

Speech by Letus Crowell Delivered at the 1915 Christmas Reunion

Listen! Grandfather and grandmother, mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, brother-in-laws and sister-in-laws, aunts and uncles, nephews and nieces, sons and daughters, and cousins.

Did you hear the uncommon and unusual salutation which I have deemed fit and appropriate in addressing this happy and joyful family reunion upon this merry Christmas gathering assembled here today to celebrate as one thing this occasion as an occasion and as another item to show our appreciation and gratefulness for the bounties, good things and blessings of which we are recipients up to date and to indulge in anticipations that our future paths may be even straighter and more glorious than we have experienced in the past.

Yes of course you noticed the family relationship designated and applied to this audience in my opening remarks and I will say without fear of successful contradiction that there has been few if any speaker, orator or any person in the course of his whole life time who has had the opportunity as I have here today of speaking or even seeing an assemblage of people composed of individuals and members who are bound together so as to make without one single missing link a continuous and unbroken chain from grandparents to cousins.

That being a fact, no wonder I am so delighted and overwhelmingly pleased in that I have been given the honor of making the speech in the presentation of the Christmas present which is donated by all of us to grandfather and mother, mother and father.

In presenting the present jointly for father and mother, I wish to say for myself and on behalf of the other children that it is meant for a token, and a symbol of appreciation and remembrance by us of the good, useful and worthy lives which that noble couple sitting there has given as a model and example for us to follow.

And now please allow me as the eldest one of the children to express a few sentiments and feelings which I have had within me for years. If you will, I shall consider it a personal favor.

Sometimes a son grows up to be a man as I have and during serious and solemn moments accumulates a conglomeration of ideas in his brain and system and becomes anxious to tell what those things are if he only had the chance to do so but he never has the chance. Thanks, I have the chance.

That is to say, I'm going to say a say that I've wanted to say for the last ten years and say I say I can say that say in about twenty words without using the word say except to say that the say I'm going to say is also a say that jibes with the say that the rest of you would like to say, unless I forget to say [what] I started out to say and, say, what was the say I wish to say?—oh, say, I remember.

As I was going to say—as I look upon this cheerful and merry Christmas scene today I am overwhelmed with joy and pleased with the thought that it presents to my mind. I have a real picture of real life, of a true representation of three generations. And virtually what does that mean. It means that we have amongst us an elderly couple—a couple who are the center, cause and reason of this reunion for this gathering and celebration—a couple who have traveled their path of life from babyhood to grandparenthood, ah, yes, and a beautiful path, a path, fellow children, that they have made and is now completed and stands out now before us in large and

gilded letters as a splendid, unblemished and spotless record and example for us to follow—if we fellow children make such a path and record as they have made then we shall have also accomplished our mission and duty on this earth as they have certainly done—they have already gone through the trial, disappointments, adversities and temptations, have been tested and proved unfaltering—and it seems to me that it must be a grand thing to be a grandparent—it seems to me that it must be a pleasant remembrance to look back upon the lives of a person's own eight children, recalling and remembering when each and every one of said children were little tots in their cradles called babies and from babies to playful boys and girls, from boys and girls to ladies and gentlemen, then to men and women, and at the present time all are married and doing well. Yes, I am glad to say doing well. Yes, my father and mother have already raised their family—a family that is now rearing another family and let me say that each and every one of my parents' family are all right and of good character, except only one of them—the one who is now making the speech before you. But listen, every family has a black sheep in it and even if I am the black sheep let me prove to you that I am not so bad after all and in fact it is needful and advantageous to have me in the bunch. Doesn't every properly regulated real band of sheep have at least one black sheep in it? When you come right down to it, aren't those black sheep just as good as the white ones? The wool on them is just as good, their meat is just as good to eat, and their hearts are just as true, just as good and just the same, and further more, the owner of that band of sheep considers the black ones the most valuable, the most important and they they are indispensable for the reason that it saves counting the whole number because if the right number of black sheep are present that shows that they are all there. So you see, I'm not so worse after all.

Well, I see I've been caught eulogizing, and bragging on myself—tooting my own horn. Consequently, I suppose in order to square myself I should tell some of the good qualities, characteristics and peculiarities of the rest of the children. I take pleasure in doing so. So here goes it. Let us start with the girls first.

Now there is Mary. She finds it's as easy to have things done right as to have them done wrong. It gets on her nerves and aggravates her to have things done in a haphazard, unfinished or incomplete manner. With her, good enough means perfect.

