Fall 1973

Thomas J. Wise: A Brief Survey of his Literary Forgeries

Thomas J. Gearty Jr.

Florence, 1862, by George Fisk Comfort. From his "Italian Tour Sketch Book" in Syracuse University Archives.

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by Thomas J. Gearty, Jr.

In 1934, a first-rate nonfiction mystery with the unpretentious title of *An Enquiry Into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets* appeared.[1] Two literary detectives, John Carter and Graham Pollard, announced that more than fifty pamphlets by fifteen Victorian literary figures were not what they purported to be, namely, the first issuance in print, or the first separate printing, of a particular poem, short piece of prose work, or a dramatic work.

British and American collectors had sought out these pamphlets for their scholarly, aesthetic, sentimental, and monetary value. A desire to collect early editions of the books of popular modern authors who had given their personal attention to the printing and presentation grew rapidly during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Many of these works acquired a monetary value that was higher than that of later editions which contained corrected texts.

Not all of the pamphlets were first brought under question by Messrs. Carter and Pollard. Suspicion arose toward some of them as far back as the later years of the nineteenth century. Commenting on George Eliot's *Brother and Sister: Sonnets* (1869), J.H. Slater noted that "this work is supposed to be a fictitious and ante-dated edition." He also wrote concerning Swinburne's *Siena* (1868): "A pirated reprint is occasionally to be met with. . . . There is no doubt that many of these forged copies are on the market."[2] Thomas J. Wise, editor of "Notes on Recent Book Sales" for *The Bookman* (London), challenged those remarks about *Siena,* in his review of Slater's book: "The 'masterly pirated reprint' of 'Siena' . . . is a creation of the author's (*i.e.,* Slater's) fancy, these 'forged copies' being none other than examples of the first published edition of the pamphlet."[3]

Wise was a renowned bibliographer and book collector of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as well as a reviewer and editor of *The Bookman*'s "Notes." He was held in high esteem by his contemporaries, and was accepted in literary and intellectual circles as a respected scholar. He was president of

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Mr. Gearty is a candidate for the Ph.D. degree in the Humanities Program at Syracuse University.

[1] John Carter and Graham Pollard, *An Enquiry Into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets,* London: Constable & Co Ltd, 1934; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934.

[2] *Early Editions,* London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., 1894, pp. 125, 294.

[3] *The Bookman,* (London), May 1894, p. 50

The Bibliographical Society from 1922 to 1924, and in 1926 received an honorary Master of Arts degree from Oxford University. His library is kept intact in a room off the King's Library Gallery in the British Museum.

But Thomas J. Wise also was a forger and a thief who stole leaves from books in the collection of the British Museum. David Foxon[4] surmised that Wise began the thefts in the 1890s to replace leaves missing from books in his own collection. Then, when he began to supply John Henry Wrenn, an American collector and friend of Wise, with plays from the Jacobean and Caroline periods and from the Commonwealth Interregnum, he took more leaves to complete the copies supplied to Wrenn. Most of the leaves stolen from museum copies which Wrenn received were acquired by him between August 1901 and July 1903.

About 206 leaves were stolen from forty-four books (thirty-nine different titles) printed from 1600 to 1659. Wrenn obtained fifty to sixty leaves and Wise acquired ninety for himself. Fifteen more leaves are untraced but may be in the Wrenn copies, and of another forty-one untraced, some may have been discarded.

Wrenn and Wise accepted the practice of making up copies of books. If Wise acquired a work with leaves missing, he held on to it until he acquired another defective copy with different leaves missing. He used both copies to make up a single complete one; in some instances he used three defective copies to make up two copies, keeping the superior copy for himself and supplying Wrenn or another collector with the other one.

The thievery and identity of the thief were discovered in cataloging the Ashley Library, Wise's name for his own collection. It was noticed that the four leaves which were inlaid in the Ashley Library copy of Ben Jonson's *The Case Is Alter'd* (1609) were the very leaves missing from the Museum's copy. Every imperfect copy of Pre-Restoration Drama was then examined, and when any suspicion arose about missing leaves, the Ashley copy was examined.

