

The Crabtree Foundation (Australian Chapter)
1996 Annual Oration
The First Coming of Crabtree

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Mr. President, Elders and Scholars.

The world hangs heavy on the shoulders of an orator pregnant with mighty revelations. For a moment let me share with you my trials.

First, the past is daunting. Previous orations have been of such magnificence as to leave scholars breathless, speechless and in many cases legless. To gain inspiration I remembered the words of Isaac Newton who said "If I have seen farther than other men it is by standing on the shoulders of giants". Accordingly, to gain a better vantage point for my oration. I sought out former orators in order to climb on to their broad backs.

This turned out to be easier than expected as they were all lying down - many in a tired and emotional state. What a sadness to see now such fine men who, in the past, in the pursuit of truth and wisdom have given their balls. (I beg your pardon that should be "In the pursuit of truth and wisdom have given their all"). In the quest for further information I had my tie forensically examined in an attempt to discover what had been on the menu at previous meetings. This brought little success but considerable nourishment and indeed the entree you have enjoyed this very evening contains portions of it. I would certainly appreciate the person who ate my tie clip to return it to me in due course - after a suitable passage of time. As a last resort I carefully analysed the "Votes of Thanks" at each meeting and noted one common theme running through them all - that was, none of them bore any connection whatsoever to either the orator or the oration. In fact this can be evidenced by the famous Salmondian Vote of Thanks which is now generally accepted by scholars not to have been delivered in English and of course the legendary Sebonian Vote which plumbed such new levels of incomprehensible gibberish that it recently received the ultimate accolade by being listed as required reading in the Law Faculty of this very university. For inspiration, I read Horace, Pliny the Elder, Pliny the Younger and even Pliny the "Yet to be potty trained". They all told me the same thing. That is - I can't remember a bloody word of Latin.

So, feeling like an elderly, asthmatic dung beetle who has just entered the Augean Stables the morning after a laxative party amongst the horses of the gods, I embark upon my monumental task single handed.

My story begins in the British Museum in London. In particular, in the Erotic Books and Artifacts Section so much beloved by our own dear Royal Family. I had just passed an intense hour and a half closely studying (for research purposes only) a splendid tome entitled "Learn to Love" only to discover to my lasting disappointment and chagrin that it was in fact volume 11 of Encyclopaedia Britannica. I was broken from my reverie by an outbreak of noisy commotion in a nearby anteroom - the unmistakable sound of the slap of open palm upon bare buttock and the cries of "Who's a naughty boy then?" clearly indicated the presence of several senior

members of the British government. As objects started flying past my head it became clear that I was caught in the cross fire between rival gangs - quite possibly the almost legendary Harrow Hanky Panky Spanky faction of the British Conservative Party had fallen foul of the equally violent Randy Rogerers and Cross Dressers section of the Old Etonians.

Without warning and with a resounding thwack one of their missiles struck me firmly on the back of the head and fell on to the seat beside me. I examined the missile carefully. It was wooden, cucumber shaped and about six inches in length. There was no doubt that it was an imitation phallus. Despite being only half normal size, the likeness was remarkable and imagine my surprise scholars, when on examining it more closely I found carved along its length, in the most beautiful copperplate, the words "Property of Joseph Crabtree. Do not remove". The fight around me had by this time subsided and the combatants had mostly returned to the House of Commons for afternoon tea and a spot of three line whipping, and thus I made my way over to the anteroom whence the wooden phallus had appeared. I needed to look no further than a battered chest in the corner that on closer inspection contained scores of similar wooden objects. The lid of the chest carried the rather cryptic inscription "Club Property - Members Only". Further examination of the contents revealed underneath about a dozen circular horseshoes and the remnants of an old and tattered book. Could this be the Crabtree Eldorado - the final resting place of his legendary school boy diary that scholars have searched for, ever since they dared believe of its existence? No it wasn't - it was in fact an old South East region bus timetable dumped there by some former curator. Underneath it however was Crabtree's school boy diary. Scholars, the revelations I now place before you are of such import that I give fair warning many of you will be so moved as to assume a beatific expression and slip effortlessly to the floor in silent and awesome amazement. In fact I note that in anticipation of these revelations several scholars have already done so.

It appears that although Chipping Sodbury was Joseph's birthplace his schooling took place in a nearby village - a Cotswold, picturesque, thatched roofing, babbling brook sort of a village with the even more picturesque name of Wilting-under-Buggery. Joseph attended an elite scholastic establishment in the village run by a leading educationalist of the day - Ezekiel Sheepshagger. The Sheepshaggers were a well respected and noble family with a fine lineage.

In fact there had been Sheepshaggers at Agincourt, although this may have been a misinterpretation of one of King Henry's dispatches in which he remarked that his army appeared to be almost entirely full of them. The young Joseph enjoyed his school work immensely and as a boarder at the school eagerly sought news from home. To his delight his parents kept him informed of the progress of the Crabtree siblings - particularly of his favourite - a youngster who in all respects was the complete opposite of Joseph - muscular, coarse featured, bearded (since the age of 6) and most interestingly of all, female. She had not surprisingly, in those conservative times, been accordingly, named Genghis. More of Genghis Crabtree later.

