The Crabtree Foundation (Australian Chapter)
1982 Oration
Crabtree and Education: Facilis descensus Averno

Richard R Belshaw
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Mr President, distinguished guests, gentlemen

On this important occasion our thoughts turn, cordially and gratefully, to our esteemed colleagues in the Parent Foundation at University College, London. I am sure each of you as a member of the Australian Chapter of the Crabtree Foundation deems himself specially honoured to be able to participate in this manner in their Observance of Joseph Crabtree's Anniversary, and share with them the Celebration of his Memory.

You who were welcomed here this evening as guests, have doubtless been informed by your hosts that by your acceptance of their invitation you qualify as Chapter members. Appropriate greetings on our behalf have been dispatched to the Foundation Members, who, very shortly, will be gathering in London for their Celebration.

As the Living Witness I am honoured to record our continuing appreciation of their having accepted this Chapter into their Foundation, and our unending gratitude to Arthur Brown, the Immortal Memory, who inspired this unique association with University College, London.

This evening I shall attempt the difficult task of paying adequate tribute to Joseph Crabtree's contribution to education. In this context it is surely most appropriate that we should acknowledge our esteem for, and our pride in, our London Connection.

When Dr Hiscock revealed last year that Crabtree had greatly influenced Australian education, and that I should investigate this influence, I immediately shared the feelings described by Keith Bennetts, who as our 1977 Orator was given the assignment of tracing Crabtree's profound influence on Australian journalism.

A quotation from Keith's splendid oration is apt to my purpose:

> *Given the standards that have, from time to time, prevailed in that field of human endeavour (Australian journalism), for my part, I would have said - facilely - that any influence that Crabtree might have had could only have been baleful.*

Like Keith's my first reaction was that any revelation of Crabtree in Australian education was likely to have most dangerous consequences for the reputation of the Crabtree Foundation and of its illustrious Namesake.

Keith's eventual assessment was that his first judgment had been hasty and inaccurate. His quest, like that of each Crabtree orator, is comparable to the experience of Bunyan's Pilgrim: a pilgrimage of Faith during which one's spirit must be kept buoyant by Hope.

The successes of our eminent predecessors provide a very necessary source of inspiration and support to each orator as he is *bidden* to follow their illustrious footsteps. One's humility is ensured by contemplation of the lustre which our pioneer orators have been able to associate with the treasured name of Crabtree. It is a truly daunting responsibility to attempt the discovery of something new in our poet's history, of sufficient merit, however insignificant in the light of past revelations, to be evaluated for an honoured place in the increasing Crabtree canon.

During the first exasperating months of the orator's quest the depth of his despondency which results from his first fruitless searches is increased by the enquiries of his interested colleagues. As the weeks pass one is spurred by the admonitory quality increasingly apparent in these, doubtless well-intentioned enquiries concerning the progress, or lack of progress, in the search for oration material.

In this period of anxiety I was continually assured by previous orators that they had suffered similar anxieties. However, as I surveyed the sorry history of what we perforce call education in Australia from its ad hoc inception and its muddling through an apparently unending series of emergencies to its imperilled present state of fragmentation, piecemeal planning, and clumsy hierarchical decision-making, I experienced at times a strange feeling of euphrasia, and almost relief mixed with some guilt that any influence of Crabtree was not readily apparent.

I must acknowledge the steadfast support of my colleagues in this period of trial; and, as I shall report later the assistance of several important clues and information, significantly relevant to our thinking this evening. There were also some helpful items which our faithful secretary had in safe-keeping in the archives. So extensive has been the range of Joseph Crabtree's interests and achievements that facts revealed by other orators, as I shall show later, have also formed vital background information for this investigation of Crabtree's educational activities.

In my quest, still clutching for emotional stamina to my faith in the efficacy of Crabtree revelation, I delved diligently and thoroughly into the most definitive and comprehensive work produced in Victoria on Australian educational history. I refer, of course, to *Vision and Realisation*: *a Centenary History of State Education in Victoria*, (1973).

This is a mammoth work. I submit it, Mr President, as an impressive exhibit to this important gathering. The volume really comprises twelve *books* and represents the work of hundreds of writers and research workers. Our most eminent educational authorities agree that such a mammoth task could not have been accomplished without countless mistakes. Using Joseph Crabtree's famous version (or perversion) of Newton's *inverse cube law of magnetism and electrostatic forces* [1] to assess this historical work, expert critics claim that the value and importance of it increases in a triplicate ratio to the number of mistakes and omissions which its

[1] Those who have enjoyed reading the brilliant 1957 Oration will recall that Crabtree became a fervent believer in everything Newton said, and he sometimes took as gospel statements which Newton had intended only as guesses … he grew up therefore in the belief that Newton had said that magnetism and electrostatic force were governed by an inverse cube law.

completion involved. In fact, of course, some experts have confidently claimed that the work is full of omissions.

