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CRABTREE AND THE HINGE OF FATE
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Like all Orators before me, I have been humbled by the man in whose honour we meet tonight. That Joseph Crabtree was a unique man, we do not question; that he made a major impact on the world (albeit one that has largely gone unrecognised) is also without doubt — poet, scientist, entrepreneur, philosopher — a true polymath. Yet what has intrigued me is how this national asset, one of Britain's finest men, seemingly played no part in the great political events that dominated the age in which he lived. For he lived in a time of war and of revolution, an age that saw empires rise and fall, an era in which Britain faced perhaps her greatest dangers. How, I asked myself, could Britain not have turned to one of her greatest men at such a time? And how could such a great intellect not have played a role in these dramatic historical events?

So I began my research and, as my journey took me around the world, across the European continent, to the Americas and even to India, I have been able to fit together some of the pieces of the jigsaw that was Crabtree's life, which, although not yet complete, I am privileged to share with you tonight. And what a story I uncovered!

Mr. President, the debt this country owes to Joseph Crabtree is a great one indeed and it is humbling to discover how he did so much for his country, yet for which he sadly received so little reward.

The first clues to Crabtree's service to his country were found by previous Scholars who discovered that he was a spy. In his subliminal Oration, Fred Gee asked how you could tell if a man was a spy: living above one's means, making impetuous journeys and having a large number of aliases, together with a knowledge of codes and cyphers and, above all, an insatiable curiosity — all attributes of Crabtree and all pointing to Crabtree having been employed by the nation as an 'intelligence agent' — for spy is a crude and mean term. But Crabtree was no ordinary agent; as I have discovered, he was the best — the 007 of his day — a man whose actions changed the very course of history.

Our story begins in 1770 when young Crabtree, while working with Richard Price, F.R.S., proved himself able to open sealed letters without the subsequent recipient knowing that the contents had been read. Such skills were quickly recognised and Lord Shelburne recruited Crabtree to the new government intelligence service, a service in which one William Pitt (the Younger) took a great interest. Crabtree then went to Oxford and, you will recall, in 1773 was sent down for writing satirical verses about his tutor, Jacob Jefferson, who you will also recall was second cousin to Thomas Jefferson. That same year our colonial cousins grew restless, with the so-called Boston Tea Party. As such protests turned to full-scale rebellion, the British government determined to send its youngest and brightest agents to the Americas to 'do their bit'. Crabtree was particularly eager to go as it provided a perfect opportunity to revenge himself on the Jefferson family.

Thus Crabtree sailed for America in 1776 and, with the aid of his relation Captain Agreen Crabtree of Hancock Point, Maine — a staunch loyalist — was soon able to found an efficient intelligence network. Alas, its organisation (consisting of young ladies who gathered intelligence in their boudoirs while 'thinking of England' — an expression which Joseph may indeed have coined or at least encouraged them with) was frowned upon by many in the British and Loyalist High Command as unworthy (typifying their view of the war, in which they judged the colonials as not 'playing the game') and much of the intelligence Crabtree gathered was ignored. Only General Gage, commander of Boston upon Crabtree's arrival, was willing to listen and the two men became life-long friends. Indeed, I can exclusively reveal to you that for many years Crabtree would visit General Gage at his London home (41 Portland Place, where my good lady wife now works) and if you look in the cellar there today, you will find scratched in the wall, almost faded away, the initials JKC and TG inscribed either side of a sketch of a bottle of claret (alas the label is unreadable) drawn no doubt after they had consumed a particularly fine case of claret.

The role of Crabtree in assisting the loyalist forces during the American war has yet to be fully revealed but I must refute the earlier claims that he was a double agent working for the rebels. True, he was well known by them and he may well have assisted in drafting the *Declaration of Independence* — that 'worthless scrap of paper' as he later called it

— but he did not believe it would ever come to fruition.

