

The Crabtree Foundation (Australian Chapter)  
1981 Oration  
*Crabtree: The Political Scientist*

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11 February 1981

I am very sensitive of the honour bestowed upon me by my being propelled into the high office of Orator this year. I am a most unworthy holder of this office. In fact when our President of last year, Prof. W.A.G. Scott, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Monash University announced that, in a Vision, the Great Orator in the Sky revealed to him that I was to be His Earthly Representative this year, a train of thought was started in my mind (as it must have been in yours), which led to severe doubts about the current state of mental acuity of the Great Orator. We must face the fact that He is not getting any younger, and whilst I remain obedient to the Bidding, as one must, I retain my doubts. Serious Doubts. But perhaps for reasons of delicacy I should not pursue this path any further. We are, I remind you, being watched. If I might re-echo the phrase which F.E. Smith, the late Lord Birkenhead, used at the end of one of his many clashes with the hapless Judge Willis, when Willis said in exasperation “Mr Smith, why do you think I am on the Bench?”, I would say with Birkenhead, “It is not for me to question the mysterious workings of Providence, Your Honour .

So, Sirs, unworthy as I may be to comment on our great Founder and Patron, Joseph Crabtree, nevertheless I stand before you, clothed in humility as I approach this profoundest of all subjects with reverence and awe. I am encouraged, however, to venture upon my topic by the sympathetic nature and the maturity of this learned audience, the fellow Members and Guests of this Foundation.

Such is the occasion tonight that we are presided over by none other than the genial ex-Nominee of the Monash University Club and the present Nominee is also here. Soon after the news of the greatness of the honour that had been thrust upon me by Providence became generally I was issued with Monash University Club’s Membership Ticket No. 1, a reproduction of which I wish to table. These are tangible proofs of the growing stature of this Foundation and of the gratifying impact which it is now having on the community around it. And, if I may depart from my printed text, the release yesterday, by the Melbourne emporium Buckley’s, in the “Age” “Melbourne Living” section, of the details of their Crabtree and Evelyn range of comestibles and toiletries, on the Tuesday nearest to the Crabtree Oration is yet another sign of the respect in which this Oration was held.

I would first, before proceeding further, ask the President if he has arranged for all doors to this auditorium to be locked, with the suspension of such Fire Regulations as might prevent the barring of doors, as there are matters which are to be revealed here tonight, in the intimacy of the Foundation, which will shock, which will astound, and which will amaze not only you but your relatives, and which, I am bound to say, could lead to the overthrow of the Hamer Government should these matters become common knowledge. I am not, suggesting that Hamer made all these things happen, but when startling facts are revealed the public is prone to blame the Government of the day for inadequate communication or inadequate activity in the past, and it is customary for the Critic of the “Age” to accuse the Government of excessive secrecy. Mr

President, is all secure? Thank you Sir. I take it that the Press has been evicted?

There is another reason for bolting the doors. My researches preparatory to the compilation of this Oration led me back and forth over the period 1808 to 1860, through the scientific laboratories and lecture theatres of Europe, and many times I encountered the name of Wheatstone, that timid man who was a pioneer of the electric telegraph and who in some bewilderment gave his name to the Wheatstone Bridge (particularly as not he but Christ~invented it). Even the most scientifically illiterate and innumerate among us is familiar with this Bridge. (Do I hear any dissent?... ) Wheatstone was persuaded, against his better judgement to deliver a Friday Evening Discourse at the Royal Institution of Great Britain when Michael Faraday was the Director of that noble and august institution. Led in by Faraday, Wheatstone surveyed the packed rows of male Royalty, nobility, notables, and even a sprinkling of un—notable, but of course very rich, commoners, all in white tie and tails, on the ground floor, and the balcony above packed with their ladies resplendent in evening dress and tiaras, together with a few even more common male commoners, and Wheatstone considered rationally what he should do. Then he did what any red—blooded Briton with strength of conviction would do — he bolted. When it became obvious that he had no intention of returning Faraday delivered an extempore lecture as was his wont from time to time. Following the Wheatstone incident, and till this very day, lecturers at the Royal Institution are led in firmly by the arm by the Director, and once in the lecture theatre all exits are bolted. They have had no trouble since; although occasionally one feels that the doors should be opened! I consider the locking of the doors a reasonable precaution on this occasion also.

I discern not only this tendency in my own psyche towards the Wheatstone Syndrome, but also a certain lack of preparedness on the part of the President in the way of a back—up extempore lecture along the lines of “The Crabtree Oration, 1981 — What might have been”. So the barring of the doors is doubly appropriate .

In the desperate mental struggle to avoid the inevitable (which can only be likened to that of St Paul, nee Mr Saul) it can now be confessed that I did check whether 1981 could be a Sabbatical Year for Orators of the Australian Chapter of the Crabtree Foundation: alas it is but the 6th year, but I warn you that next year’s Oration might well be communicated in absentia from Mantua or Montevideo.