The copies were checked and positive identifications made in a variety of ways. The early plays which were published in pamphlet form were not held together by being sewn at the fold. Rather, they were "stabbed through the inner margin and held together by thread" which went through the three stab-holes. The distance between the stab-holes varies from book to book; therefore, if a leaf has been removed from one copy and placed in another, its stab-holes will not match. By comparing the stab-holes of a suspected leaf with a leaf from the museum copy, it could be determined that the leaf from the Ashley copy was stolen from the Museum if all stab-holes matched.

Other tests which proved conclusive in determining which leaves were stolen from the Museum's books were applied to the matching of worm-holes,

[4] D.F. Foxon, *Thomas J. Wise and the Pre-Restoration Drama: A Study in Theft and Sophistication,* London: The Bibliographical Society, 1959. The following material on Wise's career as a thief is summarized from this work.

stain patterns, and paper flaws such as wrinkles in the paper which could be looked for in adjacent leaves. In one instance, the torn edge of a leaf under question was matched to the remaining stub in a museum book.

During the late 1950s, Fannie Ratchford, Rare Book Librarian at the University of Texas which houses the library of John Henry Wrenn, took most of the suspected copies in the Wrenn library to England, where she was able to help the Museum check copies to see how many stolen leaves were to be found. A total of sixty was found in the Wrenn copies, and it was suspected that another fifteen leaves which were untraceable at the time may have been in other Wrenn copies not examined in England. It was also noticed that Wise had removed about seventy-nine leaves from copies which later were sent to Wrenn, and had replaced these leaves with inferior ones from his own copies. In most instances, this probably was a result of the agreed-upon practice of making up books, although it can be shown in the case of two books that Wise, acting as Wrenn's agent, bought the books for him from the Rowfant Library and then substituted leaves from his own copies for superior ones which were already Wrenn's.[5] Wise was not above cheating an innocent friend.

Wise is equally famous, or infamous, as a forger. This account in no way presents all of his interesting and varied activities, nor does it present all of the research developed by those who have investigated Wise's activities. It is a brief survey, touching on some of the aspects of Wise's puzzling career and on some of the investigations it has prompted.

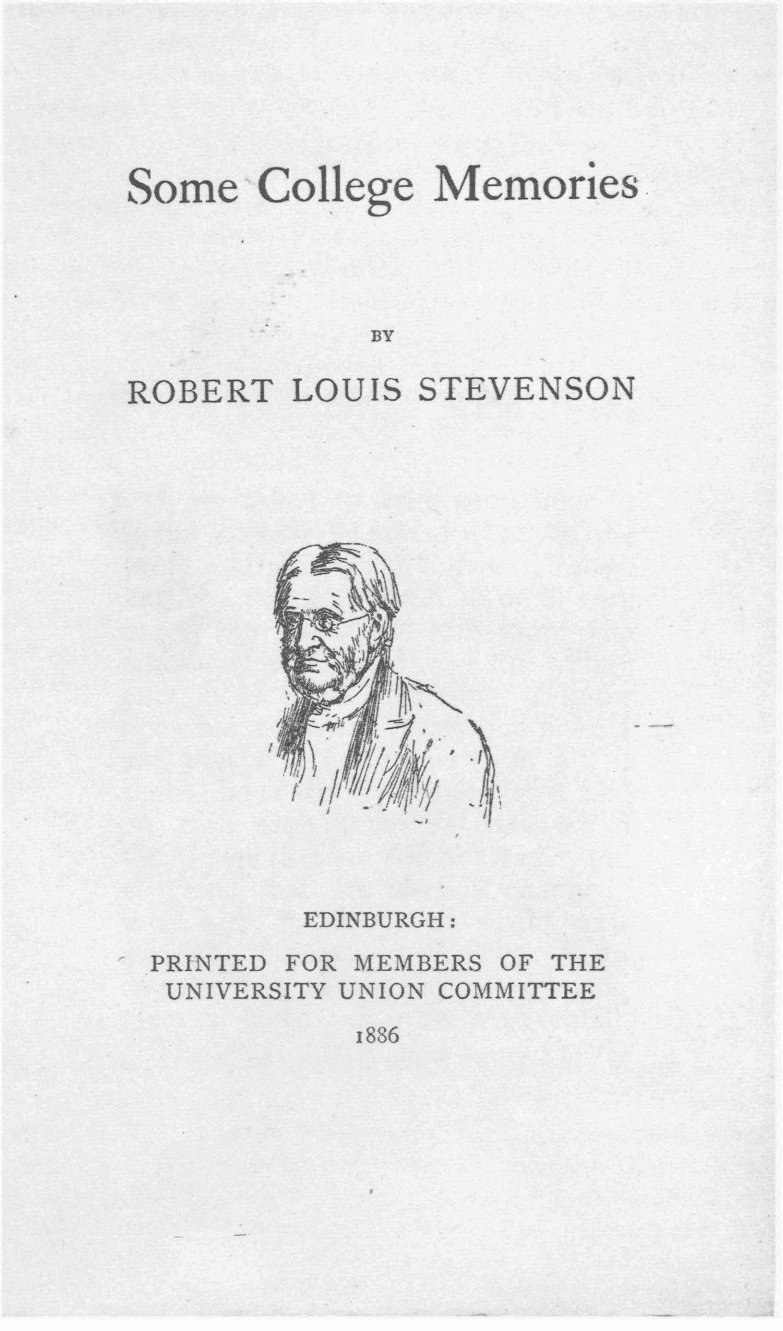
Less than four years after Slater's comments on *Brother and Sister: Sonnets* and Wise's review in *The Bookman, The Athenaeum* carried correspondence in its columns for several issues regarding the accusation by Robert Louis Stevenson's publisher that the separate pamphlet edition of Stevenson's *Some College Memories* (1886) was a pirated reprint. Again Mr. Wise, who with unwarranted assurance announced himself as "the bibliographer of Robert Louis Stevenson," rose to the occasion and pronounced that the pamphlet "was produced under the distinct direction – or permission – of Robert Louis Stevenson.[6]