Thus it was with great sadness that he saw government indolence and military incompetence lose the war. However, his own reputation emerged from the war enhanced on both sides! After Yorktown, he wound up his organisation, arranging for the young women to be married to retiring soldiers of the Continental Army, and they founded Crab Orchard in Kentucky near, appropriately enough, Dick's River. Alas on 24 November 1792 all were killed in an Indian raid and, with the destruction of the village, all files pertaining to Crabtree's role in the war were lost.

Returning to England, Crabtree soon decided to travel to France. He had made the acquaintance of several French officers during the war (while in the Rebel camp), including the young Lafayette. So in 1783, with the end of the war, he crossed the Channel to work in his Uncle Oliver's wine business in Orléans. Nevertheless, the next few weeks were far from sedentary. Visits to Sweden in 1784 (to ensure the survival of the Linnaean collection), Rome in 1785, Naples 1787, and return visits to London followed as he reported valuable intelligence to his friend, and now Prime Minister, William Pitt (the Younger). Indeed, as both were partial to claret, their evening meetings were often long and ended with both sleeping soundly on the floor! Amongst his valuable intelligence reports sent in these years were advance warning of French naval construction at Cherbourg, the news of the sailing of Peyrouse's 'Secret Expedition' to New Zealand and, crucially, the interception of key papers passing between Madrid and Paris during the Nootka Sound Crisis of 1789. The courier staying overnight in Orléans was entertained with fine wine and a young lady of Joseph's acquaintance who, after ensuring the courier slept soundly, passed the papers to Crabtree for copying.

However, such events paled into insignificance compared with those now breaking over Crabtree's adopted homeland — France. There is some evidence that Crabtree was present at the storming of the Bastille, having assumed the alias of a *sans culotte* nicknamed '*pomme sauvage*'. As the revolution gathered momentum, so Crabtree's services were called upon with increasing frequency. In 1791, with his Swedish friend Count Axel Ferson, he planned the daring escape of the royal family, which ended so tragically at Varennes, when King Louis, ignoring Crabtree's advice, dallied too long in a pub. Escaping himself, Crabtree was, as Michael Freeman reported, able to attend the coronation of Leopold II in Prague (and subsequently may have played a role in Mozart's death). In 1792 he arranged a meeting between that (anti-hero) Talleyrand and William Pitt, allegedly to discuss the metric system of weights and measures, but in fact, from this day forth, a trinity was formed between Talleyrand, Pitt and Crabtree, seeking to tame the revolution that now threatened to engulf not just France but the whole world.

Within France, Crabtree needed an alias with which to serve the new Republican regime, for a *sans culotte* did not rise high in the new government, even one pledged to equality — some (lawyers mainly) were clearly more equal than others. I believe I have discovered Crabtree's alias in France throughout this period. He used the name Jean Pierre Chauveau (hot veal being one of his favourite dishes, and also perhaps a nickname given to him by one of his earlier French lady friends). Jean Pierre Chauveau served first the Republic and then the Empire in a manner that is hard to follow: allegedly an artillery officer but one whose long periods of absence from regimental duties suggest he acted as a secret agent. Awarded the Legion of Honour and later made a Colonel in Napoleon's Imperial Guard, Chauveau was at the very centre of power in the new Empire — where better for Crabtree *agent extraordinaire* to be?

Thus Crabtree negotiated the difficult days of the Revolution, as either '*pomme sauvage*' or Jean Pierre Chauveau, doing what he could to save members of the aristocracy from 'Madame la Guillotine' — daring rescues and narrow escapes such that in future years the Baroness Orczy would record many of them as having been undertaken by her fictional character the Scarlet Pimpernel. What better verse for Crabtree Scholars than:

We seek him here, we seek him there
We seek him everywhere.
Is he in heaven? Is he in Hell?
That Damned elusive Crabtree.

Like the fictional character, Crabtree left his own calling card — a crab-apple! Of his doomed attempt to rescue the

Dauphin, however, I can find little, but believe his ultimate fate was known by Crabtree, a secret he never confided to anyone!

