

Having been away in my native Austria since 1974, I have only occasionally been in England at the time of the Crabtree dinner, though of late I have taken to hibernating over here and thus have been in the country in the middle of February and able to attend. It was therefore a very great surprise, I am almost inclined to say shock, to me when the President at last year's dinner revealed me as the next Orator. When I heard my name mentioned, I was so flabbergasted that unfortunately I did not remember the advice given to aliens by my almost fellow countryman, the Hungarian George Mikes. In his little book *How to be an Alien*, which appeared I believe in 1950 or 1951, and will probably be known to the earlier vintages of you, he wrote: 'Do not try to imitate the English, because if you don't succeed, you make yourself ridiculous, and if you do succeed, you make yourself even more ridiculous. Once an alien, always an alien.' I have so far taken heed of this advice. Now what could be more English than the Crabtree Foundation? Thus of necessity I have to immerse myself in an English environment and, whatever I say, make myself ridiculous. Having said that, I must of course add that I am very conscious of the great honour bestowed upon me and am duly grateful for it.

Last year, Dr. N.J. Mason remarked that he believed himself to be the youngest Orator to address the Foundation and asked for indulgence for any failings in the report of his researches. I think I have good reason to assume myself, at 83, to be the oldest member of the Foundation to give the Oration. On account of that, I equally ask your indulgence for any shortcomings in my address. Unfortunately, my memory often lets me down rather badly these days.

But now to the subject of my Oration and the results of my humble attempts to add new knowledge to the life and achievements of Joseph Crabtree. After being assigned the task of Orator for tonight's dinner, the first question to be answered was in which direction I should turn my researches. Fortunately, I did not have to ponder that problem for very long.

Last year's Orator enlightened us *inter alia* about Crabtree's decisive role in the Battle of Waterloo but, as far as the Vienna Congress was concerned, he merely stated that Crabtree had been present as a member of the British Delegation, but did not say what role he played and what his achievements were. Neither he nor any other of the Scholars has so far focused his attention on these important facts. As an Austrian, it seemed obvious to me that I should try to shed some light on Crabtree's experiences in Vienna, in particular the secret ones before the Battle of Waterloo and the temporary suspension of the Congress in 1815. When the participants in the Congress gathered — it was described by the historian Alan Palmer as 'a cavalcade of sovereigns and statesmen' — Crabtree was amongst them with the British Delegation led by the Foreign Secretary, Viscount Castlereagh. Crabtree's brief was to establish as many contacts by whatever means on an unofficial basis to discover the schemes of the major powers at the Congress and, if possible, to turn them into a direction beneficial to Britain. Crabtree was eminently suited to doing this by being, as we know, very successful in winning the favours of ladies, and there were a number of them present who exerted great influence behind the scenes, such as those who were simultaneously mistresses of important men like Tsar Alexander of Russia and Prince Metternich.

There was first of all a Princess Katharina Bagration, the daughter of a Baltic nobleman, Count Skavoronski, a grandniece of the famous Prince Potemkin. By command of the Tsar she had been married, at the age of eighteen, to Prince Pjotr Ivanovich Bagration, a distinguished general with battle honours from Austerlitz and elsewhere. He was twice her age and more interested in his soldiers, horses and other diversions, and neglected his wife. She was given a free rein to do as she pleased and took full advantage of that situation and her undoubted assets. She was extremely beautiful so that men, realising that she was 'not averse', were always around her. She was described as follows: 'Imagine a young face as white as alabaster with a tinge of red and the angelic sweetness of a porcelain nymph of Meissen china, with lovely features and a physiognomy expressive and full of sensibility, of medium height with an exquisite figure'. She was described as a person who seemed to combine oriental nobility with Andalusian grace. In Vienna she appeared at receptions and balls of the Congress in dazzling and very low-cut dresses with transparent tops, which earned her the nickname 'the

beautiful naked angel'. Unfortunately, I have so far been unable to find a likeness of her. However, the portrait of her daughter Clementine, at much the same age as her mother was in Vienna, and reputedly looking very much like her, conveys an idea of her beauty. At the beginning of the century, Katharina had been at the court of Saxony in Dresden and when Metternich was sent there as Austrian envoy, she soon became his mistress. In 1802 she bore him a daughter, who was named Clementine, after her father, Clemens Metternich, the intention being that anybody who doubted the child's parenthood would have his doubts set to rest. She also became the mistress of Tsar Alexander and in Vienna was his favourite. This did not stop her from carrying on with Metternich as well; after all, he also had a few other affairs simultaneously.