I have also been tempted to give the kind of lecture which Malcolm Muggeridge gave some years ago after being trapped somewhat deviously into talking on “Sex” to a women's society. On being introduced he said “Madame Chairman, Ladies, It gives me much pleasure” and then sat down again.

But the Great Bidding prevailed. So bereft of excuse, with the doors now bolted, I stand before you as a pathetic thing of scholastic shreds and tatters, your poor—man’s Crabtree Orator of 1981.

You may believe that the matters raised in this talk are the products of a tortured mind. Indeed my mind has been tortured in the course of preparation for this great event, perhaps the pinnacle of the otherwise dismal career of one who is no longer a promising young man, tortured by the quintessential nightmare of falling so short of previous oratorical splendour.

None of the crescendo of brilliance that we will ever associate with Dommett's virtuoso performance, none of the suave elegance of Bradley, none of the sparkling two column profiles of Bennetts, none of the penetrating perception of Kilbride, none of the poetic lyricism of Charlwood, none of the Quiet Dignity of the late Living Memory, merely a scientist with chattering teeth conscious of the awesome things that have been entrusted to him to say in his faltering way. So please bear with me as I present my shy thesis.

To my topic. "Crabtree - The Political Scientist". Already I hear a shuffling of feet, a whispering behind raised menus, some polite coughing to cover embarrassment on my behalf. "The gall of the man, he's not even a registered political scientist" I hear from the few of that ilk who have been allowed to join this Foundation. Would that this auditorium had a balcony Then there are others of you who are puzzled because they know full—well of Crabtree's oft—expressed attitude to political science, which for reasons of etiquette and protocol I will not detail here. But perhaps it can best be summed up, politely, in Crabtree's own aphorism:

"There is no science like political science" .

So this will not be a monologue on Political Science of the kind we encounter in University Calendars and in lecture courses of that name.

To get to the pith of my title one must go to the primitive meaning of the words. I wish to reveal that Joseph Crabtree was a crypto—scientist, and I may say without fear of contradiction the greatest of his day, and in his Leonardine fashion he was also highly involved in the politics of the day. Bit by bit we will lay this before you. Note that my title is not "Joseph Crabtree - Political Scientist" but "Joseph Crabtree - The Political Scientist" .

Two great disciples of Joseph Crabtree will cross and recross the stage this evening, the one a man of action and affairs (in every sense of the word) the Iron Duke, Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington; the other Michael Faraday the quiet genius of 19th Century science, Director of the Royal Institution and the only man ever to decline the Presidency of the Royal Society. We will see tonight a dovetailing of events, an entangling of the lives of these two men with that of their mentor, none other than Joseph Crabtree.

I must hasten to assure you that I do not wish to detract from the fame and respect proper to these two men; and I wish to emphasize this. Both were men who were quite likely to have dominated their fields in their own right, but this is something we will never know, as behind each was the same uncommon genius and friend, and it was his tutelage and kindly suggestion that made both the demi—gods that they became. Without Crabtree they might both have been village Grays. We will never know.

Why did Michael Faraday have a nervous breakdown at the height of his career? Why did he become interested in spiritualism? Why did he not only decline the Presidency of the Royal Society, but also of the Royal Institution and also a knighthood? Why did the Duke of Wellington hate the Bishops? Why did he say to the man who accosted him in the Mall with "Mr Jones I believe" "If you'll believe that you'll believe anything"! Who was Mr Jones? We shall see .

Let us start our story in 1808, although there are threads that lead back much earlier and strands that take us forwards far beyond the life of Joseph Crabtree, and apparent anachronisms and temporal solecisms, all to be resolved in good time. I have chosen 1808 because it was in that year that the Great Duke, as Arthur Wellesley, set out in the “Donegal”, with 9000 men of Cork, for the Iberian Peninsular. England was in her characteristic pose, with her back to the wall. She was fighting the battles of Europe, indeed of the world, and her colonies were sniping at her. In 1812 the USA was to declare war on Britain. And Britain’s economy was in a parlous state.

We may note in passing that the infant colony of NSW, although turbulent and lusty in some respects, was not threatening to secede. Perhaps this was due to the fact that so many of its citizens, like my ancestor John Ellison of Parramatta who migrated in the Third Fleet in 1791, had been personally selected by some of the best judges in England. Perhaps, and this is much more likely, it was due to the deft manipulations of Joseph Crabtree who had retained an intense interest in NSW since his voyage with Cook in 1772. We can only speculate on this.

