

**The Crabtree Foundation (Australian Chapter)
40th Annual Oration**

**Joseph Crabtree — Rogue Lexicographer, Wild Etymologist
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Introduction

In preparing for this talk, I took many pleasurable hours reading past orations, and I noticed in the introduction of several the word “trepidation” had been used — trepidation at standing before such a distinguished gathering, trepidation at seeking to follow in the illustrious footsteps of Orators who have come before. I too am more than a tad “trepidacious” on both counts — especially as one not long familiar with the extraordinary scholarship of Joseph Crabtree.

Indeed, it was Paul Williams’ wonderful oration this time last year that first introduced me to this body of knowledge, and since this time it has been a whirlwind year as different aspects of Crabtree’s remarkable linguistic life have come to light — so many aspects in fact that I wasn’t sure which of these I should be focusing on for this evening. In the end, I decided on Crabtree’s contribution to lexicography, the art and science of dictionary making. In Crabtree’s case, however, it was more than just the compiling, writing and editing of a dictionary — Crabtree will go down in lexicographical history for the role that he played in empowering “vulgar” English, and enfranchising this variety as a language worthy of scholarly pursuit. And incidentally — in a dictionary of underworld slang from 1812, written by British convict James Hardy Vaux (1782-1840), you will find the verb *to crab* meaning “to use offensive language or behavior”. That Crabtree should be such a major contributor to rogue lexicography was clearly destiny!

In his “Homage to Crabtree” back in 1954, James Sutherland writes of an almost “conspiracy of silence” surrounding Crabtree studies. This is certainly the case when it comes to Crabtree the lexicographer. James A. H. Murray might be someone familiar to you as the first editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (from 1859 until his death). Entirely missing from his *Evolution of English Lexicography, The Romanes Lecture* (delivered in the Sheldonian Theatre June 22, Oxford 1900) is any mention of Crabtree’s contribution to dictionary making. (Though to be fair on Murray, there were forces at work, including those put in place by Crabtree himself, as I will later reveal, to ensure that this work went well and truly under the radar.)

So let me explain how I chanced upon Crabtree’s lexicographical work. Last year I was working with my colleague Simon Musgrave on an historical account of those two key cultural expressions in Australian English: *bastard* and *bugger*. As I was tracing the public life of these

two lexical outlaws — their appearance in dictionaries (or in the case of *bugger* non-appearance), I uncovered a number of things that I feel now places me in a position to offer a more satisfying account of certain puzzling aspects of Crabtree’s life: What was really behind Crabtree’s expulsion from Queens College, Oxford in that Hilary term of 1773? What filled his days before he went to join the family firm of Crabtree and Hillier in France 1783 — as Sutherland describes “one of the obscurest decades in Crabtree’s long life” (p. 3)?

When we think of dictionary making at this early time, we think of Samuel Johnson’s remarkable *Dictionary of the English Language* that appeared in 1755. Before this time, there were some specialist collections, including bilingual dictionaries, glossaries of hard words, rarely used words and jargon, and among these flourished the compilations of cant (the vocabulary of criminals, or “flash language”, as it was also known)¹. Cant dictionaries appeared as early as the 1500s (the famous ‘cony-catching’ pamphlets), and gradually over the years, they expanded from underworld slang to include other colloquialisms, including vulgar language generally.

As I was researching the public life of *bastards* and *buggers*, I encountered a number of references to a curious collection entitled:

Gradus ad Oxoniam: A dictionary of slang academical and colloquial peculiar to the University of Oxford — interspersed with a variety of curious and entertaining anecdotes and illustrations, with tart quotations and rum-ones.

The book appeared in 1772, and the brief dedication is simply signed “your academical brother Crab Lanthorn”:

Here I set before the good Reader the leud, lousey language of the loytering Luskes and lazy Lorrels of Oxford University².

The name Crab Lanthorn is clever, and is undoubtedly the hand of Joseph Crabtree (and I will be clarifying and substantiating this claim throughout this paper). To start with, the word *lanthorn* (an alternative spelling for *lantern*) could refer quite simply to “a man with a lantern” (so a shortened form of the original expression *Jack with a lantern* or *Jack-a-lantern* literally, “chap with a lantern”). The expression *lantern/lanthorn* then extended metaphorically to anything giving light, and therefore also “the man who sheds light”. The word *crab* at this time had a number of meanings including “cross, displeased” (clearly related to our modern

¹ The word *slang* first made its appearance in the mid 1700s, and originally also referred to the patter of criminals. One early reference reads: “What did actually reach his ears was disguised [...] completely by the use of [...] the thieves-Latin called slang” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). In the course of the 1800s, it broadened its meaning to something more as we understand it today; in other words, language of a highly colloquial nature, not part of standard speech.

