

WISE VICIOUSLY ATTACKS HIS BENEFACTOR

John S. Wise, a member of the distinguished Virginia family of that name, is writing for the Saturday Evening Post a series of articles entitled "Echoes of Greatness." In a recent number Mr. Wise devotes his attention to William McKinley. While Mr. Wise describes Mr. McKinley as having been, personally, a very attractive man, he makes it plain that he was greatly disappointed because Mr. McKinley did not appoint him to the office of United States attorney for the southern district of New York.

According to the story told in the Saturday Evening Post, Mr. Wise frankly told Mr. McKinley that he would like the New York position. Mr. McKinley suggested that he obtain the endorsement of Senator Platt who, as is well known to men generally, opposed Mr. McKinley's nomination and who, as evidently well known to Mr. Wise, was not friendly to the ambitions of the latter gentleman. But, to make a long story short, Mr. Wise could not secure Senator Platt's endorsement, and later Mr. McKinley told Mr. Wise that he could not jeopardize the party by antagonizing the New York senator.

Mr. Wise says that as he rose to go he addressed Mr. McKinley thus:

Mr. President your decision is not a surprise to me. I release you from all obligations. I have long since learned how friendship is sacrificed in the game of politics. Platt has something you want. You have something Platt wants. Go ahead with the arrangement. Next time I want something and you and Platt are wrangling I will support Platt if I prize what I want more than I do your friendship. A man is a fool who is sentimental in politics.

Mr. McKinley gave a soft answer to Mr. Wise's heated remarks, but it evidently did not turn away the Wise wrath. Then Mr. Wise says:

Platt's man received the appointment. Some time afterward McKinley gave me a very handsome special appointment, but he knew just what I thought of him. It was this:

He was naturally an amicable man, but exceedingly ambitious—so ambitious that he had no idea of imperiling any personal interest for friendly inclinations. If it was necessary to sacrifice a weak friend to propitiate a powerful enemy, he would not hesitate for one moment to sacrifice the friend. To his powerful friends, on whom he was dependent, he was loyal to the point of doing anything they required, even things which his judgment or his conscience did not approve, but that was only another form of selfishness.

His natural inclination to weaker friends was kindly, and when he might assist them without danger to himself he did so with a show of great generosity. But when doing so called on him to imperil any selfish interest he did not hesitate to leave them in the lurch. Secretary Alger himself experienced this. No man was ever more loyal to McKinley, and he was an excellent secretary of war, but when McKinley found that there was a public clamor against Alger he did not stand by his secretary as he should have done; he sacrificed him for his own benefit without a qualm. In a word, McKinley was nothing like as unselfish a man as he has the reputation of having been; he was much more of a trading politician than he has the reputation of having been; he was not so high as the public estimate places him. Although he was a kind-hearted man, he was a very timid, calculating person, and although, personally, not corrupt, he was under many bad and venal influences. What saved McKinley and will pass his name down to history as a much greater man than he really was is that he had a singularly able coterie of men about him, and presided over the destinies of this nation when our people were more prosperous, more virile, more ready to work out their own destiny and achieve their own glory, than they ever had been before or may ever be again.

It will occur to a great many people, that even according to Mr. Wise's own statement he was pretty well treated by Mr. McKinley. In Mr. Wise's own language:

Mr. McKinley gave me a very handsome special appointment. When the war broke out my three boys went wild. The oldest was in the army, and the next two were graduates of the Virginia Military Institute. McKinley promptly commissioned the two latter as captain and first lieutenant in Colonel Pettit's Fourth regiment of Volunteer Infantry. My oldest son he made an assistant adjutant-general with the rank of captain, after Santiago, and afterward major in the Forty-seventh Infantry Volunteers. My second son he made major in the Fourth. He even offered me a brigadier-general's commission.

It would seem that that portion of the Wise family which had "gone republican" was pretty well treated under the McKinley administration. There was no overwhelming popular demand that John S. Wise be made United States attorney for the southern district of New York. To be sure, he had turned his back upon the traditions of an honored family; perhaps not that "thrift might follow fawning," but he certainly

placed a high price upon his devotion to the republican cause when, after having received all of these favors at the hands of William McKinley he stoops to hurl a dart at the memory of his benefactor.

It seems that when John S. Wise turned his back upon his people and his party he abandoned some other Wise characteristics. One could hardly imagine any other member of Virginia's Wise family presenting for the cold gaze of the world the bitter remarks which John S. Wise says he made to the man who conferred upon him and his so many kindnesses.

According to Mr. Wise's own statement, Mr. McKinley gave "a very handsome special appointment" to the father and other important commissions to three of his sons.

Yet to his great benefactor, now dead, John S. Wise pays such "lofty tributes" as these:

"He had no idea of imperiling any personal interest for friendly inclinations."