Wellesley went to Portugal to drive out the troops of Bonaparte and quickly showed his brilliance as a leader. He decisively beat the French at Vimeira and Torres Verde, penned them up and captured all their arms and artillery. For this reason the lead was taken from him, presumably as a splendid demonstration to the French of the British sense of fair play, sportsmanship and cricket. Wellesley was sent home to Ireland somewhat in disgrace as one lacking in moderation. Sir Hugh Dalrymple was given the command, and he allowed the conquered French to go home unharrassed, and sent all their arms and artillery after them later. Even the sports of England thought this a bit rich and Dalrymple was deposed and succeeded by Sir John Moore. His contribution was splendidly British. He lost his life in a moment of glory and his fame rests on one of the best organized retreats in British military history — the Retreat from Corunna — which formed an excellent prototype for Dunkirk some 130 years later, and for his descendant, Sir John Moore, in the Retreat from Wage Indexation about 40 years later still. How History repeats itself!

All this might cause the ordinary English chap to muse aloud “where are we going” and then to wring his hands in despair of generals and politicians. But Crabtree was no ordinary man, and he decided that it was time for him to take over the reins of polity and state. When an ordinary man is trying to formulate a scheme for extricating his country from a deep hole, the procedure is apt to be a lengthy one involving the furrowed brow, the scratched head and the crumpled cigarette butt, but in the case of a man like Crabtree this is not so. Only a minimum of time elapsed before he was able to announce inwardly that he had got it. There were of course two major problems. The first was that he had in 1801 ascended to the Bench, as Kilbride pointed out in his learned Oration, and as a Judge it would be most improper for him to involve himself in any way in politics. Had he been Chief Justice matters might have been different! Secondly he knew what fame, adulation and glory could do to a man, practically preventing him from doing any further work. In this he anticipated the Nobel Syndrome, as outlined by Zuckermann in her brilliant analysis of Nobel Prizemen. Nobel instituted the Prize to help and encourage worthy recipients, but in practical terms the award freezes a man in his tracks and it is the kiss of death to his work.

So Crabtree decided that he would have to act via surrogates. The basic needs of the

nation were for military ascendancy and for an assurance of future wealth, and he had to choose his men accordingly.

As to the first, the military ascendancy of the Commonwealth, he said to himself “Get with the strength”. There was no time to develop a new leader so he chose to build up Wellesley who had already shown himself to have the makings of a strong leader. He made his first moves to contact Wellesley as soon as the latter had returned home to Ireland. Very soon thereafter Wellesley was made Commander in Chief, and History relates, even if we don’t all know it, his splendid ultimate victory on the Peninsular which resulted in Napoleon complete defeat and ‘first period of exile in 1814. Soon, also, after Crabtree’s intervention, Wellington’s elder brother, Richard Wellesley, Marquess Wellesley, was appointed Foreign Secretary. There are splendid side stories which I could tell of the Peninsular Wars, such as the manner in which England acquired its splendid collection of Goya, or of the development of a sport among the commissioned officers known as “Nun—baiting”, but I will resist this temptation as Crabtree plays no part in them.

How did Crabtree succeed in putting the right man in the right place at the right time? Perhaps we have a clue in Crabtree’s tone poem, to which Leonard Dommert tacitly adverted, entitled “The Westminster Suite” in which there is a muted pulling of strings accompanied by a subtle interchange of brass • Crabtree was a man of many parts.

Crabtree, the ex-wine merchant of Orleans, was also a man of many ports, and so it is not extraordinary that the Wellesleys’ first target in their brilliant campaign was Opporto and he drove the French out in a singularly bold and serendipitous attack, thus assuring an unintertupted supply for the Fellows of Crabtree’s College at Oxford and for the London Bar. For this Wellington was later made Chancellor of Oxford University.

Crabtree’s brilliance and thoroughness shine through all that Wellington did and most of what he said, and did not say, thereafter. In fact if one might particularize by way of example, Crabtree taught Wellington the value of the occasional pregnant silence. At the end, it was said of the Duke that he could be silent in no fewer than 7 different languages; no mean feat for a General and a politician.

May I leave the story of Wellington at this point and move across to his great contemporary, Faraday?

Michael Faraday’s parents had intended him to become an estate agent’s stone thrower, but when it became obvious that the lad’s physique was not going to lend itself to such a strenuous calling, he was apprenticed to a Mr Riebau, a bookbinder. In 1812 he presented to Sir Humphrey Davy, famous for the miner’s lamp which he did not invent, a bound account of Davy’s lectures at the Royal Institution for that year. He did this at the instigation of a Mr Dance who had acted as Faraday’s patron and who had secured entree tickets for him to the Royal Institution Lectures. Mr Dance indeed! What a thin disguise~ Although we have no extant photograph or impression of Mr Dance it must be obvious to all present that here was the great man, Crabtree, again modifying the course of history by his intervention. Faraday had earlier written to Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society asking if there might be a job, however menial, for him at the Royal Society, and Banks had instructed the porter to say that

there would be no reply. He needed a patron.