One incident in which he played a key role and one that had a lasting effect on this country took place in February 1797. The Republic sent an American adventurer named Colonel Tate with the sweepings of the Republic's jails and galleys to raid along the Bristol Channel and burn Bristol. Landing at Fishguard in Wales on the 22nd, this force of daring adventurers surrendered to the local militia, apparently mistaking the local women in their tall hats for a Brigade of Guards. A comic incident, but one that changed our country forever. For when news reached London, it had been greatly amplified: an army of 30,000 had taken Bristol! The Fleet had been defeated! There was a run on the banks, queues of clients besieged the doors of every bank and they soon ran out of coinage, such that on Saturday 26th the Cabinet agreed to suspend cash payments. What was to be done?

Crabtree, as we know, had for a long time been on the Bank of England's payroll (so as to cover his costs during his intelligence operations) and in France had worked on the new French currency (the *Assignat*, many millions of which he had forged to flood the market and drive down its value). Now he suggested that the Bank issue £1 and £2 paper notes as legal tender. For two days it was touch and go but on the 27th a reassuring statement showed that, after meeting all liabilities, the Bank had legal assets amounting to nearly ten million. The sound sense of the country did the rest and, by the time Parliament passed the legislation, the worst was over. The City and business accepted the use of notes and thus they have been used ever since, while precious hard specie could be sent to Europe to our allies to raise armies to fight the French, a decisive factor in the future conduct of the war. Crabtree had saved the day; indeed, as we know, Crabtree invented the first banknote numbering machine.

During the course of these events, Crabtree had met a young captain of artillery in Paris, Napoleon Bonaparte, and it has to be said that the two men became friends. Indeed, as the Orator Peter McMullen summarised, at first Crabtree greatly admired Napoleon, as many did, believing he could bring order to France and peace to Europe, taming the Revolution. Not that this friendship prevented Crabtree from doing his duty for England including the infamous dead-letter-box episode in Innsbruck.

I have actually visited the very room in which Crabtree stayed at the Hotel Gulden Adler in that town; his name, however, is missing from the ledger as he crossed it out to avoid embarrassment for the Baroness von Liechtenstein.

Indeed his prowess in this department was useful in his growing friendship with Napoleon as Crabtree — how can I say this delicately with ladies present? — helped the young general extend his reach with Josephine!

Crabtree's greatest exploit of the Revolutionary Wars, however, was to sabotage Napoleon's invasion of Egypt and thus end the threat to India. At 6 a.m. on 19 May 1798, Napoleon sailed from Toulon with Europe's biggest naval expedition to date. Aboard the fleet was the Scientific and Artistic Commission: five hundred 'civilians', including the chemist Bethollet, Monge (to whom Lavoisier attributed the discovery that water is made from hydrogen and oxygen, a feat we all know Crabtree had achieved with Joseph Priestley), Jean Baptiste Say (economist), Jean Baptiste Fourier, Etienne Geoffrey St Hilaire (zoologist), Conte (the inventor of the graphite pencil), Dolomieu (after whom Dolomite was named), Malus (whose studies of the polarisation of light won him the Rumford Medal of the Royal Society in 1811 — surely it is unique to award a prize to a scientist in a country with whom you are at war), and of course their intellectual peer, Joseph Crabtree. This expedition was surely the scientific highlight of Crabtree's scientific career — indeed how could he miss such an expedition?

Avoiding Nelson and the British fleet and after capturing Malta *en route*, the great expedition landed at Alexandria on 2 July. The army immediately marched upon Cairo and routed the Mameluke army on 21 July at the Battle of the Pyramids where, with the aid of the historical knowledge of Crabtree, Napoleon exhorted his troops saying '40 centuries look down upon you'.