While this controversy was continuing, another pamphlet was being questioned in *The Athenaeum.* This time Robert Proctor, the expert on early typography and bibliograpy at the British Museum, had doubts about an item in Temple Scott and Harry Buxton Forman's bibliography of William Morris' works where the compilers acknowledged as genuine a separate edition of Morris' *Sir Galahad: A Christmas Mystery* (1858), while assigning another edition of this work to the status of a later unauthorized reprint. Mr. Proctor noted that neither the respective publishers, Mr. Morris' family, nor his friends had any record of such an undertaking.[7]

[5] David Foxon. Letter to the *Times Literary Supplement,* February 17, 1961, p. 105. Subsequently, the *Times Literary Supplement* will be referred to as *TLS.*

[6] *The Athenaeum,* February 5, 1898, pp. 184-185.

[7] *The Athenaeum,* January 22, 1898, p. 118.



Title page of *Some College Memories* by Robert Louis Stevenson, the pirated reprint that sparked the controversy in *The Athenaeum.* From the George Arents Research Library.

In the early years of this century, E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn commented on four Ruskin forgeries among the thirty-nine volumes of *The Works of John Ruskin.* They noted that a collation had proved that *The National Gallery* "belongs to a much later date than 1852" (Vol. 12, p. 396), and they stated that *The Queen's Gardens* (1864) was "set up from the later editions" (Vol. 18, p. 15). They also called into question the authenticity of *Leoni; A Legend of Italy* (1868) in Vol. 1, p. 288, and *The Scythian Guest; A Poem* (1849) in Vol. 2, p. 102. Probably, due to the enormous amount of Ruskin material and the small print of the accompanying notes, the evidence against these pamphlets escaped attention for many years.[8]

These early suspicions, along with other doubts raised over the years by A.W. Pollard and others, including the possibility that the highly valued Reading *Sonnets* might not be quite right, provided Messrs. Carter and Pollard with plenty of evidence for a cooperative investigation.

The enquirers began the narrative of this investigation by recalling how the 1847 *Sonnets* was introduced to a literary world which had always accepted Mrs. Browning's "Sonnets from the Portuguese" as first appearing in the 1850 edition of her collected *Poems.* It was not until November, 1894, that Edmund Gosse related a romantic tale supposedly on the authority of a friend of Robert Browning which seemed to account for the earlier edition of the *Sonnets,* privately printed at Reading in 1847.