In my use of this valuable historical source I trust you will not fail to notice how I faithfully heed the warnings and example of our Crabtree Elders that *in these matters we must avoid rash conclusions but proceed with cautious speculation and with scholarly deduction*. Thus, Mr. President, I must report that in several painstaking searches through this authoritative tome I could find no slightest trace or semblance of a reference to the influence of Joseph Crabtree on Australian education.

Given the important data already cited above, relating to the *inverse cube* significance of omissions from this definitive publication, we may, nay we can, with reasonable. assurance accept the logical conclusion that: therefore it is surely most highly probable our Poet, in keeping with our 1981 President's revelation, must have exercised an important formative influence on the educational development in this land which we know he assisted in discovering.

Having thus re-established and fortified my faith in the outcome of this quest I naturally began to look for any more attractive and successful features of our education system; since you would agree, I am sure, that any influence of Crabtree could have promoted the development of only the most worthy objectives, endeavours, and (if any) achievements.

The impressive title of the Centenary History, already mentioned - ***Vision*** *and Realisation* seemed to suggest a clue: perhaps some magnificent, but as yet unrealised aspirations were mysteriously, but persistently, operating like a benign trace of yeast in the daily bread of our encrusted education traditions. What *is* our Vision: does it have any substantial qualities, or is it solely mythical?

I sought for guidance in Professor W.F. Connell's learned chapter on "Myths and Traditions in Australian Education" in *Changing Education* (1972). There Connell discusses three aspects of a myth which he affirms is *widely disseminated throughout Australia and elsewhere continually by administrators, headmasters, by parliamentarians, and by all Australians when they go abroad and talk about their education*. The three aspects of the myth are *individual opportunity, citizenship, and thoroughness*. Of the *myth* Connell writes: *This is sometimes thought to be the Australian tradition in education. In a sense this is true: it is a tradition of expectation. The myth does not present reality; it is an expression of the way in which most Australians, for nearly 200 years, would like to see Australian education develop.*

Mary Warnock has pointed out in *Schools of Thought* (1977), how discussion of education is always made difficult because of our confusion about its definition and because we use the word *education* in a number of different ways. Often, for example, we use it in a goal-directed sense: education for, … .

Now if a person is educated for something of marked distinction: say for the priesthood, or for medicine or law, even perhaps (perish the thought) for Crabtree oratory, then what this person is experiencing, whatever he may think of the matter, is not really true education. *True education*, claims Warnock, *is an intrinsic good with regard only for the intrinsic worth of its*

own subject matter. I shall share with you later my findings about Crabtree's contribution to this problem of conceptualizing the essential character and worth of true education.

For the present let us agree with Warnock that for productive discussion we must be as flexible about the concept of education as we are about football, for *the relation to education of the things described as educational may be as various as the relation to football of the things it may describe*. Consider, for example, football boot, football match or football metaphor, or the difference between football education and football training. The search for the mysterious analysable essence of either *footballhood* or *educationality* might not lead to a single simple quality, and is, in any case more appropriately an exercise in mere *educanto* than a theme for a birthday anniversary oration.

The findings of Crabtree research have repeatedly supported the proposition that *great minds think alike*. We are, therefore, not surprised to find that Warnock and our poet, in their separate centuries, both stressed the dynamic effect of education on a society. They emphasised that its function was to turn each child into a special kind of grown-up, an educated grown-up. How this is to be done, the motives for doing it, and how the choice is made as to what shall be taught are *all questions of urgent and practical importance*.

In an attempt to compose an acceptable philosophy for present-day education (in the final decades of a turbulent century), Mary Warnock focused her work on the *theory* behind these questions. Crabtree, in his day as we shall see, was necessarily concerned more with basic, practical educational, and closely related political problems. It was, we must remember, a critical period of threatening revolutionary change in Europe. Then only the privileged few enjoyed the benefits of (sometimes the tortures of) any formal education; and of these only a courageous and enlightened minority was prepared to consider and even advocate the provision of greater educational facilities for the common people. These, fearing drastic reprisals and bitter social ostracism by the ultra-conservative ruling classes, were forced for a considerable time when meeting to exchange ideas and plan desirable courses of action, to do so in very well-organised secrecy.

As we examine the problems and contributions of these reformers in more detail, Mr. President, we shall appreciate even more the symbolic historical significance in our token precautions of meeting behind locked doors, of which Dr Coogan reminded us last year. You will, I am sure, feel constrained also to approve the effective and quite admirable measures which Crabtree's circle of scholars, writers and their artist friends used in those testing times to record and disseminate their reformist ideas and ideals. They made a magnificent contribution to the cultural heritage of Western European civilization as well as materially influencing the course of social and educational history in Europe, in England's newly founded penal settlements and perhaps even in her lost American colonies, though that of course is altogether another story.