But what of the great French fleet? It has never been resolved why, despite Napoleon sending express orders, the fleet did not sail to a safer refuge than Aboukir bay and thus avoid attack by Nelson. I can tonight reveal exclusively that while such an order was sent, it was never delivered, for it was Crabtree who was entrusted with it. Thus, on 8 August 1798 Nelson found the French fleet and destroyed it in the Battle of the Nile, a battle culminating in the explosion of the French flagship *L'Orient* and allowing Crabtree the onlooker to later pen the famous lines:

The boy stood on the burning deck,
Whence all but he had fled;
The flame that lit the battle's wreck
Shone round him o'er the dead.

Following the battle, Crabtree was dispatched by Napoleon to Algiers to solicit support from the Dey, a visit that allowed him, as recalled in Tancock's Oration, to pen the verse *Then spoke the sheikh of Algiers*. But Crabtree of course ensured no such alliance was formed and instead journeyed to Naples to meet Nelson and advise him of Napoleon's plans. There Emma Hamilton, captivated by Crabtree — preferring a man with two arms to one — swiftly sought Crabtree's company and, as Fred Gee recalled, Crabtree had to hide under the bed when the Admiral unexpectedly returned.

Returning to Egypt, Crabtree was able to pursue his scientific studies, advising Monge on the physics of the mirage and capillary action (a topic that appealed to Crabtree both for the purpose of drinking and for more intimate pleasures), discussing with Monge his theories of light and teaching Fourier some higher mathematics. However, Crabtree was also present at the birth of a new science, that of Egyptology. I hope in the future that another Scholar may investigate this further but, while visiting the village of Rosetta, Crabtree was approached by a young Captain Bouchard, who had uncovered a stone with three distinct written scripts upon it; Crabtree immediately recognised the importance of the Rosetta Stone and pledged his future to revealing its mysteries.

Trusted confidant as he was, Crabtree was one of that elite band chosen by Napoleon to accompany him in his secret departure from Egypt on 23 May 1799 to return to France, where the renewal of the continental war had seen the Republic descend into anarchy. Now during his time in Egypt Crabtree had, it must be said, fallen under Napoleon's spell and Crabtree believed that he alone could bring order to France and bring an end to the wars that had beleaguered Europe for a decade. Therefore, with his old friend Talleyrand, he helped Napoleon seize power in the *coup d'état* of the 18 Brumaire (9 November 1799). Then, upon Talleyrand's urging, he went to London to see William Pitt.

To Crabtree's dismay (and anger), Pitt refused Talleyrand's and Napoleon's offer of peace and from that day forward Pitt and Crabtree were bitter enemies. Pitt accused Crabtree of treachery in bringing Napoleon, Britain's most dangerous opponent, to power, while Crabtree accused Pitt of ignoring the opportunity to bring the wars to an end. Pitt dismissed Crabtree and ordered that henceforth his pay be stopped and all arrears were cancelled, leaving Crabtree destitute. Crabtree did the only thing he could and took remedial action. As Bromage recalled, Crabtree was found in a tunnel under the Bank of England, seeking to reclaim his funds.

After this, there was no place for Crabtree in England. He returned to France and, shortly afterwards, sailed from Le Havre for Rhode Island and Philadelphia. Without wishing to embarrass a previous Orator but necessarily to correct the facts, I must state that while he sailed to join the du Pont brothers, he did not sail with them, as the 27th Orator, Rowe, described; he followed them by a few weeks, bringing some of their chests (laden with chemicals) that they could not carry themselves.

Once in the United States, Crabtree swiftly resumed his old contacts and, as our august President explained in his own revealing Oration, set up the Crabtree Institute of America (CIA). However, without income, he had to look for a financial investment to provide funds commensurate with the lifestyle he had come to expect. As was told by Rowe, it was Crabtree's insight that led to his informing the du Pont brothers of the market for superior gunpowder in the United States and the brothers purchased a factory at Broom on the Brandywine river, sending Crabtree back to France to raise funds. But as we also know, Crabtree did not return, but the du Ponts' enterprise flourished into the vast chemical company we see today.