Gosse said that at Pisa, "early in 1847," the shy newlywed Elizabeth slipped the sonnets into her husband's pocket and "fled again to her own room." Robert was so overwhelmed by their beauty that he wanted the "treasures not to be kept from the world." Mrs. Browning was finally persuaded to permit her friend Mary Russell Mitford of Reading, "to whom they (the sonnets) had originally been sent in manuscript," to have them printed.[9]

Until Gosse told the story, there had been no knowledge of the pamphlet. There was to be no mention of the printing in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's letters published in 1898; nor is there any reference to it in the correspondence of Mary Russell Mitford. Finally, there is no evidence that Robert Browning ever owned a copy, or at least no copy is accounted for in the sale of the Browning library in 1913.

Edmund Gosse's story was corroborated in part in 1905, however, by Thomas J. Wise who wrote of receiving his copy from Dr. W.C. Bennett, who had obtained it directly from Mary Russell Mitford.[10] This information is

[8] This source is noted in *An Enquiry,* pp. 4-5, and in Percy Muir, *An Autobiography: Minding My Own Business,* London: Chatto & Windus, 1956, p. 91.

[9] This 1894 account is reprinted in the Preface to *Sonnets from the Portuguese,* Portland, Maine: Thomas B. Mosher, 1910, pp. vii-xi.

[10] William B. Todd, "Introduction to the *Browning Library,* 1929"; *Thomas J. Wise: Centenary Studies,* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1959, pp. 56-57, notes that this information appears in the 1905 edition of the *Ashley Library,* I. 155.

related in more detail in 1918 by Mr. Wise in his *A Bibliography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning,* and it is presented in final form in 1929 in his *A Browning Library,* where Wise describes how copies of the *Sonnets* were brought out after high tea consisting of hot buttered toast and sausages.

The enquirers examined the various official accounts of the sonnets' origin presented by Gosse and Wise with another by Harry Buxton Forman. Then they compared the accounts with other data, among which was a letter from Robert Browning to Leigh Hunt giving a different account of the origin of the sonnets. Their investigation showed that the story surrounding the 1847 *Sonnets* was fictitious, and since the "story is indissolubly linked with the book,"[11] the enquirers continued with bolstered confidence.

One method used to investigate the *Sonnets* and other suspected pamphlets was an analysis of their paper content. They were able to prove that twenty-two pamphlets were forgeries because such an analysis indicated that the paper was not manufactured or put into use until a date later than the alleged date of printing.

Typographical analysis provided the enquirers with another means to determine the authenticity of a suspected pamphlet. They called attention to the fact that most of the pamphlets are set in "modern style" type. In addition, they noted that until the 1880s, most of the "modern face" romans have two kerned letters in the lower case, namely 'f' and 'j'; that is, with regard to these two letters, "a portion of the face . . . extends beyond its body." Yet, the enquirers found that sixteen of the pamphlets which were purported to have been printed between 1842 and 1873 and printed in "modern style" Long Primer contained the miniscule 'f' and 'j' with the main stem bent back. During the course of the investigation, it was pointed out to them that the font from which the type for the *Sonnets* was set also contained a question mark peculiar to this particular font.[12] Later, this question mark was to become the key to the identity of the printer. From their study of the typography, Messrs. Carter and Pollard were able to add five new titles to the list (eleven more pamphlets condemned by their typography were already shown to be forgeries by paper analysis). The total number of forgeries was now twenty-seven.

Another test which was conclusive in detecting a forgery was one based on a collation of the text. In some of the works under investigation, the enquirers were able to show that certain pamphlets by Tennyson and Ruskin were printed from a text which did not evolve until later than the suspected forgery. Mention has been made above of the two Ruskin pamphlets which already were proved to be forgeries. The enquirers also were able to show

[11] *An Enquiry,* p. 37.

[12] *An Enquiry,* p. 58. R.B. McKerrow, in his review of *An Enquiry,* cites several examples of works which contain the lower case kernless 'f' and 'j' that were printed years before the earliest date given by the enquirers. But because of the odd question mark used in the font under discussion, the validity of the enquirers' assertions is not changed (*The Library,* fourth series, XV, No. 3 [December 1934], pp. 380-381).

XX

Beloved, my Beloved, when I think
That thou wast in the world a year ago,
What time I sate alone here in the snow
And saw no footprint, heard the silence sink
No moment at thy voice, . . but link by link
Went counting all my chains as if that so
They never could fall off at any blow
Struck by thy possible hand . . . . why, thus I drink
Of life's great cup of wonder. Wonderful,
Never to feel the thrill the day or night
With personal act or speech,—nor ever cull
Some prescience of thee with the blossoms white
Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as dull,
Who cannot guess God's presence out of sight.