I must, Mr President, take adequate pains to preserve an appropriate sequence in this report which might easily become a most complicated and inconsequential study. Mention of the loss of the American colonies brings into focus the circumstances surrounding the introduction of civilization to Australia. Manning Clark (*A History of Australia*, Vol.1: 1977) claims that *the early inhabitants of this continent created cultures but not civilizations*. According to Manning

Clark, therefore, Captain Arthur Phillip, when he was given his first commission as Governor of the territory called New South Wales on October 12, 1786, took charge of the preparations to *bring civilization to Australia*.

The distinctions between the words *civilization* and *culture* used by Clark might provoke discussion in a scholarly group such as I now have the honour to address. So I should add that in his footnotes (p. 3) Clark explains his terms: *a distinction is made here between 'civilization' in the sense of a people brought out of a state of barbarism, and 'culture' in the sense defined as the sum of the efforts made by a community to satisfy and reconcile the basic human requirements.* . . . He then adds a list of such requirements. In a further note the historian admits: *The word 'culture' is not used here in its other sense of the efforts made to ennoble, refine and cultivate the human personality*.

You will notice the concept of *education* is not explicit in either of the meanings which Clark has so precisely distinguished in his notes, though we must concede that education, like a good penal system, might be *understood* as a requirement implicit in *the efforts of a people to rise out of a state of barbarism*. With reference to bringing civilization and education to Australia it seems apposite to repeat Dr. Coogan's nice comment on the infant colony of N.S.W. in his 1981 oration: p. 4, in which he indicated how some of its promising quality of life *was due undoubtedly to the fact that so many of its citizens had been personally selected by the best judges in England*.

The native Australians when compared with the members of the First Fleet might not be categorized as *civilized*, but Crabtree, and many others, have observed desirable educational features in the tribal ceremonies and practices which they had instituted to develop, preserve and hand on their cultural heritage, and to inculcate their survival lore and skills in succeeding generations.

The impressive exhibition of Aboriginal *arts* mounted in the National Gallery of Victoria last year, together with comparisons discussed in *The Other Side of the Frontier*, a recent publication of the Queensland historian, Henry Reynolds, raise an interesting and fundamental question: really, which of these two peoples displayed the superior (or more ennobling) education or cultural heritage in their attitudes and behaviour towards the other?

Of course, apparent wisdom may often be a product of hindsight. But, Mr President, it must surely be a grave indictment against Governor Phillip, Mr Pitt, Lord Sydney, and their numerous subordinate Home Office officials that, in all the elaborate (though admittedly frustrating) preparatory planning for the new Settlement there was not any reference to the likely need for schools or education in New South Wales.

The 'omission', if indeed we may dignify it with such a title, is probably potent evidence of the political and social importance accorded to education at the time. Officially it was not only neglected; many of the more privileged class, regarding education as potentially subversive, strongly advocated repressive policies and action. For example, the following is quoted from a statement by the Bishop of London at the time: *It is safest for both the Government and the religion of the country to let the lower classes remain in the state of ignorance in which nature has originally placed them.* (Austin 1964: 2)

I need not occupy time in our Crabtree celebration to outline the sequence of dramatic events which illustrate these reactionary attitudes during the early years of settlement and pioneering in Tasmania and New South Wales. Recent TV production such as *Rush* and *The Timeless Land* have added imaginative impressions to those we all received so indelibly from our school history studies. However, it is perhaps appropriate to recall that the final performance of the opera *Botany Bay* was given at the Royal Circus Theatre in London on Saturday, 12th May 1787; next day, on Sunday 13th May, the First Fleet weighed anchor in Portsmouth harbour and sailed for the high seas.

Manning Clark gives us some choice extracts from European press items of the time. It seems that in London tartan was all the fashion for women's dresses, and that Mr Pitt was closeted for several hours with the Prince of Wales, discussing the latter's considerable debts. The Dutch press that week carried news of the New South Wales fleet as *the first step in the colonization of that 'Zuidland' in which their ancestors had searched for gold and spices, but found only a land where flies crawled in the eyes and the inhabitants were very black and very barbarian*.

In France, very significantly for us, *the minds of the Parisians were on other things, for there nothing was talked of so much as reform*.

The Fleet dropped anchor in Botany Bay on 20 January 1788 and by 26 January had moved to Sydney Cove. At some time, I cannot say precisely when, in all the harsh turmoil of establishing the new colony the Governor became aware of children's urgent needs, to which of course his elaborate array of commissioning instructions made no reference. He assumed the role of Australia's first Director of Education and managed the first ad hoc acts of an educational circus which some cynics insist is still being performed.