Crabtree's own discoveries in science and technology had made it abundantly clear to him that it was no longer a matter solely of "who you knew", but, surprisingly, "what you knew" would be important for the future. He anticipated the effects of the new knowledge by many years. His contribution to what is commonly known as the Industrial Revolution but which I will call the First Industrial Revolution was enormous. But I must leave that to an Orator-scholar more versed in research into that corner of the Pandora's Box that is Crabtree lore.

So with his country in a desperate economic plight, not in the least ameliorated by the bursting of bubbles in the South Seas, Crabtree the patriot sought out and nurtured the best "What you know" brain in England; that of Michael Faraday. Of course this took longer than did his action in the military and political sphere, and it was not until four hectic years of search had passed that he lighted upon Faraday and commenced their long friendship and collaboration. So successful was this stratagem that by the time of the Great Exhibition of 1851 it could well be said that England was the richest and scientifically most advanced kingdom in the world.

May I give you just one example of the brilliance of the success of the Crabtree—Faraday nexus? If we look at the domestic refrigerator, "Faraday" invented almost every pertinent principle embodied in it. The compression of gas followed by expansion to cool; the gas itself, Freon, a halogenated hydro-carbon; the electric motor; the transformer; stainless steel; all of these tumbled out of Faraday's laboratory. Incidentally the first working refrigerator in the world was patented in 1856 by James Harrison, Editor of the "Geelong Advertiser" and later editor of the Melbourne "Age", and was set up on the banks of the Barwon turning out 1 ton of ice per day. Remarkable were the fruits of Crabtree's days in Lake Charlie-grark and the Western District of Victoria! Harrison had the decency to allow Crabtree the opportunity of prior claims in patenting, but went ahead himself in '56 as soon as news of Crabtree's death in 1854 reached him.

But let me continue. Sir Humphrey Davy the Director of the Royal Institution took Faraday, the unknown book-binder's apprentice, under his wing in a way that is quite inexplicable other than via the intervention of Crabtree, either personally or via the agency of the new secret service department which he had recently secretly founded, MI 1, many years later and after a series of upgradings to become MI 5. Again I hesitate to pursue the story of MI 1 and I leave this to yet another Orator.

Davy set off in 1813 on a Grand Tour of the Continent, including the stronghold of the enemy, Paris, taking with him this unknown boy Faraday as an assistant, and introducing him to country after country and scientist after scientist. Paris, Lyons, Montpellier, Aix, Nice, Turin, Florence, Rome, Naples, Milan, Como, Geneva, Rome a~in, Lausanne, Vevey, Bern, Zurich, Baden, Munich, Padua, Venice, Bologna, Florence, the Tyrol, Stuttgart, Heidelberg, Cologne, Brussels, Ostend and so to London. All in 19 months. This was a marvellous trip, on which Faraday learnt new languages, met the leaders in science and generally became familiar with the world of learning. No one has seen fit to probe this improbable story before, but we who know can indulge our Gnostic insights into the matter. How could this have happened other than by outside intervention and funding?

Faraday was perpetually grateful to Davy for this apparent generosity, but as Faraday's star rose it began to eclipse that of Davy, much to the latter's chagrin, and he became jealous and vindictive. He tried hard to prevent the success of Faraday's candidature for the Royal Society in 1823, but such was the esteem in which Faraday was already held that Davy's efforts, even though he was currently the President, were of no avail. Faraday bore Davy no grudge over this, and spoke well of him until his dying day. Faraday was a member of the Sandemanians, or Glasites, an obscure, highly Protestant sect which broke away from the Presbyterian Church, flourished for a while and then died. In external aspects it resembled the Plymouth Brethren, or the London branch thereof which became the Exclusive Brethren, but, as we shall see, it forbade not alcohol. The Sandemanians met Sunday in a small chapel in Clapham and strictly enforced attendance at this weekly gathering. On one occasion Faraday was summoned to dine with Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle on a Sunday, which prevented his attending the Sandemanians and he was ostentatiously suspended from membership of the sect for a lengthy period for this misdemeanour.

What better place than the Sandemanian Chapel for Faraday and Crabtree to meet? Crabtree knew almost certainly where Faraday would be on Sunday, from 11 am till 5 pm, and there he took himself when they needed to discuss important matters, hidden from the totally unsuspecting world. When Crabtree was indisposed as his left hand sometimes gave him trouble after the nasty incident related by Dommett (C.O.1979) he sent his nephew Ferdinand Crabtree, a pimple—ridden, gangling youth, whom he found a half—crown would bribe to sit through a two hour sermon, as bearer of messages.

It is often thought that the Sandemanians cramped Faraday's style and that he was an austere and colourless man as a result of his adherence to this sect. Not a bit of it~ He enjoyed his bottle of wine as much as the next man, (and Crabtree the ex—wine merchant of Orleans saw to it that his cellar was appropriately stocked), he enjoyed the theatre, liked dining out and enjoyed human intercourse of all sorts. He did however, restrict his social activities in the interests of his work, and we should all be eternally grateful for this exhibition of self-discipline an example of which is given in the next episode of this story.

