

## Recollections of Andrew W. Mellon

By H. E. C. Bryant

Washington, Dec. 16—The announcement of the United States Board of Tax Appeals that the late Andrew W. Mellon had been found innocent of the charge of income tax fraud did not come as a surprise to newspaper men who knew him well. Mr. Mellon was a rich man, and money-making was not only a business but a pastime with him. He liked to pile up dollars as a sportsman likes to catch fish or kill rabbits, birds, or other game. But persons close to him could not believe that he was dishonest. His antecedents were Scotch. He was a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian, and his bringing up made him thrifty and careful.

On entering the cabinet of President Harding as Secretary

of the Treasury, Mr. Mellon was like an innocent child when in the hands of a drove of eager, aggressive, determined newshawks. I was at the first press conference he had, and I felt sorry for him. He actually trembled when the reporters filed into his office. Fingering a little all-tobacco cigar, about the size of a cigarette, his hand shook so that he could hardly get it to his mouth. Although he had faced all sorts of business men, sharpers and worse, he had no stomach for the correspondents who swarmed about him, but he was friendly, polite and frank. As the weeks passed he became more at ease at such conferences.

I was on the New York World Bureau at the time Mr. Mellon came to Washington to take over the Treasury Department. Duty required frequent visits to him, and some of the questions I had to ask were insolent if not insulting; but I was never turned away empty-handed or mistreated by him.

A story to the effect that Mr. Mellon had agreed to allow certain liquor handlers to have permits for whiskey held by the Government if they would pay off the million and more debt of the Republican National Com-

mittee came to us. The thought of the fourth richest man in the United States entering into such a cheap conspiracy was very difficult for me to swallow. Our bureau was asked from the home office if we could get to the bottom of that report, then in circulation in certain quarters in New York.

The chief of the World Bureau agreed with me that we should not go to Mr. Mellon without more information. The matter was dropped for the time, but in a few weeks it came up again. Once more we decided to pass it up. But soon after that we were informed of the name of the author of the story, and the declaration was made to us that he had seen Mr. Mellon in person on a particular day and taken up the matter of permits for bonded liquor. We had to see Mr. Mellon; we felt it our duty to him as well as to our paper.

I went over and called, told him of the reports, and showed him a telegram giving the latest version. He was not nervous that day. Bracing himself in his chair, and taking a little firmer grip on his tiny smoker with his teeth, he rang the bell for his secretary, and told him to bring in the diary for the date mentioned. Sure enough the name looked for was there, but with

it a notation that the caller wanted to know something about liquor permits and was passed on to Commissioner of Internal Revenue David H. Blair. I went to see Mr. Blair, and his books stated that the man had been told how he and others could get permits for the withdrawal of whisky. At neither office was there any discussion of the Republican committee debt. But the man had achieved his purpose; he went back to New York and offered to sell his influence, and found suckers who took the bait.

The fact that a man of that type had been allowed to call on the Secretary of the Treasury interested me, and I returned to Mr. Mellon. I was told that the fellow was unknown to him and the record showed that he had been presented by a Republican United States Senator. Mr. Mellon had never heard of him before, but received him because a member of Congress had presented him.

From Mr. Mellon I went to the Capitol to interview the Senator, who, in turn, said he knew nothing about the man, but some colleague had asked him to go down and introduce him. When I told the Senator what I knew about the talk in New York, and what Messrs. Mellon

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