As there was official concern for the moral and spiritual welfare of the children, the ideological basis on which Phillip established an education system was religious. Emergency measures were taken to meet both religious and educational needs; the same buildings, for example, were used both as churches and schools. Extreme sectarian division and bitterness was a remarkable characteristic of this period of history. It was therefore inevitable that education and political problems became entangled with the unfortunate religious conflict.

During this period of conflict and searching for educational magic in the new Australian civilization, groups of visionaries in other places were effectively countering the prevailing repressive attitudes in western societies with powerful charitable sentiments which they hoped would infiltrate and enlighten public opinion. You will certainly not be surprised to learn that Joseph Crabtree was an active participant in one such group which met, understandably in Paris.

Ideas and convictions from the liberal reform movements which were fostered in various parts of Europe in the second half of the Eighteenth Century, flourished in Britain and France during the Nineteenth Century. They slowly but steadily reached Australia and significantly influenced those concerned with education Every Crabtree scholar would listen expectantly to any report of such a movement.

This was my fortunate experience when I attended a seminar last year on the French

painters of *The Revolutionary Decades 1760-1830* whose work was on exhibition in Sydney and Melbourne. I am indebted to the fine arts lecturer, Dr L. Borland, for the following: an international group of friendly scholars was wont to meet regularly in the Paris studio of the artist Jean-Baptiste Regnault. In their *complot*, which was prompted by the most straightforward intentions, and was free of all trace of tergiversation, they argued out many debatable topics, but as their interests were centred on politics and religion they consequently tended to discuss, almost endlessly, matters of economic and educational theory and practice.

Although many of this group, and most of their successful associates lived under privileged patronage, few of the contemporary ideas and values escaped their critical questioning and their discussion at times, to say the least, could have been regarded as unpopular and even dangerous. Thus they reflected their lights of truth carefully shielded by bushels of secrecy, and they communicated outside their own group only after careful preparation.

Because of their undoubted sincerity and intellectual integrity we can understand how they felt the compulsion to risk communication as almost a sacred duty. The artists in the group hit on the ingenious idea of disseminating their ideas, or their group's consensi (I believe Crabtree used this unusual plural form) in their paintings.

This led, of course, to the development of a complicated language based on symbolism, and devised by the skilful merging of ideas and forms to create appropriate imagery for arguments and propositions. To have profound ideas thus admired, discussed, evaluated and accepted without the burden of the least understanding of them, must surely be one of the earliest triumphs of effective communication in the higher education of Western European civilisation. And, Gentlemen, we shall see, I believe, how some of the results of this triumph eventually influenced our new civilization struggling in the antipodes.

Those in the *complot* who lectured or, more dangerously, who wrote would do so anonymously or by using a nom-de-plume. Crabtree following his usual custom, at least on a few occasions in Paris used the anagrammatic device. Having been made aware from our Crabtree Foundation studies of our Poet's predilection for this art of concealment I was well-qualified to uncover the real identity of an English member of that group - one who went by the name of Peter Brace.

I am eager to tell you, however, that I first became aware of Joseph Crabtree's presence in the Paris group by a most moving and remarkable revelation the recollection of which still gives me very mixed feelings of humility and exaltation. It occurred during the early afternoon on the first day of the National Gallery seminar of which I have been reporting.

The lecturer was illustrating the influence of the art of the Revolutionary Decades on educational thought and used, amongst others, slides of different versions of the 'intellectual man' painting. The original of one version was one of the successful, large and colourful paintings shown in the Melbourne exhibition. As the first slide-image of the painting was flashed on the screen the lecturer discussed the possible identity of the figure in the left foreground prominently representing the scholar. In the art world it seems there have been conflicting opinions that the figure may represent the artist himself or Peter Brace or some other

of his Paris coterie.

Jean-Baptiste Regnault *Physical Man, Moral Man and Intellectual Man*, c. 1810-1815
Canvas 159 x 131, Brest Musée des Beaux-Arts

When I first looked at the painting I believe I was privileged to share the experience described by Professor Sutherland when he and Dr Spencer discovered our Crabtree portrait in Simmond's second-hand shop near University College. His report reads: *we both of us felt it at once - there leapt out a portrait which both of us immediately recognised by some curious instinct as that of Joseph Crabtree.* My immediate reaction to seeing the image of the *intellectual man* painting was: *that's not the artist, nor Peter Brace, it's Joseph Crabtree.*

One must allow for the fact that shortly before the art seminar I had been to last year's meeting of this Chapter, and our psychologist colleagues would doubtless argue that my perception had been given thereby a strongly twisted motivational bias. Nevertheless, my first spontaneous conviction was reinforced when we became aware of the true significance of the *Brace* anagram. I was also fully convinced by the confident reassurance of some colleagues when we studied copies of the portrait and when we squared our impressions from the image with the verbal descriptions so authoritatively recorded for us by Dr Terence Spencer in his 1956 Oration *The Iconography of Crabtree*.