Crabtree had devised another plan to bring Faraday and himself together with the Duke of Wellington in a convivial atmosphere on weekdays, which led to the founding in 1823 of the Athenaeum Club, one of the most important pillars of the Establishment of the United Kingdom (a light—hearted way of referring to England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland). Faraday became the Athenaeum's first Secretary in 1823 but resigned in 1824 after only a year in office, as he had by then realized what enormous inroads this was making upon his time, and putting his science first, he resigned.

So Faraday only repaired to the Athenaeum occasionally thereafter but as there was ample opportunity for Crabtree and Faraday to meet at the Sandemanians neither was inconvenienced by his withdrawal .

Wellington however remained in the Club, which formed an excellent place to meet Crabtree on congenial terms. We do not know what name Crabtree used in the Club, but I incline to the view that the talents of Theodore Hook, the best raconteur in the Club at that time, exhibit a great similarity to those of Crabtree, whom we know to have been a literary man, as

Hook is also described.

Wellington was a powerful influence on the Committee of the Club which was set up for men of arts and science to meet on equal terms.

A great debate took place in the early days as to whether the bishops should be allowed in. Wellington strongly opposed their admission. “Let them in, and you’ll never have an umbrella again”, the Duke growled. To no avail. This is merely one example of the deep antipathy between the Crabtree group and the clerics. The bishops had two or three major bones of contention. Firstly the . morals of Crabtree and the Duke (I started to count the mistresses of the Duke using biographies as a source of information and gave up at 50, which was something the Duke did not do) — little were the bishops to know that the motivation was the study of eugenics. Secondly Crabtree and Faraday and many of their circle, such as Brewster, Brown and Babbage were either dissenters or eccentric in their religious beliefs. Thirdly, the group tended to put out very disturbing new knowledge and philosophy. The bishops took every opportunity to belabour the group. For example when the British Association for the Advancement of Science held its second meeting at Oxford University in 1932, Wellington, the Chancellor, honoured Faraday, Brewster and Brown with Doctorates of Civil Laws. Faraday had generated an immense spark with simple apparatus at the meeting, and somehow the bishops understood this to be particularly menacing. They complained, mainly via Keble and Pusey, of the lowering of University standards in conferring of these honorary degrees.

Faraday was a man of tender conscience and it eventually troubled him greatly that he was quite unable publicly to acknowledge Crabtree’s contribution to his work. Early in his career, in 1923, he was accused of plagiarizing his invention of the electric motor from Dr Woolaston. His chief accuser was his master, Sir Humphrey Davy, insanely jealous, but Faraday was quite innocent of the imputation and Wollaston himself helped Faraday shake off the charge. The ‘~in of this incident made him hypersensitive to any possibility of being called a plagiarist. However, ironically, he was guilty of plagiarism at least in the sense of not acknowledging vital suggestions and inspiration which came from Crabtree. The latter of course sympathized with Faraday in his moral dilemma, and they often discussed the matter, but neither was willing to give up the amazingly fruitful partnership and Faraday’s qualms were not to be relieved until Crabtree’s death in 1854. This provides us with the key to understanding a number of events in Faraday’s life.

In 1835 he was offered a knighthood, but to the amazement of the Queen and the Prime Minister he politely declined it, ostensibly on the grounds that such an honour would go to his head and affect his work. “Fraser’s Magazine” got wind of this and came out with one of the most outrageous puns of the Victorian era. “Far—a—day was near—a—knight”, it quipped. We can see clearly why Faraday, a man of transparent honesty, declined — his conscience would not allow him to accept.

Later he was to be offered in succession the Presidency of the Royal Society by a deputation from the Council in 1857 and the Presidency of the Royal Institution of which he was the Director. Sadly he declined both, after hesitating in each case. Both offers were tempting but the fear of discovery of the part that Crabtree had played haunted him. As he said to his colleague and successor, John Tyndall at the time “If I accepted the honour which the Royal

Society desires to confer upon me I could not answer for the integrity of my intellect for a single year.” In part Faraday was referring to the sharp decline in his powers which we will not be surprised to learn occurred in 1854, the year of Crabtree’s death, but he was using the word “integrity” in both its ambiguous senses. In fact he was only half the man he had been.

As Crabtree aged he was hale, strong and hearty almost to the last (witness the fact as we will see later that he begat Lotta Crabtree in New York in 1847, his 93rd year), but Faraday had no doubt that he must go the way of all flesh and that death was inevitable. Crabtree had never posed as an indestructible prophet or Messiah. So Faraday, in desperation began clutching at straws.