² *Lusk* “sluggard” goes back to the 15th century; *lore* “rogue” even earlier to the 14th century.

word *crabby*). So we have Crab Lanthorn a disgruntled man shedding light. It is well documented that Joseph Crabtree was discontented with the college education he was receiving, and was disparaging of his tutor Jacob Jefferson (and I will be giving you a taste of his dictionary entries in a moment to support this). Recall, too, the verb *to crab* “to use offensive language”. The name works on so many levels.

Crab lanthorn (or *Crab-a-lantern*), like *Jack-a-lantern*/*Jack-o'-lantern*, was also used to refer to something mischievous, and since the late 1600s also to something misleading or elusive. You might view Crab Lanthorn as a kind of will-o'-the-wisp — a Jack-o'-lantern on the murky path of English lexicographical history.

Incidentally, there is another thread to this network — the name Crab Lanthorn also alludes to a very famous piece of rogue lexicography, the cony-catching pamphlet *Lantern and Candlelight*, compiled in 1608 by Thomas Dekker. This was one of the earliest glossaries of underworld slang³.

The Dictionary

There are many things that point to Crabtree as the author of the dictionary *Gradus ad Oxoniam*. We know from Philip Martin’s oration of 1988 that there exists a *considerable body* of Crabtree’s erotic writings, and apparently in a surprising array of forms. Though Martin makes no mention of any dictionaries, he describes the works as “amazingly modern in their forthrightness, ahead of their time” (p. 2). But probably the strongest evidence for Crabtree as the originator of *Gradus ad Oxoniam* is to be found in the dictionary entries themselves and their definitions.

Alas, for reasons I will explain in moment, there are no surviving copies of *Gradus ad Oxoniam*. However, fortunately for us, a number of extracted entries from the dictionary were published in some the London weeklies of the day, including the three most well known: *Peeping Tom*, *Cheap John* and *The Fast Man*. In the following, I give a sample from among the more decent of these entries:

³ *Lantern and candlelight* was the old call of the London nightwatchman.

TO KNOW C FROM A CRABTREE CUDGEL: to be an adept at any feat or exercise⁴

A BALLOCKS: a stupid contemptible man; a Tutor [the author gives the example Who's the old ballocks you were talking to?]

OLD JOBBERNOWL JOLTHEAD: nickname for Jacob Jefferson [note, Jacob Jefferson has long been identified as Crabtree's tutor at Queens College; cf. *The Crabtree Orations 1954-1994*]⁵

A FINGER-POST: an Oxford tutor, so called, because he points out a way to others, which he never goes himself. Like the finger post, he points out a way he has never been, and probably will never go, i.e. the way to heaven.

TO TUTOR: to talk like a tutor; to use flummery and humbuggery; from the assumed gravity and affectation of knowledge generally put on by the gentlemen of that profession who are commonly as superficial in their learnings as they are pedantical in their language

OLD FOGGY a Tutor [the author derives *fogey* from the adjective *foggy* "fat, bloated"]

BLOW SMOKE UP YOUR TUTORS ASS: to lickspittle; to tell Tutors everything they want to hear and nothing they need to hear

This last entry here is of interest linguistically because it is quite clearly the first metaphorical use of this expression; in other words, evidence of the meaning we have today; namely, "to compliment in a crude and obvious manner". As Crabtree rightly points out later in the entry, the expression referred literally to a medical procedure — basically, a tobacco smoke enema (administered via a leather bellows contrivance) that was used to resuscitate victims of drowning⁶. As some of you may be aware, there were bellows placed strategically along the Thames for exactly this purpose, in the same way we strategically place life jackets today (Allen 2013 provides an image and description of the bellows)⁷.

⁴ This expression plays on a formula around at this time that generated expressions to describe those who are well-informed, experienced (e.g. *to know B from a battledore*). However, I suspect this expression is what is known as a "hot-house" word, so one that Crabtree invented himself and planted in his dictionary. Many such hothouse sprouts were cultivated in early English dictionaries, especially those of the 17th and 18th centuries — perhaps these resourceful dictionary makers felt these words should exist in the language, perhaps they were anxious to show off their knowledge, or perhaps these hothouse words were simply a cunning way of catching out plagiarists!