After his opening affirmation: *The study of the portraiture of Crabtree is based upon the*

impregnable rock of the Sutherland picture, which hanging before you ..., remains indisputable in pedigree and provenance, Dr Spencer says: *precious to us would be a portrait of the poet in the glory of early youth.*

This Paris painting is dated circa: 1810 when Crabtree aged 56, while no longer in early youth, would still sometimes have, with nearly half his so active life-time remaining, in Spencer's words: *his poet's eyes in a fine frenzy reeling.*

Dr Spencer's prescription of Crabtree's characteristic pose presents us with a minor problem. He writes of "those powerful nimble hands, the left habitually plunged into his waistcoat leaving his right hand free, as one of his contemporaries nobly described it 'for the adornment of his discourse and for the manipulation of his liquor'." However, Gentlemen, given the serious educational import of this painting, the model's expression of calmly subdued frenzy and his 'squared' somewhat 'right-angular' pose are entirely appropriate to the artist's purpose.

The painting, in the accepted elaborate fashion of the period, is a fine illustration of profound and complicated communication reduced by the reformist painter to artistic simplicity. The composition, full as it is of action and symbolism has captured, on one canvas, a consensus of the Paris Crabtree Circle's educational philosophy.

The painting, of course, like any good picture or educational aid tells its own story. In a gathering so erudite as this an Orator obviously avoids giving time to needless exposition. Since I have only these inadequate black and white copies made, indeed, from a reproduction of the spectacular original I should perhaps rapidly summarize the salient features of its educational symbolism. We may of course, if you so direct, Mr. President, return our attention later to this in so far as it contributes to the evening's main objective.

In the original painting, the pan of brightly glowing embers in the centre foreground represents the light of learning which enables the scholar to gain control over terrestrial affairs. The central cube is obviously the important concept in this version of the picture: being for a time a matter of controversy it is omitted from some drafts and renditions of this thematic composite. The controversy must have been interesting for 'unity' is one of the concepts symbolized by the cube: many sides but one form, many subjects but one curriculum. It is difficult to resist one's mind leaping to the present and the motto of our Australian College of Education - *Multa membra corpus unum.*

Knowing the reason for the controversy is important for a full appreciation of the cube's significance in Crabtree' s reasoning. It would be difficult to exaggerate the influence of the differing reactions amongst Crabtree's contemporaries to the work of John Locke. His book *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), as well as wide circulation in Britain (35 editions) had at least twenty-one French and seven German editions.

Roland Stromberg wrote in *An Intellectual History of Modern Europe*:

> *The name of John Locke was pre-eminent along with that of Newton during the 'Enlightenment' ... Viewed as an influence on an era, Locke was one of the most important men of ideas who ever existed, worthy to be ranked in that respect with*

Plato and Aristotle among his predecessors, and with Rousseau, Darwin and Freud among his successors.

The unforgivable omission of Joseph Crabtree from that list of men of ideas is one more illustration, if such were necessary, of the important trust reposing in our Crabtree Foundation: to restore to its rightful place a neglected name.

The opposing educational arguments triggered by the publication of Locke's *Thoughts* can be most concisely stated as the now familiar heredity versus environment debate. In ramifications of the debate I believe Lock's opinions were often compatible with both positions. All the evidence I can find suggests that Crabtree consistently attempted to argue towards a balanced rather than an extreme position. The symbolic cube in our painting supports this belief for the cube, above all, represented balance, equality and even a form of mathematical mean. I stand to be corrected by the eminent mathematicians present; but, I understand the cube to represent a mean between the sphere (with maximum volume for a given surface area) and the tetrahedron (with minimum volume for its surface area). Artists of course have used the form to suggest endurance and strength of purpose.

To be pragmatic, educational principles and teaching practiced which characterized the training given in our Australian teachers' college courses for many years have reflected the ideas which I believe are captured in the symbolism of this famous painting. Further, Mr President, I believe we have reports of contributions to Australian education in some of its developmental stages which were made, and could probably not have been made by any other than Joseph Crabtree and some of his Paris companions.

One of Crabtree's Paris circle was a young Christopher Coffin. His was a lesser branch of the well-known Devon family of Pine-Coffin whose work for the poverty-stricken Irish is featured by Cecil Woodham-Smith. (Later in the century General Sir Edward Pine-Coffin was a resident English Commissioner at Limerick.) Although he had successfully studied medicine, Christopher under pressure was reluctantly representing his family's commercial interests in France. He was attempting to buy corn for official supplies to provide relief for the Irish without contravening the restrictive Corn Laws of the time.