It was during his voyage back from the States that Crabtree increasingly dwelled on the injustice done to him by Pitt and determined to return to England and clear his name, but no sooner had he landed in Portsmouth than he saw in *The Times* the announcement of his death! For such was the enmity of Pitt that all traces of Crabtree were to be removed; indeed, not for the last time did his enemies seek to expunge his name from history.

Saddened, Crabtree was at a loss as to what to do when by chance he met his cousin George Crabtree, who was then sailing to India, where he had established a small trading house. Joseph went with him, and, as Datta told, the two men arrived in Calcutta in 1801. There, they met the Viceroy, the Earl of Mornington (the Marquess

Wellesley, brother to Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington), a fellow connoisseur of fine clarets. Soon a profitable trade was established by the Crabtree brothers — claret and fine wines to India, rhino horn and Indian hemp to Europe.

However, Joseph Crabtree was not to remain a merchant for long. The Viceroy was fitting out an expedition to sail up the Red Sea to attack the French army marooned in Egypt. Who better than Crabtree, with his intimate knowledge of that country to act as chief of staff? Thus it was Crabtree and not the Viceroy's brother, Arthur, who sailed with General Baird to Egypt. Not for the last time was Crabtree to overshadow Arthur Wellesley, a fact that the haughty Duke of Wellington was not to forget and *never forgive*, leading to a bitter enmity between these two men that, as we will shortly see, almost brought ruin to our country.

Crabtree's return to Egypt was followed by the surrender and evacuation of the French army from Egypt, ending their Eastern expedition, and it was Crabtree who, in the final articles of capitulation, ensured that the Rosetta Stone was sent to England where, of course, it still resides not far from here.

Crabtree returned to England in 1802 to find his old adversary Pitt out of office and Lord Addington the Prime Minister. Wordsworth, delighted by his mentor's return from the dead, dedicated *To The Cuckoo* to his return. Peace was finally signed (the Treaty of Amiens) and Crabtree was able to accompany the Secretary of the Royal Society, Sir Charles Blagden, to Paris to arrange the *Alliance Sciences* exchanges. Indeed Blagden was so impressed with the First Consul that, with Crabtree's support, he wrote on 25 May 1802 to the Royal Society President (Sir Joseph Banks) recommending that Napoleon be admitted as a Fellow. Alas, despite research in the Royal Society archives, this letter, like so many of Crabtree's papers, was found to be missing.

Although formally restored to life, Addington's Ministry did not restore Crabtree's pay and, with peace, it seemed that his days as an intelligence agent were over. So in 1803 Crabtree returned to India.

India, where the sensual pleasures of the *Kama Sutra* called upon all of his research tenacity, always fascinated Joseph Crabtree and, later in his life, I believe he made many visits to the subcontinent, most of which have yet to be revealed. He travelled widely, discussing philosophy with the sages, learning the secrets of the occult and tantric rites. He was widely admired by many of the gurus and I believe took part in the *Kumbh Mela* where, naked, he bathed in the Ganges, his physical form drawing the admiration of many present.

Yet the two years he was there saw the subcontinent torn apart by the Marathas wars and once again the destinies of Arthur Wellesley and Joseph Crabtree were intermingled. As Arthur Wellesley built his military reputation at Assaye and Argaum, he sought to conceal the role of Crabtree in his success. For it was through Crabtree's actions that the Marathas armies were at the crucial moment deprived of their French officers and through bribery and blackmail that several Rajas were persuaded to remain aloof from the struggle. Arthur Wellesley, however, was not one to let another gain credit, however well deserved, when it would denude his own laurels, and thus Crabtree's role in these events has for too long gone unrecorded.

The Indian wars concluded and Britain's supremacy in the subcontinent secured, Crabtree left for England when his mentor the Earl of Mornington was replaced by Lord Cornwallis, he who surrendered the British army at Yorktown losing the American War, and hence a man Crabtree would have despised even had he not been a port-and-brandy man and not a claret man, as Orator Datta documents. Quite simply, Crabtree could not stay in India with such a man at the helm.