However. Joseph loved to receive news of his father's career as a musical instrument maker, specialising as he did in instruments for the tone deaf. Who could forget his inventions of the stringless violin, the stickless triangle, the cymbal and his piece de resistance the Wurlitzer organ complete with power cord and nowhere to plug it in for 150 years. In this regard, Joseph had tried to follow in his father's footsteps and he wrote music every day, but had never managed to get beyond the letters M U S. Indeed Joseph owed him his nickname of "Toothy"

which he had acquired one day when he entered the room unexpectedly as his father was practising the trombone.

In the diary I had discovered, Joseph seems to have recorded carefully some of the important events of his school days and I will now read to you some of the few remaining legible extracts, kept in his first flush of youth, that perhaps indicate the reasons for his later unusual behaviour.

June 14th.

School is fun and although it is only for boys, the headmaster's eldest daughter Meg sits in our lessons. She smiles at me for no reason. I wish she'd stop. Mr. Sheepshagger insists we speak only in Latin at school.

June 15th.

Learned Latin for street. We all had to practise asking "Where is the street?" in Latin. Meg still smiling at me.

June 16th.

At last we learned the Latin for lavatory. The relief is terrific. Meg just keeps on smiling at me - her face is going to crack soon.

June 17th.

Mr. Sheepshagger said that today we would conjugate the Latin verb to love. Meg asked me if I knew what conjugate meant. I didn't but pretended I did and said I would show her one day. She giggled and looked at me in a different way - at least it's better than all that smiling. New boy at school - made friends. His name is Rupert Ramsbladder. Meg smiles at him too.

June 23rd.

Meg chased me in the schoolyard. When she caught me she bit me on the neck in a really strange way. Perhaps she is hungry? I felt quite strange inside.
Illegible entries in a shaky hand at this point takes us to:

July 8th.

I am in love with Meg Sheepshagger. She is as beautiful as her name. I will love her every day of my life from now on and twice at weekends .

August 18th.

Rupert Ramsbladder is a great friend. He always comes along with Meg and I and is fine company. He told me he is very shy of girls and this helps him a lot. I wish he wouldn't join us quite so often however.

September 6th.

Rupert told me that Meg ran by him today without her clothes on. He said this came as no surprise and it had happened lots of times before but only on the inside of his head. She was probably looking for me.

The three of us are all going on an outing this weekend.

I have told Meg not to worry about Rupert even if he is a little shy.

September 10th.

Outing a great success. Meg was kind and said I didn't need to help with packing up and could go on ahead. She said she would stay behind with Rupert and put their things together.

September 12th.

Meg has left the school and run off with Rupert Ramsbladder. My life is finished. I will starve myself to death and show her how much I care.

Had eels for tea - they tasted off. Serves me right for backsliding on a promise.

September 13th.

Double woe is me - my beloved Meg has left me and my stomach is going up and down quicker than Mary Potter's drawers. Thank goodness I remember the Latin for lavatory.

Several pages of the diary are missing here - apparently torn out in considerable haste. There is a scribbled note however that reads : "Three days ago I felt as though the bottom was falling out of my world and now I feel as if the world is falling out of my bottom".

The remaining extracts from the diary are in the main illegible apart from a rather peculiar diagram (which appears to involve several people in unusual positions) and what as a result of scientific dating turns out to be the remains of an eighteenth century pilchard, and thus there is little more to study.

This rejection by his beloved Meg had a dramatic effect on Joseph's life. He left school immediately, took up lodging in the village and decided to become celibate. Worse still, he also decided that a life of celibacy was not only for him. but for everyone else as well. He vowed to dedicate the rest of his days to the total eradication of sexual intercourse. His views became puritanical to an extreme degree and he decided that he would lead a personal crusade that would probably conclude in the curtailment of the human race. To this end he started a learned society to give people a sensible alternative to fornication, and called it the "It's Better Manually" Society. Regrettably, even after 6 months the office bearers still read: President: J. Crabtree, Hon. Sec. : J. Crabtree, Treasurer: J. Crabtree, membership : one. At this point, Joseph girded his loins, tied up the loose ends and set forth to divide those who would multiply. He commissioned the manufacture of hundreds of wooden phalluses and circular horseshoes each of which he carefully inscribed with his name and the instruction not to remove it. These he placed in a sturdy chest with the "Club Property" inscription I had already seen. His avowed intention was to seek out those hedonists who engaged in these disgusting activities and hold them up to public ridicule. Accordingly, each night he would roam the village, listening at doors and peeping through keyholes to identify the guilty parties. If he found any people engaged in sexual congress he would nail a wooden phallus in a prominent and upright position on the door of the offender's home to indicate his censure. If no such acts were taking place he would nail a circular horseshoe there as a suitable compliment. Unfortunately this had the opposite effect that he desired. Indeed, in the first 6 weeks of his campaign the blacksmith's door had collapsed on three separate occasions due to the weight of wooden phalluses that Joseph had been obliged to nail there. The entrance to the forge was now marked by a relatively orderly queue of ladies from the village, all apparently wishing to feed the horse. Conversely, his good friend Richard the miller's son, who's abstinence Joseph had rewarded by nailing many a circular horseshoe to his door, had in consequence to this suffered some humiliation. Poor Richard was now known in the village as "Floppy Dick".