By the time the Congress began to gather in Vienna, Princess Katharina had become a widow, her husband having lost his life in the battle of Borodino in 1812. If anybody could be justly described as a 'Merry Widow', it was she. There was in Vienna a particularly famous salon, that of Prince Andreas Ratsumovsky, a brilliant host. This salon was the meeting-place of all the high-ranking Russian noblemen and diplomats because many beautiful Slav women, including Princess Katharina, were frequently to be found there. Metternich was a regular visitor. Crabtree, after arriving in Vienna, soon knew of course where he had to go to carry out his assigned role. Through having attended the coronation of Emperor Leopold II in Prague in 1791 (Smith, 1994), he had excellent connections to the highest circles of the ruling houses of the European states and thus had no difficulty in gaining access to these circles, which included Prince Ratsumovsky's salon. There he met Princess Katharina. Although sixty years old at the time, he cut a fine figure and was still very attractive to women. He had been briefed about Princess Katharina's affairs and therefore realised that she would be the best contact to further his aims. He had little difficulty in winning her favours since he also had the advantage of being fluent in her native tongue, Polish, and very knowledgeable about Poland, as we learnt from Frank Carter (1983). This liaison proved most valuable in obtaining confidential information and influencing the major players. However, he appears to have genuinely fallen in love with her since he wrote a poem dedicated to her. Unfortunately, the poem in its original English version has been lost; however, it is extant in translation. The reason for this is that Crabtree, at one of the musical *soirées* he attended, had met Franz Schubert, at that time a rising star in the musical heaven of Vienna. It was here in Vienna that Crabtree *first* met the composer, not in 1819 at the Wörthersee (as alleged by Tattersall, 1978). A number of Schubert's *Lieder*, especially some poems by Goethe which he had set to music, e.g. *Erlkönig* and *Gretchen am Spinnrad*, had immediately been greatly acclaimed. This *soirée* was held in the Gundelhof, the residence of one of Schubert's friends, Herr Sonnleitner, a noted barrister, who arranged weekly concerts there to which many guests were invited. Crabtree was so enthralled by Schubert's compositions that he asked him to set his poem to Katharina to music and promised him a substantial reward. Schubert, who was always hard up, agreed, but as he was not conversant with the English language, he had it translated into German and, like his famous setting of Shakespeare's *Who is Sylvia?*, he wrote the music to the German text. When, some time later, this *Lied* was published, the translator's name, Ludwig Rellstab, appears as the author of the text. This is regrettable, but all music lovers must be grateful to Crabtree that this much loved *Lied* was composed. Naturally the German substitute for the English poem could not be nearly as impressive as the original but, in order to let you have an approximate idea of its beauty, I will give you the German words:

Leise flehen meine Lieder
Durch die Nacht zu dir;
In den stillen Hain herneider,
Liebchen, komm zu mir!

Flüsternd schlanke Wipfel rauschen
In der Mondes Licht;
Des Verräters feindlich Lauschen
Fürche, Holde, nicht.

Hörst die Nachtigallen schlagen?
Ach! sie flehen dich,
Mit der Töne süßen Klagen
Flehen sie für mich.

Sie verstehen des Busens Sehnen,

Kennen Liebesschmerz
Rühren mit den Silbertönen
Jedes weiche Herz.

Laß auch dir die Brust bewegen,
Liebchen, höre mich!
Bebend harr' ich dir entgegen
Komm, beglücke mich!

Back now to the goings on at the Congress. When the Congress began, Katharina had just started a very intensive liaison with Tsar Alexander. Immediately after his arrival, he came to her and spent a lot of time with her alone so that it can surely be certain that he was not just having a cup of tea with her. Very busy with the preparations for the Congress, Metternich had somewhat neglected her, the mother of his illegitimate daughter, and, out of a sense of revenge, she was even more willing to lie in the Tsar's arms, or rather bed. But, however intensive the relationship was, it did not suffice to satisfy her needs and it is reliably reported that at the time she had a whole bevy of lovers: a Baron Schoenfeld, Prince Constantine (the Tsar's brother), the Duke of Coburg, the royal princes of Bavaria and Württemberg, and the Piedmont ambassador, Bertone de Sambuy. Even the Duke of Wellington is reported to have been impressed by her daring *décolletés*, because he rather wickedly invited her to a dinner on 15 March 1815, together with her hated rival, the Duchess of Sagan.