On his voyage back to Europe, Crabtree met Admiral Nelson's fleet and, joining him, was present at our greatest naval victory, off Cape Trafalgar. Who also but Crabtree could have composed that poignant and dramatic famous signal *England expects every man to do his duty*? Thus he was present at the Admiral's death when Nelson, perhaps knowing of Crabtree's liaison with Lady Hamilton, exhorted him to look after her, exclaiming 'Kiss her hard, Crabtree' — which, amid the din of battle, was heard by a slightly deaf Flag Captain as 'Kiss me Hardy'.

The next few years were momentous ones for Crabtree and Europe. Ever playing the *agent extraordinaire*, Crabtree can be traced as Jean Pierre Chauveau at the Battles of Austerlitz (1805), Jena (1806) and Friedland (1807), where he was present at the famous meeting between Napoleon and Czar Alexander on the raft at Tilsit. Crabtree was able to set up an intelligence network in Poland to denounce the two Emperors' plans, a network

based on the University of Vilna where, as Frank Carter recalled, he was given a Chair. However Crabtree could not enjoy this academic post for long as he was recalled to go to the Iberian Peninsula, where Napoleon's attempt to place his brother on the Spanish throne had led to a national revolt which swiftly spread to Portugal, where a French occupation army led by General Junot was soon confronted by a British army under none other than Arthur Wellesley! Once again Crabtree did his job well as he misled Junot into attacking Wellesley with inferior numbers at Vimerio on 21 August 1808. Wellesley won a battle he could not lose and Britain gained her first decisive land victory on the European mainland. However, the spoils of victory were thrown away by the subsequent convention signed at Sintra, by which Junot was permitted free evacuation and repatriation by the Royal Navy, complete with baggage and booty. Crabtree was furious and penned those immortal lines since attributed to his friend Wordsworth '*Britannia sickens, Cintra, at thy name*', writing a denunciatory pamphlet (extracts of which appeared in *The Times*) and touring the Dales with Wordsworth defaming Wellesley for signing such a document. Wellesley's family connections ensured that the blame was placed upon other senior officers and he was able to return to the Peninsula, where he won fresh laurels; but Crabtree and Wellington were now bitter enemies, to the detriment of our war effort. It was an enmity that certainly prolonged the Peninsular War.

In the next few years, Crabtree continued to play a major role in Napoleonic Society, becoming a Baron of the Empire and taking part in the fateful invasion of Russia in 1812. Indeed, he played a pivotal role in that eventful campaign. Given responsibility for preparing the Grande Armée's clothing for the campaign, Crabtree used his knowledge of metallurgy to prepare metal buttons from an alloy that, below a certain temperature, cracked. Thus as the French army struggled back from Moscow and as the temperature fell, so did the soldiers' apparel, and hence the great army was literally 'exposed' to the elements, its 'members' freezing. The French were unable to hold their weapons to resist the Cossacks. That Crabtree took his own precautions we know, since he accompanied the ladies of the Paris opera, ensuring shared body heat saw all of them safely back to France.

The fateful campaign of 1812 began Napoleon's decline and though there were difficult days to come when Crabtree had to use all his negotiating skills to keep the allies committed to the common cause, at last in April 1814 Napoleon was defeated and sent into exile on Elba, the Bourbons were restored to France (in the form of Louis XVIII) and the Great Powers gathered in Vienna to redraw (or rather restore) the map of Europe.

The Congress of Vienna saw the greatest collection of sovereigns, diplomats, artists and courtesans ever assembled in one place. Crabtree of course played a key role in the British delegation and, through his encyclopaedic knowledge and polymath skills, soon came to dominate proceedings to such an extent that even Talleyrand admitted to being in awe of his prowess. Isabey's famous painting of the Congress shows the diplomats in a break between sessions. You will notice that the central chair is empty, yet the portmanteau and files are there. Alas, in the few minutes that Isabey was given to sketch the scene, Crabtree was absent, perhaps a recurrence of his bladder problem, exacerbated both by the cold in Russia and his social activities at the Congress? Such is the cruel hand of fate that we should be deprived of a painting of Crabtree in his finest hour!

