent years as a piece of sound scholarship, and his views on the date and origin of the White Horse are quoted with respect in the Victoria County History. His excursions into remote fields of learning were rather occasions of intellectual adventure than opportunities for careful exploration, and, as his confession to Dr. Lyttleton shows, he built on insecure foundations. 'Inadequate' might be his epitaph. Perhaps his chief claim to remembrance lies in what he did to secure honour for a great Englishman.

There is little more to record. For some years Wise had been harassed by the gout and failing eyesight. He had by this time said farewell to his hobbies of coin-collecting and classical antiquities. Only his garden remained. Most of his time was spent in what he called his Hermitage at Elsfield. He corresponded very little with his friends, and his last recorded letter is one addressed to Dr. Ducarel on 21 April, 1766:

> 'You require from me a line at a time when I was never less able to write. I am quite broken down with age and the gout: a cripple in every

[1] George III subscribed £200 towards the cost of collating the Hebrew MSS. of the Bible undertaken by Benjamin Kennicott. Kennicott succeeded Wise as Radcliffe Librarian.

limb; weak, short-breathed, &c., so that I am reduced to the condition of a snail; can crawl about a little in my garden in Summer-time; but was confined all last Winter within-doors. What is worse, my eyes, the last comfort, begin to fail me, and grow worse every day; my memory is a little impaired; but my senses, I thank God, are otherwise as well as can be expected. I am always glad to hear that Learning flourishes and meets with encouragement, but can no longer contribute to its support. You are of a happier constitution, and have many more years to come; and I heartily wish you all health and success in the prosecution of your studies. This short epistle is the labour of two days; and I presage will be the last that you will receive from, dear Doctor, your most affectionate and literally old friend, Francis Wise.'

He enjoyed two more summers in his garden. Francis Wise died on 6 October, 1767, and was buried at Elsfield, but, at his own request, no stone marks his resting place. That he might be rescued from the iniquity of oblivion the President and Fellows of Trinity College seventy years later erected in the chancel of the church a monument to his memory on which only his offices are recorded, '*de doctrina eius et moribus silet marmor, testantur opera.*'

BIOGRAPHICAL TABLE

1695 June 3. Born at Oxford.
1711 Matriculated from Trinity College.
1717 Took degree of M.A.
1719 Fellow of Trinity College.
Sub-Librarian, Bodleian Library.
1721 Ordained priest.
1722 Published *Annales rerum gestarum Ælfredi Magni auctore Asserio Menevensi.*
1723 Presented to the curacy of Wroxton.
1726 Received the donative of Elsfield.
Elected Keeper of University Archives.
1727 Proceeded to the degree of B.D.
1729 Unsuccessful candidate for the Bodleian librarianship.
1736 Published *Epistola de nummo Abgari regis.*
1738 Published *A Letter to Dr. Mead* (dated 21 December, 1738)
1743 Published *Further observations on the White Horse.*
1745 Accepted living of Rotherfield Greys.
1746 Resigned Sub-Librarianship.
1748 Elected Radcliffe Librarian.
1750 Published *Nummorum scriniis Bodleianis reconditorum Catalogus.*
1758 Published *Some enquiries concerning the first inhabitants of Europe.*
1764 Published *The history and chronology of the fabulous ages considered.*
1767 October 6. Died at Elsfield.

FRANCIS WISE

AUTHORITIES

Letters of Francis Wise

Bodleian Library.

To Dr. Charlett (1720). MS. Ballard 30, ff. 108–110.
To George Ballard (1731–42). MS. Ballard 40, ff. 63–75.
To Thomas Carte (1738). MS. Carte 240, f. 256.
To Dr. Ducarel (1757). MS. Eng. misc. c. 75, f. 34.
To Browne Willis and George North (1740–5). Gough Berks 5 (at end).
To William Blackstone (1757–8). Gough adds. Oxon 4° 216, ff. 38–42[a].
To Francis North (1722–36). MS. North d. 4, ff. 2–5, 16, 21–2, 30, 43–4, 51 116, 119–20.
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