Page from the *Sonnets* of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, containing the misprint in line 10 which Wilfred Partington considered further evidence that the Brownings were in no way associated with the publication. The word "the" should read "thee" and Partington maintained that such an oversight in proofreading could not have occurred if the Brownings had been consulted in the publication of the book. From the George Arents Research Library.

similar textual discrepancies among several works by Tennyson. In one, for example, *Ode for the Opening of the International Exhibition* (1862), stanza V, line 10 reads in part, "fruits of earth," yet in three other versions of the ode, also printed in 1862 (two printed later in the year and one printed earlier), the phrase reads "fruits of peace." It was not until the poem was included in the 1872 edition of Tennyson's works that "fruits of earth" was printed. Taking into account other textual discrepancies, the enquirers concluded that the pamphlet must have been printed from the 1889 edition of his works.[13]

Messrs. Carter and Pollard were able to condemn definitely two pamphlets by Ruskin and three by Tennyson on the basis of their texts. Of these pamphlets, four were already condemned on the basis of their type or on the basis of both their paper content and their type. Therefore, one more pamphlet was added to the list, bringing the total to twenty-eight.

In addition, the enquirers condemned Swinburne's *Dead Love* (1864) because of a discrepancy in its imprint. The publisher listed on its title page is John W. Parker and Son. They had determined that this imprint was not used later than December, 1860, when it was changed to Parker, Son and Bourn on January 1, 1861. They further reported that "by the end of April, 1863, Parker had already made arrangements for liquidation."[14]

The enquirers had the opportunity to examine Tennyson's *Child Songs* (1880) just as their book went to press. (This pamphlet is not in the Arents Library collection.) From an examination of the type, they have determined that the printer's imprint is false, and that, therefore, this work also must be a forgery.

Four other pamphlets, while probably not falsely dated, were established as "fraudulent and unauthorised productions," and thirteen more were classified as "profoundly suspicious." Finally, there were about two dozen more pamphlets by Swinburne, Tennyson, Morris, and Stevenson which bear resemblances to the forgeries, but the enquirers believed that further investigation was needed. A number of these latter pamphlets have been shown since to be forgeries or piracies.

The next problem facing the enquirers was to identify the printer of the forgeries. They were able to do this only through a "lucky accident." They knew that the hybrid font (containing the odd question mark) could be the property of one printer only, for they believed that "the chances are incalculable against these two special founts becoming mixed in this particular way in more than one printing office." While examining an 1893 type-facsimile reprint of Matthew Arnold's *Alaric at Rome* (1840), edited by Thomas J. Wise, the enquirers recognized the hybrid font; the kernless 'f'

[13] *An Enquiry*, pp. 71-76.

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 270-271. A counterfeit of the forgery is in the Arents Library collection. I was unable at this time to examine the copy in the Mayfield Collection to see whether it is the forgery or the counterfeit.

and 'j' and the unusual question mark were all there. They compared this facsimile with the Reading *Sonnets* and concluded that "both books were printed in exactly the same fount." They knew, then, that the printer of at least sixteen of the forgeries had to be Richard Clay and Sons.[15] (Actually, only fourteen of the sixteen pamphlets contained the odd question mark.)

Upon presentation of the enquirers' evidence, the printing firm admitted that they had printed the pamphlets; however, the firm had not preserved their ledgers before 1911, so they were unable to provide any information regarding the printing assignment. While the enquirers could not prove that the other pamphlets were printed by Clay's firm because the six other fonts from which the pamphlets were printed were not peculiar to any one firm, they were able to demonstrate that Clay did possess the various fonts to print all the condemned pamphlets.

From their study Messrs. Carter and Pollard further concluded that the forgeries were the work of one man because 1) they could all be traced back to one source, 2) more than half of the proven forgeries were printed by one printing firm, while other proved and suspected forgeries were printed in fonts of type used by that printing house, and 3) the formula of the forgeries was unique – the creation of a first separate edition.[16] They did not name that one man because the evidence they had against their suspect, Thomas J. Wise, was circumstantial. Not letting Mr. Wise off, however, they castigated him for his vanity, his gullibility, his dogmatism, and his "shocking negligence" in accepting and giving credence to so large a number of pamphlets which, if he had done the work required of him as a bibliographer, would not have found so prominent a place in the book collecting world.