⁵ Both *jobbernowl* and *jolthead* are early words for "a thick-headed person, a blockhead".

⁶ A description can also be found on page 131 of the *History of Anaesthesia Society Proceedings* 48.

⁷ This expression is also interesting linguistically on account of the word *ass*. It confirms that this form was the colloquial shortening of *arse* as early as 1772 (so a century earlier than the *Oxford English Dictionary* entry for *ass* suggests). In fact, in Crabtree's time there was also the euphemism *johnny bum* for *jackass*; Frances Grose's *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1785) has the following: 'JOHNNY BUM. A

That Crabtree's work was not well received is an understatement. One review in *The Monthly Mirror* describes the dictionary as "a little monster", and it goes on to suggest "strangling this mis-begotten offspring of the press"⁸. A little harsh!

Indeed, there were those, like Mrs Daisy Picking, who in letters to journals railed endlessly against the compiler of this dictionary. Mrs Picking complained persistently of "the want of delicacy, and chastity of language". Here I will quote from just one of these outbursts where she notes:

"[t]hat this a learned university would be so disgraced by such licentious idiom and lubricious barbarism which seem better calculated for the purlieus of Chick-lane, or Broad St. Giles" [...] Many words, there found are highly offensive to the modest ear and cannot be read without a blush. [...] To inspire youth with sentiments of modesty and delicacy is one of the principal objects of early instruction and this object is totally defeated by the indiscriminate use of vulgar and indecent words". [Daisy Picking, letter of January 5, 1773]

Wild Etymology

As you can see by some of the entries in the collection, Crabtree occasionally tried his hand at etymology, as is fairly typical of dictionary makers of his day (basically anyone felt able to have a go!). Perhaps the best way to describe Crabtree's foray into word history is that he was an instinctive etymologist — guided by intuition, he took scant regard of consonants and even less of vowels. His etymological principle seemed to be that if words that sounded alike, or if they were spelled alike, then they were historically connected.

In the November 20 edition of *Peeping Tom* in 1772, we find a few of his entries for words to do with women, and these give a taste of Crabtree's etymological endeavours. I should warn that many of these will make a modern reader's toes curl (though let me add, Crabtree was not alone — these etymologies were fairly typical of the time).

he or jack ass: so called by a lady that affected to be extremely polite and modest, who would not say Jack because it was vulgar, nor ass because it was indecent'.

⁸ While there is no mention of the dictionary in any of the well-known histories of lexicography (such as that of James Murray), the collection did attract the attention of at least one bibliographer of slang and canting literature. In 1923 Gertrude Flowerdew wrote a remarkable and foresightful paper ("Should a dictionary include only the 'good' words?"). Here she describes the entries in Crabtree's dictionary as "vigorous and expressive" (by which I think we probably can understand "profane and obscene"), and though she gives no examples of this vigorous and expressive lexicon, we learn from her account that collection comprised more than 200 entries.

GIRL: a mistress, a harlot [with the example *girl of ease*]

Ignoring the fact that girls used once to mean “young person of either sex”, Crabtree derives the word from Italian *girella* “weathercock” (a semantic shift that he attributes to the fickleness of women, an etymology he shares with Nathan Bailey 1724).

WIFE: a leg-shackle

Crabtree derives this word from the verb *swive* “to copulate”. [The fact that *swive* begins with “s” appears to be of no concern to Crabtree — never let a consonant get in the way of a good etymology!]

WOMAN: in tossing, the Britannia side of the penny

Going against the thinking of other lexicographers of this time, who either connected *woman* with *weaver*, or (like Stephen Skinner 1671 and Nathan Bailey 1724) based it on *womb-man*, Crabtree derives *woman* from “woe to man”.

LASS: a retailer of love

Crabtree derives *lass* quite simply from *alas!* the expression of grief, pity regret, disappointment.

Let me quote directly from Crabtree on the last two entries:

Look at the very name — Woman, evidently meaning either man’s woe — or abbreviated from woe to man, because by woman was woe brought into the world. And when a girl is called a lass, who does not perceive how that common word must have arisen? Who does not see that it may be directly traced to a mournful interjection, alas! breathed sorrowfully forth at the thought the girl, the lovely and innocent creature upon whom the beholder has fixed his meditative eye, would in time become a woman, — a woe to man!