The Duchess Wilhelmine of Sagan was also one of the ladies at the Congress who had great influence through her lovers; thus Crabtree had no option but to try to join their number. While at Dresden, Metternich, in addition to Princess Katharina, had also become the lover of Wilhelmine, a daughter of the last Duke of Courland. When she was twenty years old, she had been briefly married to a French *émigré* prince who served in the Austrian army. She was quite different from Princess Katharina, not nearly as ravishing, but a much more predatory animal. She was at times tantalisingly elusive and occasionally drove her admirers to hostility by a mocking arrogance. Her exotic temperament had already made her notorious, 'a volcano belching forth', as a contemporary described her. When twenty-four years old she had already had ample sexual experiences. She had almost been married to Prince Ludwig Ferdinand of Prussia. When this marriage came to naught she was in compensation given the title of Duchess of Sagan, from her possessions in Silesia. After two more failed marriages, she had decided it was less complicated to have lovers instead of husbands. Metternich wrote about her twenty years later: 'She acts as if mad and goes to bed with men like others sit down for a meal'. However, it was not for her insatiable need to have sex but also for her other attributes and her keen intelligence that many important men like Metternich and the Tsar knelt at her feet.

When she went to Vienna at the end of 1813, it was probably to be near her then principal lover, the dashing Austrian officer, Alfred von Windischgrätz. She took up residence in a wing of the Palais Palm near the Ballhausplatz (Metternich's official residence). Probably by chance, Princess Katharina resided in the opposite wing. The palace was only a stone's throw from both the Hofburg (Royal Palace) where the Tsar had been accommodated by the Emperor of Austria, and the official residence of Metternich at the Ballhausplatz. Very conveniently for Crabtree, his lodgings in the Residency of the British Ambassador were also very near. This close proximity of lovers and mistresses presented an intriguing picture of to-ing and fro-ing to the participants in the love pentangle as well as to observers. While Crabtree's relationship with Princess Katharina was based on true love, that with Duchess Wilhelmine was purely one of doing his duty. As he remarked to a friend at the Embassy, with her temperament all he needed to do was to 'lie back and think of England'.

Soon after Crabtree had taken up residence in Vienna, he had an unexpected visitor from Salzburg, Constanze, the remarried widow of Mozart. The purpose of her visit was, however, not to renew the amorous relationship of 1791 with Crabtree (Foreman, 1984), but a political one. Soon after she moved to Salzburg, the Prince Archbishopric had ceased to exist as an independent territory. In 1806 the Archbishop was forced by Austria to sign away his rights as a territorial ruler and he became restricted merely to his ecclesiastical status; the territory became part of Austria. That did not worry her since she was an Austrian anyway. However, this situation was short-lived. In 1809 Austria, after being defeated by Napoleon and his allies, which included Bavaria, had to cede Salzburg, together with Tirol, Vorarlberg and other territories, to Bavaria. Thus Constanze, much to her disgust, found herself to be living in a foreign country. Her visit to Crabtree was to urge him to use his connections to have this territorial transfer reversed. While the King of Bavaria, who had changed his allegiance with Napoleon into being one of the anti-Napoleon allies, was quite willing to return Tirol and Vorarlberg to Austria, he refused to hand back Salzburg. The reason for this was that he

thought he had been cheated over the Mosel provinces, which were promised to him but had been given to Prussia. Since the return of Salzburg to Austria was clearly in the interest of H.M. Government, Crabtree willingly used his connections via his lady friends. In the final redrawing of the boundaries of Europe, Salzburg, although slightly reduced compared to its former size, once again became a part of Austria.

Having been born in Salzburg, I am personally very much indebted to Crabtree, since, without his intervention, I would probably now be a German, instead of an Austrian, which to me is much preferable.

The general British aims for the redrawing of the boundaries of the states of Europe were based on the Roman principle *divide et impera*, and that no state should be very large, in order to guarantee a balance of power. Crabtree, through Katharina and Wilhelmine, helped to achieve this.

A very important issue to be settled was the question of Alsace and Lorraine, claimed by both the new French kingdom and Prussia. As it was in Britain's interest for Prussia not to become too mighty a power, Crabtree, through his connections, influenced Metternich so that in the final treaty France retained these provinces. Whether in the long run this was a wise decision is difficult to assess since the acquisition of these provinces was one of the causes that led to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 and the foundation of the German *Reich*.