In 1847 the Fox sisters in New Jersey had “invented” the modern wave of spiritualism. New Jersey had been the epicentre of the Shaker movement, which had emigrated from England in the 17th century, and had flourished in New Jersey until the 1830s when its numbers diminished dramatically. In the frenzy of its death throes, its leaders claimed “miracle” after outrageous “miracle” until the collective mind of New Jersey would believe anything. And believe the Fox sisters they did. Swiftly the cult spread to England and by 1849 it was the rage in the grandest parlours of the land; even Queen Victoria spent a lot of time trying to contact Albert until she discovered Mr John Brown Spiritualism was a highly controversial subject and the debate raged. Faraday was approached by influential people to look into the matter and to pronounce upon it. Let me remind you that these were the days of Dr Mesmer and of “anima magnetism” and it was quite logical to solicit the help of Faraday the greatest authority on magnetism in the world. After nine intensive months, largely spent observing the methods of a Mr Home, the doyen of the London mediums, Faraday managed to reproduce all of the phenomena associated with the mediums and he invented ingeniously simple apparatus to detect whether the turning tables were being pushed or not. He concluded that all was fake, even if honest delusion, and published his findings in the “Athenaeum” magazine and the column of the Times. This made Mr Home a very unhappy medium, and he contested Faraday conclusions vigorously but Faraday was not to be drawn as he had closed his mind to the subject.

Of course Faraday had a desperate ulterior motive in all this. He urgently needed to know whether he could continue to communicate with Crabtree after death and was shattered to find a negative answer. His work did, however, initiate a long tradition of investigation into spiritualism at the Royal Institution which was continued notably by Sir William Crookes and Sir Oliver Lodge. Faraday was a broken man and never regained his composure although he comported himself with great dignity.

Crabtree, perhaps not particularly kindly, made a little fun of Faraday’s interest in spiritualism, and sent him the result of some of his reading in Afrikaans, when he discovered that the immortal

“Hamlet, I am thy father’s ghost”

when translated into Afrikaans became

“Omlet, ek es da papa spook.”

Let us now return to the Duke of Wellington. How did he and Crabtree communicate — certainly not by Mr Justice Crabtree, in wig and gown, parading in Pall Mall in order to bump into the great soldier — politician!

You will recall that Crabtree had formed M.I.1, to counteract the then currently strongly discernable tendency to revolution which ran through the poor of England. Pitt the Younger in 1796 attempted to introduce a social welfare Bill of astonishing enlightenment in order ‘to ~ad this off, which would have given every journeyman the means of his livelihood — to a carpenter tools and wood, to a peasant—farmer cows and sheep — but his parliamentary contemporaries had thrown it out with scorn. Crabtree then, since the softer line which he favoured was not possible, set up M.I.1 to deal with subversion. That we have not heard more of M.I.1 and that there was no bloody Revolution are silent tributes to the silent manipulator — Crabtree.

Allied to M.I.1, but not of it, was another body set up specifically to deal with the twin national emergencies of 1808 in the military — political field and the economic sphere — the Joint Organization for National Emergency Services, J.O.N.E.S.

Of course Crabtree needed a cover in his dealings with Wellington and what more natural than to call himself Mr Jones, of J.O.N.E.S.? He was indeed “Mister Jones” as its creator, inspirer and sustainers.

So that is why, when a bumbling fellow from M.I.1, having met neither “Mr Jones” nor the Duke of Wellington, but having had them pointed out via M.I.1’s sole spy—glass, as they conversed earnestly in Pall Mall and confusing them, came up to the Great Duke and said

“Mr Jones I believe”~

history chronicles the Duke’s reply as

“If you’ll believe that you’ll believe anything”.

The man was paid to know better, and it certainly did not do for the Duke, Sirs, it did not do for His Grace.

It would be fascinating to know more of J.O.N.E.S. but, until further research is done, we don’t. It would not be unreasonable for the Australian Office of National Assessment to fund deep research into this amazingly successful organization and I commend such a project to that body, and to our President for consideration of how this thought might best be passed on to ONA. Perhaps we should also commend the title ONA Operation National Unity Study to ONA for this, or as it will be acronym zed and verbalized “ONA ONUS”.

There was not the deep bond of affection between the Duke and Crabtree (or “Mr Jones” as he was to Wellington) that existed between the eternally amiable Faraday and Crabtree (or “Mr Dance” as he was originally known to Faraday), in fact Wellington and Crabtree were known to make ascerbic animadversions about one another.

“Deep down the Duke of Wellington is very shallow” Crabtree observed (noted by Smith,

Crabtree's Boswell in M.I.1).

Wellington, for his part, was fond of saying of Crabtree "He combines the manners of a Methodist with the morals of a Marquis" a wickedly pointed comment about Crabtree the former Methodist. This travelled around London with the speed of light and some years later W.S. Gilbert was to plagiarize the phrase, in inverted form, and use it in his musical entertainment Ruddigore.

I should correct the impression which I may have left with you that all of Crabtree's experiments were successful and that he specialized in the physical sciences, so for reasons of economy I will choose the one anecdote to illustrate both of these points.