When *An Enquiry* appeared, there were some who did not know that Wise was the forger. The reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement* commented on the success of the forger's method in deceiving Wise and concluded the review noting that "who the man was who so successfully perpetrated this colossal fraud is a problem which . . . is likely never to find an answer."[17] In his review, R.B. McKerrow remarked, "Unfortunately they have not entirely cleared it up, for to do this would require the discovery of the originator of the frauds, and here they have to confess themselves baffled." Yet, McKerrow does not fail to comment: "If the eminent bibliographer whose name is most frequently mentioned in the volume under discussion had any more intimate connection with these pamphlets than that of being deceived by them, he must have acted in a manner strangely inconsistent with the character of his bibliographical work as a whole."[18]

For the most part, however, those who read the book knew that Wise was the one being singled out for the creation of the forgeries. Gabriel Wells

[15] *An Enquiry,* pp. 63-64.

[16] *Ibid.,* p. 110.

[17] *TLS,* July 5, 1934, p. 472.

[18] McKerrow, *The Library,* p. 383.

Pass under white, till the warm hour returns
With veer of wind, and all are flowers again;
So dame and damsel cast the simple white,
And glowing in all colours, the live grass,
Rose-campion, bluebell, kingcup, poppy, glanced
About the revels, and with mirth so loud
Beyond all use, that, half-amazed, the Queen,
And wroth at Tristram and the lawless jousts,
Brake up their sports, then slowly to her bower
Parted, and in her bosom pain was lord.

And little Dagonet on the morrow morn,
High over all the yellowing Autumn-tide,
Danced like a wither'd leaf before the hall.
Then Tristram saying, 'Why skip ye so, Sir Fool?'
Wheel'd round on either heel, Dagonet replied,
'Belike for lack of wiser company;
Or being fool, and seeing too much wit

Page from *The Last Tournament* showing the kernless f and j, and the alien question mark. From the George Arents Research Library.

wrote a short essay in which he acknowledged that he had "no argument against the allegations advanced, and the facts presented."[19] But Wells doubted that such a venture could have been the work of one individual, and he abhorred the enquirers' "entering upon personalities" (p. 4). Knowing that Wise had been seriously ill and advising him that he should "maintain a dignified silence until he recovered" (p. 11), Wells attempted a meager defense of Wise. In part, this defense helped to lead to the proof needed to show that Wise was the forger, and this proof confirmed Wells's belief that the forger did not act alone – at least in producing one of the pamphlets, Tennyson's *The Last Tournament* (1871).

Charles F. Heartman, the editor of *The American Book Collector,* knowing of Wise's efforts in bringing forgeries to the attention of the public[20] and knowing of his bibliographical work, defended Wise against what he thought were vindictive and revengeful charges, and he even elicited a statement from Wise which was to be printed in Heartman's magazine. Before it could be printed, however, Wise withdrew the statement on advice of Frederick Page of the Oxford University Press, who, while acting in Wise's defense, had called upon the enquirers to discuss the charges against his friend and had come away convinced of his guilt.[21] Soon afterwards, Heartman, "on the strength of written and properly signed statements," convinced himself that Wise was connected with the pamphlets' origin.[22]

Others did not express such early loyalty. Viscount Esher, a collector, had read Wise's weak defense in the *Times Literary Supplement* (May 24, 1934, p. 380 and July 12, 1934, p. 492 – the former one written under Wise's name by Frederick Page) in which Wise stated that he received his copies of the Reading *Sonnets* from Harry Buxton Forman and implied that he received many of the other pamphlets from Forman, also. In addition, Wise had persuaded Forman's son, Maurice, to write letters supporting this position, and he concluded by saying that he would no doubt have something further to say when he read *An Enquiry* with the care it deserved. By August, Esher felt that Wise should have a satisfactory explanation ready.[23]

Since Wise did not come forth with the information himself, his biographer, Wilfred Partington, and others provided much of it. When Wise was in his mid-twenties, he had joined the newly formed Browning and Shelley Societies. In the societies Wise became involved in the production of facsimile reprints of the authors' works which at the time were generally unobtainable in their original editions. In 1886, for the Browning Society,

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[19] *The Carter-Pollard Disclosures,* Garden City, 1934, p. 3.