We know from *Ship News* in the *Launceston Advertiser*, Vol.111, No.103 (1821), of the arrival of the 700 tons brig *Czar* chartered by a widow, Janet Templeton, to bring some fine Saxon merino sheep and her family party to New South Wales. The *party* included her brother's family, the Forlonges, and it is recorded *there were on board other important passengers destined to become most valuable colonists.*

During their travels in Europe to select and buy choice Saxon sheep and learn all they could about sheep and wool, one of the Forlonge sons and a James Brown had, I believe, spent time in Paris with Crabtree and Christopher Pine-Coffin. This, and the fact that Brown was a tutor as well as farm-manager, could explain their affinity of interests and how the two Paris friends came to be on the *Czar*. These important passengers also accompanied the Templetons when they went on to settle near Parramatta. Eventually they all moved south, at different times, and influenced the area which latter became Victoria.

The Templetons, with the valuable flock of sheep, developed a beautiful property, *Seven Creeks*, near what is now Euroa. Crabtree and Coffin probably kept in touch as well as communications would permit, and further on in our story we find them re-united in the early Western-Port settlement.

The circumstances in the developing colony made various groups receptive to educational ideas and change. Phillip, and later Hunter and King saw education as a means of rescuing children from the evil influences of convict parents and a shrewd way of concealing their idleness or unemployment. Gradually community leaders saw education as a possible means of producing an enlightened and more united population from the strange colonial mix, and many in the *upper* and *lower* classes saw learning as a means to social and employment preferment.

Crabtree appears in different parts of the area loosely referred to as the Port Phillip District. He had been appointed as an itinerant commissioner to investigate and assist in the development of, and to report on educational needs in remote settlements. Obviously a school would have by no means, a high priority in the needs of a newly developing district.

The Commissioner often learned at first hand the difficulties in thick *bush* country of establishing tracks so that communication and supply of provisions would not depend solely on pack-horses. Adorning a routine report, which mentioned entering thick scrub for the first time, we find, I am sure you will agree, our Poet's unmistakable touch:

Stems planted close by stems defy
The adventurous foot: the curious eye
For access seeks in vain.

Accurate perception is an essential characteristic of a good poet or a good teacher; many communication mistakes and examination howlers are the result of misperceptions:

(An aside:

> I well remember when I had told a young class that the story of King Alfred burning the cakes was of no historical significance and they must only stress his important achievements. The answer of one of my young hopefuls to the School Inspector's history question went something like this:
>
> *Alfred was a famous King. He joined England into one country. He fought the Danes. Once when he was being beaten he fled and sought shelter in a goatherd's cottage. The goatherd was not at home. King Alfred spent the night with the goatherd's wife but our teacher won't allow us to say what happened.*

Accurate Crabtree perception of grim realities and sensitivity to nature are clearly discernible in these lines inspired by the poet's close association with country school pupils.

Sometimes sulking, as they trudged
for miles, like patient toiling brutes,
Their stockings round the ankles and

hearts down in their boots.
Shimm'ring grasses at the roadside,
swaying in the breeze,
Bush birds enjoying freedom, darting in
and out of trees;
Nature calling little rebels to take creek-track
to the pool.
Hard seats, grim slates and blackboards
were what welcomed them to school.

Attention to the needs of those in the outback, Mr President, has been one of the pleasing and relatively successful aspects of Australian teaching and our often clumsy educational administration. We have in our archives this special piece of evidence relating to Joseph Crabtree and the education of those with special needs. It is a copy of a letter from Matthew Rolleston, Tutor of University College Oxford, to the father of Sir Thomas Phillipps. Our flimsy but very treasured copy is in the meticulous handwriting of the Immortal Memory transcribed from *The Family Affairs of Sir Thomas Phillipps,* A.N.L. Munby (1952: p.10).[2] This valuable letter bears testimony to Crabtree's *unremitting* and *effective* attention, as a teacher, to a pupil's needs.

Further evidence of Crabtree width of interest and acute observation is provided in the historic natural museum section of the old Warrnambool Mechanics Institute. A Mr Pittock, geologist and teacher, and the School Commissioner for the Western District at the time, identified an interesting fossilized impression on some limestone from a local quarry. The fossil is clearly claimed by a Mr Crabtree to be the record of an early inhabitant of the district having sat firmly on some ancient sediment.

I suggest, Mr President, that this Chapter cannot recognize the Warrnambool fossil as evidence of a Crabtree influence on Australian geology. Our distinguished legal orator, Mr Patrick Kilbride, in the stirring conclusion of his splendid (1978) oration, clearly prescribed the legal requirements to be *footprints in the sands of time*. To accept the Warrnambool fossil as Crabtree evidence would obviously have the footprint requirement arse up.

The area east and north-east of Port Phillip and Western-Port Bays (towns of the Bunuron, Baling-Wilam and Naring-Wilam tribes) attracted a remarkable array of settlers and early settlement there is the source of some interesting historical writings. I am sure the district holds much promise for Crabtree scholars.