With the replacement of Castlereagh by Wellington as head of the British Delegation, Crabtree left the Congress (again, note how the painter has made this allegorical by having Wellington enter to the left as Crabtree is absent), for Vienna was not big enough for both of them! Upon departing, Crabtree resolved to visit the fallen Emperor on his toy Kingdom of Elba and, as history books recall, in February 1815 an unknown Englishman visited Napoleon and regaled him with stories of France and events at Vienna. Crabtree then left for England. Little did he know what events would follow from this conversation...

11 March 1815 and Crabtree was, as Orators Tattersall and Datta discovered, at the Haycock Inn in Wansford, seducing Byron's young bride Anabella and fathering Augusta Ada Byron when news of Napoleon's escape from Elba and return to France arrived. Crabtree was shocked, appalled, for he realised at once the significance of the event and how his own actions could be seen as providing the Emperor with valued intelligence. If, or rather when, it was known what he had done, Crabtree risked not only ruin but perhaps his life! As our menu shows tonight, in France the Bonapartists had no doubt as to Crabtree's role. In their cartoons you will see Napoleon and Empress Marie Louise returning 'with the violets' — look carefully and you will see Crabtree's silhouette too!

For perhaps the first time in his life, Crabtree was afraid yet also angry at Napoleon's actions, which plunged Europe once more into chaos and war, and he was now determined to do all he could to hasten Napoleon's fall

and clear his own name. *Don't get mad, get even* was a motto Crabtree had often followed and never more so than in the 100 days to come.

Returning to France, Crabtree was greeted by the restored Emperor as hero and loyal supporter and made Prefect of the Tarn and Garonne, with their fine vineyards (you can see the district flag presented to Crabtree by the Emperor's own hand on display at Apsley House here in London). Nevertheless, Crabtree did all he could to frustrate the Emperor's new schemes. Perhaps our Italian Chapter will be able to reveal more on Crabtree's role in the defeat of the first Italian War of Independence (led by Murat of Naples) and the archives in Vienna may one day reveal how he frustrated Napoleon's attempts to seize his wife and son and bring them to Paris. Nevertheless, in June Napoleon stood ready with a formidable and fanatical army to gamble once again for the domination of Europe.

In Belgium, the Duke of Wellington and Prince Blücher of Prussia stood ready to meet the threat. Napoleon knew that if he defeated them, the other allied armies might suddenly find themselves willing to treat with the ever victorious Emperor of the French! On Thursday 15 June the French army stormed across the Belgian frontier, smashing into the hinge of the two allied armies.

Quite how Wellington, Europe's so-called infallible general, was able to be surprised by such a move and thus allowed his army to be caught unawares and hopelessly scattered has never been resolved. It seems that Crabtree sent warning through his usual route (a buxom *vivandière*), but the wench was waylaid by a German officer, Dornberg, at Mons and the news did not arrive in time. The Duke thus received the news of Napoleon's advance late that night at the Duchess of Richmond's Ball after it was brought by 'the fattest Prussian officer on the slowest horse' in the Prussian army. 'Humbled, by God', the Duke exclaimed, believing Crabtree had deliberately let him down.

Next day, Friday 16 June, the French army met Blücher's Prussians at Ligny and gave them 'a damn good beating' as Wellington sought to assemble his scattered troops at the crossroads of Quatre Bras while fending off Marshal Ney's attacks. It could have been worse, for one French Corps marched to and fro all day, missing both battles, an action which may be attributed to Crabtree and is recorded in Crabtree's verse as '*We march we know not whither*'. Yet next day both allied armies were in retreat, the Duke taking up positions on the fateful field of Waterloo.