Another problem which Crabtree tried to help solve was the question of Poland. Because of his intimate knowledge of Poland, his friendship with many Poles, especially Prince Czartorski, and having held the Regent's Chair of the University of Vilna in 1808-9 (Carter, 1983), Crabtree also had a personal interest that a solution favourable to the Polish patriots should be reached. Alas, this was not to be; reasons of state had to take preference. The Tsar, as a reward for the important role he had played in defeating Napoleon, wanted to incorporate the whole of Poland into Russia. This was clearly against British interest, and Crabtree was called upon to use his connection with the Tsar, via his mistresses, to change his mind. At one stage, after returning from a visit to Prague with the Austrian Emperor, he went straight to Katharina and remained closeted with her for three and a half hours. Discreet enquiries next morning revealed that they had indeed also talked politics, but Katharina had reported that 'over the Polish question he will not listen to reason'. It was a bit later that Wilhelmine changed the Tsar's mind to agree to a compromise. Although the Poles were not given an independent state, as they had wished, a Kingdom of Poland was created, alas ruled by the Tsar. This kingdom consisted of the greater part of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, which Napoleon, who was sympathetic towards Polish aspirations, had created. Of the territory of this former Grand Duchy the southern part, Galicia and Tarnopol, was returned to Austria, and the western part, Poznan, including the towns of Poznan and Torun, went back to Prussia. Whether this was a good solution is doubtful since the Poles of the new kingdom had various uprisings against Russian rule and the area that had gone to Prussia became a part of the recreated state of Poland after World War I and formed the so-called Polish corridor, which separated East Prussia from the rest of Germany. This was a cause of friction between Germany and Poland and eventually the spark that started World War II. It is difficult to assess in detail the influence of Crabtree on the redrawing of the map of Europe, but there can be no doubt that it was considerable and that he served his country well.

When the news broke that Napoleon had left Elba and was once again marching eastwards with a powerful army, all the delegations departed and with them Crabtree left Vienna. His job having been completed, he did not return, much to the disappointment of Katharina and Wilhelmine and possibly a few pretty Viennese ladies of easy virtue with whom he had dallied in various *Heurigen*, the typical Viennese wine taverns.

Strange as it may seem, despite courting the same women, Metternich and Crabtree were on excellent terms; one might even venture to say they became friends. Thus when Metternich had to resign his post as Chancellor in March 1848, and fled Vienna with the intention of going to England, he sent a message to Crabtree about his impending arrival. There were various delays, partly for political and partly for health reasons, so that Metternich arrived at Blackwall on a steam packet boat on 19 April, having had as company on the ship twenty oxen, sixty or so calves and a hundred sheep. The Metternich family was met by Crabtree, who arranged transport to their temporary abode at the Brunswick Hotel in Hanover Square. Another friend from the past, the Duke of Wellington, was generous with his hospitality towards the Metternichs and visited them frequently, as did Crabtree. Metternich, however, had a serious problem; he was desperately short of cash. After his hurried departure, there appeared accusations in newspapers that he had received bribes from the Russian Tsars Alexander and Nicholas, and that he had embezzled vast sums of public money. With the state of affairs then existing in Vienna, the authorities had no option but to order an official investigation. While this went on, all his property in Austria was sequestered. He was cleared of any impropriety but

it took two and a half years to do so. Until then, he had to rely on loans which he received from the Rothschilds and also Crabtree, who, after successful speculation on the stock market in 1815 (Mason, 2001) had become quite wealthy. In order to economise, the Metternichs moved from expensive London to cheaper Brighton, where they took up the lease of 42 Brunswick Terrace. There again he was visited by Crabtree. There is a plaque on the wall of this mansion to commemorate Metternich's residence there.

In spring 1849 the Metternichs moved to the Old Palace at Richmond, where another visitor from the past was Princess Katharina Bagration, now a frail old lady, but inappropriately still wearing the veil-like tops as at the Vienna Congress. Naturally, during her visit, she also met her old flame Joseph Crabtree.

The Metternichs' funds were again at an ebb and they decided to move to Brussels, where the cost of living was appreciably lower than in London. When they left from Charing Cross Station on 10 October, they were given a royal send off. Amongst their friends who came to bid them farewell were the Duke of Wellington, Disraeli and, of course, Crabtree.

With that I too take my farewell and leave it to another Scholar to discover what happened to our poet in the last years before he died.