Our poet in the limited time he could have spent there learned much of both the harsh fringe pioneering life and the comparative comfort of the unique communities which eventually developed quite rapidly.

In Niel Gunson's, *The Good Country,* we read of the early squatters near Western-Port: *A good percentage of them were gentlefolk coming from prosperous mercantile, professional and even aristocratic backgrounds*. Many were young and *proving themselves* before settling down

[2] Ref Appendix

to inherited roles. Their life-style assumed almost an adventure-book pattern greatly influenced, of course, by their strange physical environment and social circumstances peculiar to new and unique settlements.

I mentioned earlier the reunion of Christopher Pine-Coffin and Crabtree. This, I believe, took place in the district near Cranbourne. The papers of William J. Thomas (Vol.27, 125-131) are rich with colourful references of which my time permits only scant attention to those with a Crabtree connection.

> *There was in the district a choleric, eccentric medical practitioner, who was affectionately known as 'Old Pills' or the 'Old Doc'.*

Old Pills for a time had a young assistant with the French name Le Pine who was remarkably adept with live-stock, particularly sheep, and rendered valuable veterinary service to the scattered settlers. If this were Crabtree's erstwhile companion (and there is evidence as we shall see, from the Dumaresq family records that it was) an historian has the problem of trying to explain why with a promising future in a new and developing district young Christopher should choose to drop the latter portion of his ancient aristocratic name.

Eventually Dr William Kerr Jamieson, *Old Pi1ls*, laid aside his potions and blisters, gathered together some fine flocks of sheep and joined the squattocracy. As for our young friend Le Pine, finding it difficult to settle down permanently to rural pursuits, he transported to Melbourne Town where in the homes of eminent citizens, he was for several years undertaking the edification of their sons. However, Le Pine was finally lost to education when he became interested in a certain aspect of the new country's commercial enterprise.

A member of the Dumaresq family, which is featured in Neil Gunson's publication (1968: 242),was one of Crabtree's confreres in Paris. He became a well-known tutor and school master in the Port Phillip district. Having more than a passing interest in literary affairs his papers and memoirs are valuable and fascinating .

Dumaresq records a ballad composed by the *Rip-tail Roarer* about the only drinking house for the Western-Port squatters. It captures the spirit of the *No Good Damper Inn*, but I am not certain the *poetry* could be claimed as vintage Crabtree.

Consider for example:

> *We'll empty things and use them right*
> *Each case and box and hamper*
> *With what delight each bumper bright*
> *We'll drain at No Good Damper.*

However, the *object lesson* poems to which Dumaresq often referred are a Crabtree influence, I believe, and therefore important in our educational history. Object lessons were a teaching device of the time designed to apply some of John Locke's educational principles. If well-managed they were thought to cultivate *sense - perception and observation and accustom children to express their thoughts in words*. Teacher training in the precise methods of using

these lessons stressed *the proper order as - Things, Ideas, and Words*.

François Dumaresq has carefully preserved some Crabtree lines from poems related to school object lessons. One refers to the contemplation of an old shoe:

A poor old shoe there are thousands such
And each much like a man,
All shapes and sizes just like us,
Some black some white some tan.

Provided with a tongue you see,
And each one has a sole.
When broken down they're patched afresh
And heeled to make them whole.

Another was obviously inspired by the finding of a well-worn and long untouched saddle:

Still, there by the hay-box the saddle hangs idle,
And cobwebs all over its strappings are spun.
There's rust on the stirrups and dust on the bridle,
And mildew'd 's the leather once baked in the sun.

Any impact on the training of educators would have a long-term influence on educational development. I believe, Gentlemen, I can reveal at least two examples of Crabtree's contribution in this important area.

In a publication of the Australian Council for Educational Research on "Supervision and Inspection of Schools" (1961), there is an appendix which gives interesting material from the Crabtree period of the previous century. It includes criticism of the "continual and indiscriminate application of what is known as the 'suggestive method' of questioning. This was referred to as *seductive* teaching.

Good educators would use *eduction* in their class-rooms, Mr President, not *seduction*.

Early this century the influence of the Crabtree complot was still evident by the presence of the Crabtree Cube in many lecture rooms and laboratories devoted to teacher training. When models and objects were so popular in class teaching, effective teacher-training lecturers showed great versatility in their use of the cube as an aid to theoretical exposition.

Its six sides, for example, were used when illustrating the six *maxims of method* which characterized good teaching, the first of which was *Proceed from the known to the unknown*.

(An aside)

Maxims - Proceed from:
the known to the unknown;
the particular to the general;
the simple to the complex;

the concrete to the abstract;
the relative to the absolute;
impression to expression.