As you would be aware he had a consuming love of cricket and spent many of his leisure hours at Mr Lord's Cricket Ground. After a season in which there were some complaints about the state of the pitch Lord wrote one of those terse 19th century letters to his friend Crabtree~

My Dear Crabtree,

The turf is in an abominable state this season. Can you suggest a remedy?

I am, dear Sir, very truly yours

Thomas Lord.

By return post Crabtree responded:

My Dear Lord,

I suggest that you sow pansy seeds in the pitch.

Believe me, my dear Lord, yours truly

Joseph Crabtree.

This was a bold experiment in the very best tradition of great scientists, but it was not fruitful. The pansies grew, but the mixture was a ghastly failure. The net effect of Crabtree's suggestion was to queer Mr Lord's pitch.

Another of Crabtree's excursions into biological science was into the realm of Eugenics, a diversion which, ultimately was to become an overwhelming passion. Knowing as he did the rate need the British Empire would have in the future for men of the highest calibre such as we find gathered here, he deliberated on the matter and then decided that such chaps could be produced by a practical application of the principles of genetics which was only beginning to emerge as a science in his mind. Of course this was well in advance of the work of Charles Darwin and the Abb5 Mendel, and even further in advance of the work of Francis Galton the great statistician. Galton, who is usually given credit for inventing eugenics in the 1880's, was Charles Darwin's cousin, and was greatly influenced by Darwin's work. He studied statistically

the effects of the weekly prayers for the Royal family on their health, and was forced to conclude that they tended to live shorter lives than their comparable contemporaries, but he avoided public obloquy by further concluding that Royalty would have led even shorter lives were it not for the prayers. But of course the work of Crabtree preceded this.

Crabtree decided that for reasons of ethics and of secrecy, he must conduct these experiments within his own domestic circle, which posed no great restrictions as we know of at least three wives, Anne Gallon his French mistress (Charlwood C.O.1976), his three musical mistresses of Bologna (the descent of the issue of one of whom later became an eminent Prime Minister of Australia (Dommett C.O.1979))and there have been intimations of many other affairs. I will not further enlarge on his methods for reasons of delicacy and indeed because so little is known of them. We do know however that his goal was the production of Greatness in the CI strain.

Crabtree must have known that he was flying in the face of the ancient wisdom entailed in the adage:

“Plant the Crabtree where you will, it will never bear pippins”. But this did not seem to daunt him.

In one sense these experiments were a success; in another they had unexpected results. One may liken them to the curious case of Sean Crabtree, Joseph’s Irish cousin, mentioned by Bennetts (C01977), who even though drunk once rescued a sinking leprechaun from a bog. In gratitude that small person proffered the granting of one wish to his swaying benefactor.

Sean told him, on a confidential but not very well—enunciated basis, of his heart’s desire. In the event he had a 12” pianist, playing his tiny piano, to the delight of Sean’s friends at the pub, but it was not quite what Sean had requested and had anticipated so confidently.

A similar thing happened in the case of the CI Crabtree strain. I would like to table exhibits 3 and 4 Mr President. As you will see from the Press photograph of Shirley Crabtree, known as Big Daddy, who is Joseph Crabtree’s great—great—great—great (in fact one might say very great) grandson, Greatness was achieved even if it was not quite what Crabtree had in mind.

Another type of greatness is that which leads to an entry in the Guinness book of Records, and yet another CI Crabtree has shown the propensity of the strain to excel/. I refer to Exhibit 4, in which the Hon. W.F. Crabtree, Minister for Services in NSW, pronounced wisely and widely on “total fire bans” in September 1980. This was the earliest proclamation on Total Fire bans in that or any other season, and deserves a place in the Book of Records and will no doubt be duly recognized in the course of time.

Lotta Crabtree, the great American actress, will probably for ever remain a mystery, but there is little doubt that she too was a product of Crab tree’s experiments in eugenics. Born in New York in 1847 she must occasion speculation. We have no other evidence that Crabtree was in America in ‘47. It is just as likely that the mother visited England in late ‘46. Did Crabtree re—marry and separate in his 93rd year or did she take his name by deed poll? Or had he

invented A.I.S.? I doubt that this latter hypothesis is tenable because Crabtree always preferred the personal touch. What we do know on the evidence of the “Oxford Companion to the Theatre” is that Lotta excelled. Perhaps we are vouched safe another hint in that Lotta was tutored in dancing in California by Lola Montez, whose connection with Crabtree via the Western district of Victoria is well known.

Closer to the present day and better documented in “Who’s Who” are Jonathan Crabtree, the correspondent of Prof. Kilbride on Crabtree lore, and Prof. Lewis Crabtree, who holds the Sir George White Chair of Aeronautical Engineering in Bristol University, in the lee of Chipping Sodbury.

Clearly Crabtree’s efforts to breed a master race were blessed with some success. As Crabtree himself was fond of saying to his intimates, “This is the branch of science which gives me the most satisfaction”.