Some of you may well recognize that almost the very same wording appears in Chapter 24 of Richard Southey’s collection of prose works *The Doctor*. This is the sort of unblushing plagiarization of Crabtree that we have come to expect, especially of those “Lake Poets” (extraordinary examples of which is described in Bryony Cosgrove’s 2011 oration).

It was the brazen guesswork characterizing Crabtree’s etymologizing, and others like him, that gave etymology such a bad name. In 1809 Samuel Pegge the Elder observed: “Nothing in the world is more subject to the power of accident, or fancy, or caprice, of custom, and even of absurdity, than etymology” (p. 272). And it was these wrong-headed analyses of words that the famous Jacob Grimm of the Brothers Grimm dubbed *wilde Etymologie* “wild etymology”. Indeed, it was in reaction to such wild etymologies that Grimm developed his new philological method that was to become the basis for scientific etymology of modern linguistics. The relationship between Crabtree and Jacob Grimm was fraught. Crabtree better

connected with more fun-loving Wilhelm Grimm, especially through their shared interest in Runology and association with Futhark: The London Society for Runic Discovery — but this, as the saying might go, is ‘a whole nother oration’.

Why there are no surviving copies of the dictionary

Let me now address the question of why there appear to be no surviving copies of Crabtree’s dictionary. It is a familiar tale in Crabtree studies. Of course one would immediately suspect the hand of the university, but there were other forces operating at the time. Some of you will be familiar with the activities of those arbiters of linguistic goodness who toiled under the banner of The Society for the Suppression of Vice (a society that in 1802 grew out of the Proclamation Society, and in 1885 was absorbed into the National Vigilance Association).

Seeking out filth, I gather, was what this society did best, and in their sights was, to use their own words, “every thing that may tend to enflame the mind, and corrupt the morals, of the rising generation” (*Address to the public. Part the second*; pp. 14-45; *Orthodox Churchman’s Magazine*, 1803, p. 423).

The following is an extracted account published in the weekly journal *The Leisure Hour*, 13th January 1872 (as part of an appeal from the society for funds). It is a little after Crabtree admittedly, but it does give you an idea of the scale of their activities (from 1802-1885):

“Within *the last two years* [emphasis mine] [the society] has destroyed the following enormous mass of corrupting matters: —140, 213 obscene prints, pictures, and photographs; 21,772 books and pamphlets; five tons of letterpress in sheets, besides large quantities of infidel and blasphemous publications; 17, 060 sheets of obscene songs, catalogues, circulars, and handbills; 5,712 cards, snuff-boxes, and vile articles; 844 engraved copper and steel plates; 480 lithographic stones ; 146 wood blocks ; 11 printing presses, with type and apparatus; 81 cwt. of type, including the stereotype of several works of the vilest description”

Members ransacked circulating libraries, and copies of Crabtree’s dictionary could well have been destroyed during those raids — or else they may have languished among the literally hundreds of books, prints and drawings that were secured in a large tin chest. Pandora’s Box was safeguarded by three separate keys held by different committee members of the society — and all three “custodians of the filth of the nation” had to be present to open it (Wilson 2007 p. 121).

Summing up — Crabtree’s expulsion from Oxford

We know that Crabtree neglected his studies, we know that he “had issues” with tutor Jacob

Jefferson and got into serious strife for lampooning him in satirical verse. And now we learn of his authorship of *Gradus ad Oxoniam: A dictionary of slang academical and colloquial peculiar to the University of Oxford — interspersed with a variety of curious and entertaining anecdotes and illustrations, with tart quotations and rum-ones.*

It is clear from the sample of entries we have that the compilation contained a generous sprinkling of underworld terms. That university students should know and use terms from English criminal cant was bad enough, but there was also the exuberance of indelicate expressions to do with those areas of human activity clearly of most interest to Crabtree and his students; namely drinking, eating, swearing and swiving. It is also clear that the pious, especially the clergy, came in for a great deal of criticism, as did Crabtree's university education — many of the entries are clearly critical and mocking of Oxford tutors. And do not forget that “variety of curious and entertaining anecdotes and illustrations” (as mentioned in his dictionary's title) — we can only imagine what these might have been!

And thus began what has been described “one of the obscurest decades in Crabtree's long life”, and as James Sutherland explains, we must fill in those years with “cautious speculation and scholarly deduction” (1954, p. 13). I put it to you that before Crabtree joined Uncle Oliver in the family firm of Crabtree and Hillier in 1983, he continued to contribute extensively to the tradition of rogue lexicography. In the few minutes remaining, allow me to explain the facts that make me convinced of this.