The six sides of the one form were used to represent the six powers (or faculties) of the mind (perception, retention, conception, recognition, imagination and critical evaluation) which were identified by Hamilton (1788-1856) . The 'advanced' educators of the time believed "that the cultivation of these 'powers' through appropriate mental exercise was preferable to the mere acquisition of knowledge."

More reactionary educators (such as John Wesley) postulated six spiritual diseases (atheism, pride, worldliness, anger, guile and lack of mercy and justice), the eradication of which should be the main goal of education.

I have already suggested that Crabtree and his Paris circle perceived the cube as a perfect form representing a philosophical 'mean', and a symbol with which to philosophize. Crabtree believed it exemplified unity, balance and strength of purpose, which were all desirable qualities in an educational system and in the personalities the system should produce.

Our Educator-Poet and his fellow reformists considered civilization was headed for catastrophe, and believed its hope of survival lay in improved forms of education. Our current education-news headlines seem to echo their warnings.

In the "Australian" of January 6, we read of "a controversial bill passed in the Victorian Parliament and giving the Minister of Employment and Training potential control of tertiary education".. and that "effectively there will now be three ministers in the education area that would seem to be fostering confusion for the future to say the least."

The 'Education Special Features in the Melbourne AGE last week proclaimed proposed radical reorganisation of education as "Heading for long overdue reform"; and called the new appointments of senior administrators in the structure "A Game of musical chairs".

Mr President, one must, almost, forgive the cynics who say our planning is little farther advanced than that of the first Governor-cum Director of Education.

Our charter this evening, Mr President, is not to find answers to insoluble problems of our own designing. We are met to honour the name of one who at a formative period in educational thinking seems to have given challenging concepts, a vision if you like, and faith, hope and warning.

To honour Joseph Crabtree worthily we must cling to his faith and heed his warning. In 1980, a Tom Crabtree, in his splendid book *On Teenagers*, dedicated *to the Crabtree family and its many colourful branches*, has done just this in a very important and difficult area of our educational practice.

Martin Peter Hansen, one of our Directors of Education whose name like Crabtree's has not received its due recognition, repeated our Poet's warning during the threatening days of the

1930's. He would agree with Crabtree that:

Harsh is the track and long the journey
of the scholar as he plods
In search of truthful fragments from
the classroom of the gods.

Hansen used the Virgil allusion of *avernus* as a symbol of the catastrophe which can so easily befall an ill-prepared society.

Gentlemen, the mallet depicted in the painting we have studied represents the Teacher's Voice: Virgil echoed the warning of that Voice to us in the line

Facilis descensus Averno
(Easy is the descent to catastrophe)

(*The Aeneid*, Book VI : line 126)

APPENDIX: A TREASURE IN OUR ARCHIVES (ref. Oration p.19)

Letter from Matthew Rolleston, Tutor of University College Oxford to the father of Sir Thomas Phillipps.

I observed likewise a slowness of apprehension and mediocrity of talent which, notwithstanding all his application and painstaking, would materially obstruct his progress. Of this I daily became more convinced as he approached the period of his first examination, and I felt satisfied that he would not pass securely through this ordeal, unless he obtained that minute attention and that particular assistance, which the multiplied engagements of his public tutors necessarily prevented them affording him beyond his fellow students. It was this conviction that determined the advice I gave him to apply to a private tutor; and the event has fully justified my advice,, as, I am certain, nothing but the effectual assistance and unremitting attentions of Mr Crabtree, the gentleman to whom I recommended him, aided by his own assiduity, could have enabled him to pass that examination, as he now fortunately has done …

Copied by Arthur Brown from:

A N L Munby *: The Family Affairs of Sir Thomas Phillipps*, 1952, p 10.

(Letter, perhaps fortunately, undated. A.B.)

OBJECT LESSON

An Old Shoe

A poor old shoe there are thousands such
And each much like a man,
All shapes and sizes just like us
Some black, some white, some tan;
Provided with a tongue you see
And each one has a sole,
When broken down they're patched afresh,
And heeled to make them whole.

Like men in youth they are well tanned,
They're hammered to the last.
In them the maker puts his awl
'ere on the world they're cast.
And how like men in their infinite variety,
Some lowly tread the paths of life
Some walk in high society;
Strong ones made of bullock hide
and soft ones labelled 'calf',
Some honest leather, some alas
of paper nearly half.

And just like women now and then
Cut low and tightly laced,
With dainty bows marked 'latest style'
In public view well placed;
Some heavy and unyielding
squeaking without reason.
Some made to bear the brunt of time,
Some just to last a season.

This poor old shoe without reward
uncomplaining, undemanding,
Has guarded someone's footsteps
upheld his understanding,
His constant companion, oft trodden in the mud
Now worn out;
Worn out for his master's good.