[20] *TLS,* February 14, 1924, p. 96 and June 13, 1929, p. 474.

[21] John Carter, "Thomas J. Wise and His Forgeries," *The Atlantic Monthly,* February 1945, pp. 95-96.

[22] *The American Book Collector,* V, No. 10 (October 1934), p. 311.

[23] *TLS,* August 23, 1934, p. 577.

Wise edited and provided a prefatory note to a type-facsimile reprint of Robert Browning's *Pauline* (1833). For the Shelley Society, Wise was able to edit many more reprints, such as those of *Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats* (1821), *Hellas, A Lyrical Drama* (1822), and *Address to the Irish People* (1821). The editing of such facsimiles was not highly unusual at the time. Bertram Dobell, the London bookseller, reprinted Shelley's *Alastor* in 1885, before the Society was founded. He joined the Society and reissued *Alastor* and produced another Shelley work, *The Wandering Jew,* for it. Others, such as Harry Salt and H.B. Forman, were also involved in the editing of Shelley facsimiles.

The reprints included a title page stating that the work was a reprint, and it included the Society's publisher's imprint. The printer's imprint, Richard Clay & Sons, was found at the end of the book. After the editor's prefatory note the reprint began and included the original publisher's and printer's imprints; then the text began. There was nothing within the reprinted pages to suggest that the material was a reprint.

Apparently, Wise saw the possibilities available to him for a deception. Already involved with facsimile reproduction, he was one step removed from eliminating the extraneous parts. But to do this would involve producing a counterfeit which could always be compared with the original. Fannie Ratchford points out that it was necessary for Wise to obtain the assistance of someone at Richard Clay & Sons, very possibly at the executive level, who would be willing to approve the printing or to set up the type for a title page without having an original from which to work.[24] There seems to be no way for Wise, or any accomplice, to have accomplished this short of printing the pamphlets himself, and it has already been shown that they were printed by Richard Clay & Sons.

Next, Wise had to provide a market and establish pedigrees for the forgeries. He did this by selling some of them cheaply to provincial book dealers in order to get the origin of the pamphlets removed from himself. He donated copies of the pamphlets to the British Museum, or he had a fellow employee or member of his employer's family sell a copy to the Museum.[25]

One further opportunity came Wise's way when he was appointed editor of "Notes on Recent Book Sales" for *The Bookman.* In this position, he was able to discuss the forgeries and attribute a value to them. Also, in his bibliographies and catalogs of his personal library, Wise introduced titles and provided false provenances for the pamphlets. In addition, he sometimes reproduced a title page or some other part of a pamphlet that he was interested in publicizing in his catalog, and in some instances, reproduced a copy from a friend's library to show that other collectors also had the works.

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[24] *Letters of Thomas J. Wise to John Henry Wrenn: A Further Inquiry Into the Guilt of Certain Nineteenth-Century Forgers,* New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1944, pp. 78-79.

[25] Wilfred Partington, *Thomas J. Wise in the Original Cloth,* London: Robert Hale Limited, 1946, pp. 81-82.

One who did not believe that Wise acted alone in the production and marketing of these pamphlets was Fannie Ratchford. From her reading of *An Enquiry,* of Harry Buxton Forman's 1896 essay entitled "Elizabeth Barrett Browning and her Scarcer Books," and of Maurice Buxton Forman's letters printed in the *Times Literary Supplement,* she concluded that Harry Buxton Forman and others were active participants in the forgeries. Her "evidence against Forman had been formulated and was in completed manuscript"[26] for her edition of *Letters of Thomas J. Wise to John Henry Wrenn* before she saw the incriminating document which linked Forman with Wise in the production of at least one forgery.

This document came to light after Gabriel Wells, in his attempted defense of Wise, noted that the enquirers on page 293 had mistakenly attributed an article by Harry Buxton Forman to Wise. Wells revealed that he had bought the manuscript of the article by Forman in the 1920 Buxton Forman sale.[27]