Unperturbed by these minor setbacks, Joseph continued his programme with even greater vigour. He now carried with him a ladder which he placed against the upper storey of potential offender's homes, allowing him to examine their nocturnal activities from the correct vantage point. Again the village populace responded by leaving their shutters open at night and throwing clods of earth, small tables and authorised versions of the Bible at his inquisitive and censorious gaze as it appeared in the windows of their bed chambers. To protect himself from these objects on his nocturnal missions, Joseph had taken to wearing his landlady's chamber pot upon his head - thereby inventing the crash helmet and sewage disposal system at one and the same time. Indeed. Joseph's landlady certainly suspected him of being the thief of her prized po, but as she confessed to her friends, she had nothing to go on.

Each night the young Joseph cut a fine figure, atop a ten foot ladder wearing a size seven and three eighths chamber pot pushed firmly down upon his noble brow, steaming with righteous indignation and the recent contents of his landlady, rattling the shutters of the windows shouting "Stop it, stop it , whatever you're doing!". In perfecting his activities Joseph had enlisted the support of his strapping sister Genghis and the blacksmith's assistant - a young Greek lad by the name of Con Slapanticklous latterly arrived from his home village of Clitoris in the Greek islands. Con had manufactured, according to Joseph's careful design, a form of advanced pedal bin, made from the finest pewter. The aim of this was, by careful application of springs and pedals to project the appropriate artifact upwards to Joseph's outstretched hand as he stood at the top of the ladder with hammer and nails at the ready. In this endeavour, aim and accuracy were everything. Three feet to the left and the night sky would be filled with a myriad of spinning horseshoes and flying phalluses. Three feet to the right and Joseph would probably be joining them. In fact Joseph's eyes still watered at the memory of the night when young Genghis, afflicted with an attack of hay fever and repetitive sneezing had sent (courtesy of her delicate size 15 boot) a triple volley of flying phalluses, at something approaching the speed of sound, directly towards the seat of his trousers as he waited expectantly atop the ladder. When he awoke some time later in the local hospital and was asked in time honoured fashion by the admitting nurse, his name, his age, his religion and whether he had had his bowels open recently. Joseph rather confusingly but emphatically answered "Yes" to all four questions. Scholars, my research shows that at this point in his life Joseph made some form of re-evaluation, as well as having his trouser seat reinforced, and embarked on the great works that many orators have already so lucidly explained. However, whilst probably still only a youth of 17 or 18 his contribution to civilisation had already been significant.

Therefore, scholars, it is time to distil the young Crabtree's contribution to posterity. Let us look closely at the new words his activities had created. The acronym for the "It's Better Manually" society is IBM, a name now used by one of the world's most influential corporations; his landlady's plaintive cries as she walked the village streets and recognised fragments of her beloved chamberpot knocked from Joseph's head were almost certainly "Those are MY PO CHIPS". Remember Richard the miller's son and his name "FLOPPY DICK" and Joseph's schoolyard complaints of his former love were almost certainly "MEG BITES". However, I note in particular the advanced pedal bin designed by Joseph to project his artifacts up to him at the top of the ladder. Whilst it should have carried the name of its designer, it undoubtedly carried that of its young Greek maker and the metal from which it was made. In other words inscribed on the side were the words "CON PEWTER".

Whether Crabtree went on to design the insides and workings of the modern computer is still

unknown and must be the subject of further research, however, the brilliant invention of upright phalluses and circular horseshoes is without doubt the original source of the ones and zeroes of binary arithmetic, without which the electronic computer cannot operate. Indeed it is highly significant that Joseph's "CONPEWTER" was brimming with them. Nonetheless all this is largely irrelevant for Joseph had already given the world so much more. He had provided us with the embryo of a vocabulary without which no modern business, organisation or government can operate. Unfortunately he had also allowed people with no clothes sense, monotone voices and personal hygiene problems to bore the living shit out of complete strangers at parties, by simply using a handful of these words over and over again. To balance this, he had allowed that intellectually limited group, professors of computing, to appear intelligent in public places by the careful use of this jargon when faced with the horrendous reality that the sum total of their knowledge is now taught in the first 3 weeks of Grade 6. He had given the English language its start on a new and special extension. Joseph Crabtree had given the world Computer Bullshit.

Scholars my revelations are over but before leaving I charge you with a weighty task. Justice must be done and the computers of all shapes and sizes that cover our desks and fill our places of work should bear the correct name. I exhort you therefore to go to your homes and offices and seek out the machinery that carries the name computer - even into the Arts Faculties of our own universities where these machines can be readily identified by the large amounts of white out on their screens - seek out these ill named objects and replace the word "computer" with the name "Crabtree". I have already begun, and I assure you scholars that this very oration was prepared on an It's Better Manually Personal Crabtree and indeed I hold a permanent copy of it on the floppy dick in my own pocket. For Joseph's sake we must act now.

Thank you.