Crabtree and Grose

An important chapter in Crabtree's lexicographical life was his collaboration with the Falstafian Captain Francis Grose⁹. Francis Grose aimed at a career in the Army but ended up a writer, a painter and, most significantly, a lexicographer. It is a remarkably apt surname for Francis — not only it is reported that he was so bulky his bedclothes had to be strapped to him of a night (cf. Newall 1992), but he is also responsible for a dictionary of some 4,000 colloquialisms and vulgarisms *A Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1785) — as in the case of Crabtree, Grose's name clearly suited the job!

We know from numerous accounts that Grose used to drink at the King's Arms in Holborn, a tavern with the reputation of being “the resort of men of literature; persons connected with the press; artists; distinguished performers belonging to the Theatres royal; men of talent in general”, as Pierce Egan describes in his introduction to the third edition (*Grose's Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue: revised and corrected*; 1823, p. xxxv). One of the clubs of the “most select description” that met at the King's Arms was the so-called Hygeian Club, and among the distinguished members of that most “harmonic society”, you will find listed one Crab Lantern — who it seems was a constant visitor to the King's Arms.

⁹ This was the father of Francis Grose, *Governor of New South Wales* 1792-94.

Egan documents how Grose habitually set out from the King's Arms around midnight to explore the slums of London. We know from Egan's account that he felt very much at home among the thieves, the beggars and the cadgers of the St Giles district (the "Holy Land", as it was known), and it was during these encounters that he was inspired to put together his remarkable collection. Over the years of fieldwork preceding its publication, Grose was accustomed to taking a companion on his trips. One was Tom Cocking (with the nickname "the guinea pig"), another was Batch "a sort of companion and servant", and the third was unnamed.

I put it to you that Crabtree, then aged in his early thirties, was this third companion. Crabtree of course was already in the position of making a few lexical contributions of his own; indeed many of the entries in Grose's dictionary tellingly echo the wording of a number of definitions in *Gradus*. That Crabtree's contribution is never acknowledged is not surprising. For one, he had to keep his dictionary work well away from his Methodist tee-totalling uncle Oliver, for he undoubtedly would have missed out on the opportunity of joining the family firm had his uncle known of his linguistic pursuits. I also suspect he and Grose might have had a falling out. There are a number of tell-tale entries under *crab* and *crabbed* ("sour, ill-tempered, difficult") in *The Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, the most revealing of all being the definition of *crab lanthorn* which Grose defines simply as "a peevish fellow".

As an aside, some years later there appeared two fuller editions of Grose's dictionary in 1811 (edited by Hewson Clarke) and in 1823 (edited by the aforementioned Pierce Egan). What is striking about these editions is that the obscenities of the original work are absent — these editors, Clarke and Egan, had clearly "cleaned up" the collection by snipping out all the objectionable parts. Thus, without the guiding hand of Crabtree (by now safely in France with Uncle Oliver), began the tradition of lexicographical "castration" (the term given in the 19th century to the practice of removing the rude bits from literary works, also known as "bowdlerism")¹⁰.

Crabtree and Ash

As just indicated, the first edition of Grose's dictionary was surprisingly upfront in the obscenities it contained. However, what was entirely missing from this work, indeed from dictionaries generally (even the ratbag compilations), were entries for those "most disreputable of all English words" (Read 1934, p. 267), in other words, the "monosyllables" (as they were known in Crabtree's day). If any collection did include them, they were always in heavy disguise — rendered invisible with asterisks, dashes and their definitions given in

¹⁰ Dr Thomas Bowdler is best known for his expurgated edition of Shakespeare's works. Together with his sister, Henrietta Maria, he produced *The Family Shakespeare* (1818), from which, as he announced on the title page, "those words and expressions are omitted which cannot with propriety be read aloud in a family".

Latin (so the text would have been uninterpretable to the uneducated and therefore to the young and the innocent). The full-blown obscenities had been banished to that “Dark Continent of the World of Words” (to draw on J.S. Farmer’s description of the invisible obscenities of early Modern English) — simply too pungent, too potent, to ever appear in public.