Sunday 18 June, a day enshrined in the history of the British people, when the hinge of fate swung to and fro. Crabtree did all he could to give the Duke of Wellington victory. Sent by Napoleon to recall Marshal Grouchy and his 35,000 troops, he quietly rested in the woods of Paris, sitting for a couple of hours under a tree (which I believe our President later found out had been made into a clock case) before directing Blücher and his Prussians to the battlefield. Persuading Marshal Ney that a tactical withdrawal by the British infantry to behind the ridge (hence avoiding French artillery fire) was in fact a full-scale retreat, Crabtree ensured that Ney threw away the cream of the French cavalry in a series of futile charges. And yet, by 7 o'clock that evening, the battle was close to being lost. Wellington, his centre giving way, was heard to murmur 'Give me the Prussians or give me night' — even then he could not bring himself to say 'or give me Crabtree'. Napoleon ordered his final reserve, the immoral, never defeated, Imperial Guard forward to complete his victory, and march over the bloodied bodies of the British infantry on to Brussels and glory.

As Ney prepared the final attack, stealthily leading the Guard Battalions up the slope to fall upon the unsuspecting allied infantry, history recalls a lone horseman dashing out of the French ranks and announcing the approach of the Guards. That man I can reveal to you was Crabtree! Just in time, he could warn Wellington and give the Duke time to bolster his line to meet the attack as Crabtree brought men up from the left flank and urged those retreating Prussian units (who had thought the British defeated and were retiring to avoid being caught up in the final rout) to return to the fight (an episode later attributed to a cobbler or a traveller, which of course we now know to be Crabtree wearing a civilian coat over his French uniform).

Thus Napoleon's invincible legions met their Waterloo and Europe was saved from his ambition and conquest. Yet why, you may ask, has Crabtree's role gone unnoticed for so long? Why no mention in the famous Waterloo Despatch penned by the Duke that night? Jealousy? Spite? On the part of the Duke? Perhaps, but I am afraid to say that in part Crabtree brought it on himself, for that evening, when a grateful Duke sought him out to thank him and to declare that from that day forth the two men should bury their differences, Crabtree was nowhere to be found.

Alas, Crabtree's old failing, avarice, had seen him hasten from the field and race for London. Crabtree knew that all London would be waiting for news of the Battle. Arriving in the City, he went straight to Lord Rothschild and between them they planned to spread false rumours of defeat, rumours that led to a collapse of stock prices, whereupon Crabtree and Rothschild bought heavily. When Wellington's despatch arrived, the country went wild with joy and stock prices soared. Nathan Rothschild is said to have cleared a million, Crabtree certainly no less than £100,000. Yet many were appalled at such a base action and, though undoubtedly rich, Crabtree was denied the other honours that he deserved for his role in the battle.

Crabtree was now sixty and it is fitting that the last titanic battle was fought as retirement beckoned. Although certainly free of financial worries (even though a State pension was shabbily denied him), Crabtree's years as agent and government employee seemed to be over and he could spend the remaining years of his life in following his many other pursuits. Yet as we know, there were many more twists and turns of fortune to come. I leave it to future Scholars to research his role in the South American Wars of Independence (with the hidden hand of Jeremy Bentham); his return to India and the Far East and the opium trade; his participation in the Year of Revolutions (1848). But I believe tonight I have had the honour and privilege to reveal to you the debt that this country, if not the world, owes to Joseph Crabtree, without whom we would all no doubt be speaking French, already have a common currency (the Franc not the Euro, or are they the same?) be drinking brandy not claret, and eating snails and garlic, not good British lamb and soused herring.

Mr President, this country owes Joseph Crabtree much and I believe that there were many who at the time did wish to honour him, hence that empty plinth in Trafalgar Square. If it had not been for the jealousy of the Duke of Wellington before his death and the lack of a suitable model and likeness upon which to draw after his death, I believe a statue of Joseph Crabtree would be standing in that place today. Alas it is not so, but instead, in tribute to this great man, I ask you to stand and raise your glasses to:

Joseph Crabtree — Patriot!