"If it was necessary to sacrifice a weak friend to propitiate a powerful enemy he would not hesitate for one moment to sacrifice the friend."

"To his powerful friends on whom he was dependent he was loyal to the point of doing anything they required, even things which his judgment or his conscience did not approve."

"When he might assist his weaker friends without danger to himself, he did so with a show of great generosity, but when doing so required of him to imperil any selfish interest he did not hesitate to leave them in the lurch."

"He sacrificed Alger for his own benefit without a qualm."

"McKinley was nothing like as unselfish a man as he has the reputation of having been."

"He was much more of a trading politician than he has the reputation of having been."

"He was a very timid, calculating person, and although personally not corrupt, he was under many bad and venal influences."

It would be difficult for any man to say anything meaner of another man than John S. Wise has said of William McKinley, the man to whom he was so heavily indebted. It was a wretched undertaking when engaged in by a man whose entire family seems to have been provided for by the dead president, now so bitterly assailed.

Many democrats have thought that their party did not greatly suffer when John S. Wise went over to the republicans. Since he has made such vicious thrusts at his dead friend, many of them will conclude that when John S. Wise turned his back upon the party of his fathers he might have sung, in all propriety, in paraphrase of the "patriots" of old: "True democrat am I, for be it understood, I left my party for my party's good."

ORIGIN OF "PUBLIC OFFICE IS A PUBLIC TRUST"

The editor of Harper's Weekly is in a peck of trouble, and all because he undertook to locate the originator of the phrase "A public office is a public trust."

Harper's identified the name of the late Daniel S. Lamont with the phrase under discussion, but being called to account by one of its readers, said:

We did not say that Colonel Lamont was the author of the phrase "Public office is a public trust"—only that he adapted it to fitting use in a Cleveland campaign. The originator, we believe, was the late Governor Hugh S. Thompson, of South Carolina, who first employed the expression in his inaugural address in 1832.

A St. Paul, Minn., reader of Harper's, replying to this latest editorial declaration, says:

Daniel Webster, in a speech in the Odeon, Boston, seventy years ago, said: "It is time to declare that offices created for the people are public trusts, not private spoils."—Volume 1, Works of Daniel Webster, p. 335. It may be that the governor of South Carolina and Colonel Lamont drew their inspiration from the same source.

The man who undertakes to name the originator of the phrase "Public office is a public trust" has assumed a large task. In attributing the origin to Governor Thompson, of South Carolina, Harper's Weekly does not touch the mark. Governor Thompson used it in 1832, perhaps just as Abram S. Hewitt did in 1833 or Daniel S. La-

mont in 1834, as a phrase which had become so general as to justify its use without quotation marks.

Dorman B. Eaton, a New York lawyer, who became widely known by his advocacy of civil service reform, said in 1881: "The public offices are a public trust." But as long ago as May, 1872, Charles Sumner said: "The phrase 'public office is a public trust' has of late become common property."

The St. Paul reader of Harper's correctly says that Daniel Webster declared, "It is time to declare that offices created for the people are public trusts, not private spoils." Mr. Webster delivered that speech October 12, 1835. But on February 13, 1835, John C. Calhoun said: "The very essence of a free government consists in considering offices as public trusts bestowed for the good of the country, and not for the benefit of an individual or a party." So the phrase certainly did not originate with Webster.

Neither did it originate with Calhoun, because years before Burke, in his address on the French Revolution, said: "To execute laws is a royal office; to execute orders is not to be a king. However, a political executive magistracy, though merely such, is a great trust." In the same address Burke said: "All persons possessing any portion of power ought to be strongly and awfully impressed with an idea that they act in trust, and that they are to account for their conduct in that trust to the one great Master, Author and Founder of society." In the same address Burke

said: "In their nomination to office they will not point to the exercise of authority as to a pitiful job, but as to a holy function."

Thomas Jefferson in 1807 said: "When a man assumes a public trust he should consider himself as public property."

But among the claims with respect to the origin of this phrase, those of Matthew Henry are not to be entirely ignored. Matthew Henry was a British divine, who died in 1714. He published a commentary upon the old and new Testaments. In the third chapter of the first Epistle to Timothy, referring to the qualifications of deacons, as well as of bishops, it is said, "and let these, also, first be proved." Commenting on this Matthew Henry said: "It is not fit that the public trusts should be lodged in the hands of any, till they have been first proved and found fit for the business they are to be entrusted with."

Clearly, the phrase did not originate, as Harper's Weekly says it did, with the governor of South Carolina, nor as the St. Paul reader says, with Webster.

Of course, the exact origin is not of the greatest importance, but it is a good sign that public interest has been aroused in phrases of this sort, and whether it comes in the words of Matthew Henry, of Jefferson, of Burke, of Calhoun, of Webster or men of more recent days it is particularly important at this time that elector and elected understand that, as Disraeli put it, "All power is a trust, and we are accountable for its exercise."