There was, however, one single work that showed no such squeamishness — one dictionary that not only included the sexual obscenities but even removed the fig-leaves. This was John Ash’s *New and Complete Dictionary of the English Language* that appeared in 1775. It claimed in its introductory advertisement to be “extensive beyond any thing that has yet been attempted of the kind in the English Language” and indeed this was the case — Ash goes down in linguistic history as the only lexicographer brave enough to include in a general English dictionary, not just the canting words, but also the monosyllables, with no coy abbreviations and with no Latin camouflage¹¹.

But what is truly remarkable is that the author of this book — John Ash — was an English Baptist Minister, moreover one designated a “divine”. What could have caused the Reverend John Ash to include the “lowest of all vulgar words”, to quote the great American lexicographer Noah Webster¹²? A clue lies in what two critics writing in the *American Review, and Literary Journal* (in the year of 1801) had to say in reference to Ash’s Dictionary:

“There are other words [...] We cannot soil our page with the transcription of them: they are to be found under the letter C and the letter F [...] we did not think it possible that words so shockingly indecent and so vulgar should find their way into any English dictionary; but turning to Ash, whose purpose it appears to have been to insert every word written or spoken in our language, we there found them. We hope, however, that neither the authority of the reverend pastor, or even of his learned colleague, will be sufficient to give them currency” [Volume 1, Article XXIV, p. 345]

So who is this “learned colleague” these critics are referring to here? There is no mention of any collaborator for Ash’s dictionary. To my mind, everything points to that lexicographical will-o’-the-wisp Joseph Crabtree (or Crab Lantern). We know that Crabtree spent some time in Pershore after he had been rusticated from Oxford, and then expelled, and it was in Pershore that Ash had his ministry. Their shared interest in lexicography would have made them natural soul mates. I submit to you that it was Crabtree’s inspiration and encouragement that persuaded Reverend Ash to include, not just the terms of cant, but those

¹¹ Ash’s entries for the monosyllables have been described as “models of lexicographical excellence, explaining the meaning of the words in a way that is entirely inoffensive, and at the same time warning against using them” (Micklethwait 2000, p. 49).

¹² Despite Webster’s own view of dictionaries as an inventory of all words belonging to a language, his collections (of 1806, 1807, 1817, 1828, 1841) were well and truly sanitized (Webster was after all the man who cleaned up the Bible; cf. Perrin, 1992)

expressions from the “Dark continent” — words that even the *Oxford English Dictionary* did not see fit to include until well into the 1960s¹³.

And there’s an end on’t

Crabtree might be missing from the celebrated surveys of English lexicography, but there is no doubt in my mind that he (together with Ash and Grose) was a true pioneer in English lexicography — certainly ahead of his time. And though James A. H. Murray spurned the contribution of Joseph Crabtree, let me nonetheless quote his own words from that celebrated Oxford lecture of 1900:

[...] the English Dictionary, like the English Constitution, is the creation of no one man, and of no one age; it is a growth that has slowly developed itself adown the ages.

Crabtree’s work heralded the greater scientific urges to come, and reflected the democratic approach that has now come to characterize lexicography today — the idea of a dictionary that contains all words (the old ones, the archaic ones, the obsolete ones, the new ones and even those with dubious futures — and of course the obscene ones), and giving equal treatment to all usages. Crabtree was among those driving the idea of the dictionary as a non-prescriptive historical record of the language, foreshadowing the dream of Richard Chenevix Trench, Dean of Westminster — a dream that inspired the work that eventually produced the *Oxford English Dictionary*. It was at the November meeting of the London Philological Society that Trench delivered these now famous words¹⁴.

“A Dictionary then [...] is an inventory of the language [...] It is no task of the maker of it to select the *good* words of a language [...] If he fancies that it is so, and begins to pick and chose, to leave this and to take that, he will at once go astray. The business which he has undertaken is to collect and arrange all the words, whether good or bad, whether they do or do not commend themselves [...] He is a historian of it [= the language] not a critic. [...] The lexicographer is making an inventory; that is his business. [...] “A Dictionary is an historical monument, the history of a nation contemplated from one point of view and the wrong ways into which a language has wandered may be nearly as instructive as the right ones”

If only Crabtree had lived another three years to have heard these words.

¹³ Of course in 1857, there also appeared a legal guardian, in the form of the Obscene Publications Act, to ensure these words dropped from public record.

¹⁴ You can read a second edition of the full text of Trench’s paper: <http://public.oed.com/history-of-the-oed/archived-documents/>. Also among these archived documents you will also find a link to James A. H Murray *Evolution of English Lexicography, The Romanes Lecture* (delivered in the Sheldonian Theatre June 22, Oxford 1900).

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