

T. J. WISE AT THE TURNBULL

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mrs Todd and I arrived, as some of you know, just several days ago, and it was indeed a fine introduction both to Wellington and especially to the Turnbull Library to discover on the plane coming down from Auckland the NAC Airline Review featuring the Turnbull Library. I picked up one dog-eared copy and Professor McKenzie arrived at my hotel Monday evening with another copy, both of which perhaps I should leave here as mementoes to be ensconced somewhere in the Library shelves, if they are not already there. I rather suspect it is unnecessary to discourse at any length on T. J. Wise beyond some few generalisations by way of reminder. Having done that I then thought I should certainly indicate what impressions I have now of the immense library here, more especially as it relates to Wise. It must be understood in this part of my talk that I am speaking of an infinitesimal part of the library, a library at the time of Mr Turnbull's death ranging beyond 50,000 volumes, of which 50,000 I have been concerned with only fewer than two score books. Thirdly I thought I might consider with you at some greater length, since you would be less familiar with the topic, the John Henry Wrenn Library at Austin, Texas. There are as I now know, certain peculiar affiliations between our holdings in Texas of Wise and your holdings here (I use the term 'affiliation' both in its bibliographical sense and in its wider context).

Mr Taylor, your former librarian, visited us in 1960 at the University of Texas, and I still distinctly remember his appearance there. With all the attractions that we had to offer him he indicated to me right off that he wanted to see only one thing—the John Henry Wrenn Library. Thus in effect I am returning Mr Taylor's visit, somewhat belatedly, but better late than never.

As for Wise, here is a man of such eminence that he is recorded for all time and posterity in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, recorded there, in the elliptical phraseology which introduces every biographical sketch therein, as a book collector, bibliographer, editor and forger. Since that account was written for the *DNB* one must add to those several designations vandal and thief. I will expatiate a little further on these other aspects of his career, more especially as they relate, not to your library, fortunately, but certainly to the British Museum and certainly also again to the Wrenn Library at Texas. We must also recall that, while he is now known as forger, and more recently as vandal and thief, at least in the '20s Wise was the foremost bibliophile in the United Kingdom—indeed anywhere; he was the supreme bibliographical pontiff on all matters whatsoever. He had an air of infallibility about