This reminded Carl Pforzheimer, who owned proofs for this article, to check his material which contained "letters and messages from Forman to Wise" that were returned to Forman by Wise with answers between the lines of Forman's writing.[28] He came upon one incriminating piece in which Forman was questioning Wise about his use of certificates which were vague regarding the number of copies of an item which had been printed. Forman wrote: "The appearance is this – that you are reluctant to say how many are printed; & say 'a few' because some will understand that to mean 3 or 4, some 10 or 12, some 20 or 30, & so on." Wise replied: " 'A few' *means* [strongly emphasized] 'a few', & can mean nothing else!" Forman continued: "There cannot on the face of it be an honest reason for wanting the number printed to be differently conjectured by different people; and it turns out that the appearance is borne out by the fact that, printing 30 (more or less), you want some one to think you only print 10 or 12." Wise commented: "Quite so. And we print 'Last Tournament' in 1896, & want 'someone to think' it was printed in 1871! *The moral position is exactly the same!* But there is no 'dishonesty.' "[29]

Fannie Ratchford found it difficult to believe that Harry Buxton Forman did not recognize that the type used for eleven of the suspected forgeries was identical to that used for his four-volume edition of Percy B.

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[26] From a letter sent by Miss Ratchford to *The Atlantic Monthly* in response to John Carter's review of her *Letters to Wrenn.* Only a small portion of the letter was printed in the magazine, but a copy of the complete text was sent by Fannie Ratchford to George Arents. Another copy of this letter was sent to John Mayfield and is in the Mayfield Library.

[27] *Carter-Pollard Disclosures,* a "postscript" attached between pp. 12 and 13.

[28] *Between the Lines: Letters and Memoranda Interchanged by H. Buxton Forman and Thomas J. Wise,* foreword by Carl H. Pforzheimer, Introductory essay and notes by Fannie E. Ratchford, Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1945, pp. ix-x.

[29] *Ibid.,* Plates 22a-22b.

Shelley's *Poetical Works,* the Shelley poems he had had printed privately, and two of the works he edited for the Shelley Society. Also, she found it suspicious that Wise used Forman's name freely to Wrenn as the provenance of forged pamphlets, but, unlike others whose names Wise used to supply fake provenances, Wrenn met and corresponded with Forman. Surely, she believed, Wise would not take such a chance unless Forman was in on the secret. In addition, she pointed out that "Forman entered, or caused to be entered, in standard bibliographies no less than eleven of the impostors" (*Letters to Wrenn,* p. 98). This was definitely too many pamphlets for one to have sponsored innocently. And when his library was disposed of after his death, thirty-two forgeries plus eleven duplicates were found.

To conclude her case, she recalled that Forman's son stated in a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement,* just before the publication of *An Enquiry,* that Wise received his two copies of the *Sonnets* from Forman's father.[30]

Thomas J. Wise died at his home on May 13, 1937, at the age of seventy-seven.[31] His library was soon offered to the British Museum and purchased by the nation for sixty-six thousand pounds. In October, 1956, Mr. David F. Foxon of the Museum announced in *The Times:* "That Wise was the receiver of stolen goods is now certain; that he knew their origin is almost undeniable; that he himself stole them is probable."[32]

Syracuse University, through the generosity of George Arents and John S. Mayfield, has acquired since the exposure more than forty of the forged titles originally named by Carter and Pollard. In addition, the Library possesses about two dozen more pamphlets which are duplicates, counterfeits of the forgeries, and titles added later to the original list of forgeries. Most notable among the titles in the collection is a copy of the Browning *Sonnets* to which the enquirers gave prominence.[33] Surprisingly, the pamphlets have taken on a value, both monetary and scholarly, which rivals the value the titles had as first editions.

Chauncey B. Tinker, late Professor of English Literature and Keeper of Rare Books at Yale University, notes in his review of *An Enquiry:* "A complete set of these suspected books should be in every great library, so that scholars may have an opportunity to assess the exact amount of mischief that has been done and of misinformation that has been spread abroad in the name of bibliography."[34] Syracuse University has made a great beginning toward achieving this goal.

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[30] *Letters to Wrenn,* pp. 93-107.

[31] The General Register Office, Somerset House, London, lists the cause of Wise's death as 1a) Thrombosis of Cerebral Vessels, 1b) Arterio sclerosis. This was certified by E. Collingwood Andrews, M.D.

[32] October 18, 1956, p. 11.

[33] This pamphlet and all of the other forgeries attributed to Wise and named in the text are in the Rare Book collection of the George Arents Research Library at Syracuse. The few pamphlets mentioned that are not available in the Library are so noted in the text.

[34] *The Saturday Review of Literature,* August 11, 1934, pp. 45-46.