It is not without significance that the proverb:

“The older the Crabtree the more Crabs it bears”

first appeared in the English literature in 1856, as you will see from Exhibit 8 which is an extract from the “Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs.”

In the field of eugenics much of Crabtree’s pioneering experimental work lives on after him.

A sideline from Crabtree’s mainstream study of eugenics, which might be of interest to members of the Australian Chapter, is his study of the genetic composition of an astonishingly uncouth man he had encountered during his sojourn to Lake Charlie-grark. Allowing for the fact that this was a rural community, Norman Ocker was still a remarkable anomaly, perhaps a sport. Crabtree could remember no—one even remotely approaching his degree of phillistinism in the rural Chipping Sodbury of his youth. Could this case be explained in genetic terms? We know very little of Crabtree’s research into this matter of deep social importance, but there are tantalizing fragments extant. We do know, for example, that Crabtree traced Ocker’s lineage back to Ethelred the Unready. There have also been unsubstantiated hints that William the Conqueror played a part in Ocker’s genetic makeup, which may account for the strong family preference for the name Norman. Unfortunately, of course, Crabtree did not publish and Australia is the poorer for it.

Another field of science in which Crabtree personally made a strong contribution was geology. His early study of the formative geology of Norfolk county was classic, and you will not be surprised to learn that the title of his most significant paper on the topic is “On the Laying of the Broads”. This was read to the Fulham Geological Society, which went out of existence after the disastrous fire in its rooms in 1857. So we have nothing left but the title of the paper and the facts, which we know from contemporary correspondence, that the paper was highly regarded by his peers, and that he threw himself into this work with great passion. He must have so exhausted his energies in Norfolk that we know of no further work in geology.

Why did Crabtree dabble in science? The answer lies in the man's completely insatiable curiosity. He was a very curious man indeed. I find it remarkable that no previous Orator has commented upon his personal motto, which gives us some insight, however tangential into the inner Crabtree:— "To explain the inexplicable and to unscrew the inscrutable".

This motto exhibits a level of human aspiration which is breathtaking, and it reveals how much in advance of normal men Crabtree was in noble endeavour. Of course this motto has been shamefully plagiarized by the Oxometrical Society in this century, and thus somewhat tarnished, but it must still remain one of the most inspirational objectives in the English language.

Crabtree built up his explanation of the Universe on a sound philosophical basis. The two principles which influenced him most were, firstly Hegel's profound Law that the non-existent can have no effect, and secondly Engel's principle that the part cannot be greater than the whole. Crabtree made these the cornerstones of his philosophical system out of which his natural philosophy grew. In fact the oft-quoted statement of Hegel that only one man had ever understood his philosophy and he had misunderstood it, was really a reflection on Hegel's limitations as he did not understand Crabtree's advanced interpretation of his own philosophy.

Is the Crabtree Foundation the sole repository of knowledge of these extraordinary matters and of these benevolent deceptions? I think not! I believe that in the highest scientific circles in England these things are rather better known than people are willing to admit. Let me illustrate this.

For over 100 years The Faraday Society was a prominent part of the chemical Establishment in England and its journal was one of the most important periodicals in the literature. I attended the last prestigious Conference of the Faraday Society, to be precise a conference on "Amorphous Solids" in October 1970 in Bristol University, not far from Crabtree's Chipping Sodbury. During the conference I went on Pilgrimage to Chipping Sodbury and had several ciders there and was so affected by the ineffable sense of Universal Understanding that descended on me there that my life has never been the same since. Imagine then my feelings when at the Conference Dinner, the President, Prof. G. Gee, in a voice hoarse with emotion, revealed that the Society would be wound up. At the height of its career? No wonder the poor man was smothered in embarrassment and that the reasons which he gave for this action were utterly specious. There can be but one explanation for this incongruity.

But perhaps it is asking too much for such knowledge to be commonplace. We have much to do in educating historians before we can contemplate the possibility of every school child becoming acquainted with the Crabtree Circle. The immensity of the task can be gauged from the fact that As a Briggs, an historian, can write books purporting to epitomize the significance for our times of events in the 19th century, and can fail to mention two men who did more to change our lives today than any other men of that century, Michael Faraday the father of electricity and Charles Babbage, the father of the computer. Presumably Briggs cannot grasp the fact that the pattern of our lives today is remarkably different from that of the Victorians.

I believe the time has come for me to terminate this Oration, although of course one can never interrupt the swift flight of scholarly research, as like arrows they come to earth we know not where, and bear fruit in strange ground. Perhaps I can do no better in closing than to quote Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*, Part i, canto ii, 1. 831~which you might recall which were we not to

know the dates of Butler's life, might appear to contain a sly dig at both Crabtree and Wellington.

*With many a stiff whack and many a bang,  
Hard Crabtree and Old Iron rang.*