Another thing about Mary, she knows how and what to say at the right time and place. For instance if a person is in discouragement and disappointment she administers the proper and correct consolation and advice that inspires him to get up and march forward again. She did that with me, see. Thanks to Mary.

Next comes Elizabeth. She's the one that you can't get of the best of in an argument. A person gets enthused to her hear talk. If you are not well posted on your subject she'll be sure to tell you some things you never thought of before. That's been my experience with her. Many times I thought I had a correct view of certain matters but before I got through with her—or rather she got through with me—I found that I had only considered one side of the question and was entirely mistaken. She certainly keeps well posted and up to date on current events. Elizabeth is pleasant, good-natured and one whom people like, and at the same time has the tact of not allowing herself to be imposed upon.

Now for Bula [Beulah]. Bula was formerly a little baby. But now she has grown up to be a good and lovable mother—and woman—a woman who is right and good because she believes it's right to be right and good, and all the riches and wealth of the world that one might desire

would not induce her to abandon or desert her home or family. Many times I have called to one of them expecting only to stay fifteen or twenty minutes but on account of her congenial disposition and hospitality, and by reason of the pleasant, cheerful and homelike surrounding, it would be three or four hours before I would depart.

Another thing about Bula, she can obtain more news in fifteen minutes than most people can in a whole week especially Ma day [Monday?].

The boys now. I'll give Clarence his medicine first. There's a boy who is not afraid of work. There is not a lazy bone in his body. He'd rather work than eat. The only reason he does eat is so he can work—neither is he afraid of anyone—not even his boss—he knows how to boss his boss and makes a good boss.

Another thing about Clarence, he likes to see people enjoy themselves. For instance if he tells a joke and you laugh at it he will keep repeating that joke until you quit laughing. That is quite natural in him for he is willing to do so as long as he sees that it is creating merriment to his listeners.

What about Arthur. Well there's a loyal one—using that word in the sense that if he knows of two friends, nothing would persuade him to betray either of them—he would not even for revenge tell one about the other so as to break up the friendliness between the two. In other words he's no traitor to his friends. Another thing about him, he's one that you like to be with, especially when you're working. As long as he's working with you, the shorter the time seems. If I am working with him the day always seems too short, and he has the faculty in case one is not doing the work right to tell him in such a way how it should be done so as to not make a fellow sore at him. In the end his men become to like him and will strive to do things for his best interest.

O Le, or rather Leo. Excuse me, I made a mistake in pronouncing his name backwards. There's a witty one—he's quick and clear to think—can grasp the idea at once. He can read a newspaper, magazine, poem or book and immediately give you an original opinion of the same and also of the merits and demerits of the authors.

Leo is a funny one. He can keep you all guessing and is different from the average person. Most people you know make you glad twice. They make you glad when they call to see you and they make you glad when they leave. Leo is not that way. He makes you glad when he calls to see you but you're sorry when he leaves. He makes you wish he would stay longer and give some more entertainment and a hope that he would not thereafter make his visits so few and far between. Now I know just what I am talking about when I say that whoever is fortunate enough to have him for a friend has a true friend indeed. A boy who will stay with you to the bitter end—whether you are in adversity or prosperity—whether you are in poverty, or in riches and abundance—a boy who would rather go hungry himself than see his friend do so, and if there ever was such a thing as one brother liking another it certainly exists with me toward him—there's a person—there's a man. Yes, you thought as much of me when I was down and out as when I was on my feet. That disposes of Leo.

C.C.C. C raised to the third power equals Charley Chester Crowell.

In him we have a man—we have an example of good character and correct living. And I will advise and say to his boys that if they follow in the footsteps of their daddy they will not go wrong. Boys, your father is surely laying a faultless and sound foundation for you and sufficiently equipping you with guns and ammunition so you can successfully battle with and resist the allurements, disgraceful death falls, temptations and sins which are so artfully and prettily displayed by the devil to the eyes of young men staring out into this deceitful and wicked world.

Charley is known and famous the world over as the dry joker. But, really, I don't know why we call his jokes dry ones unless because they are all original and he creates them from everyday life which he observes. I notice his jokes do not spoil.

Charley is the one who knows how to make money by using good judgement. He would rather use his brains for fifteen minutes and make \$10000 thereby than to use his muscles a whole week and only make \$20. But he does use both his brains and muscles. That accounts for him being a Millionaire.

He is the one who makes life worth living—go down on his ranch and see him make sometimes for work and sometimes for play—in jollyng the crowd he's the big cheese.

Now just one more thing and then I will close. About six months ago we children commenced to systematically make arrangements for this family reunion with a view of keeping it a secret from the folks and unquestionably it has been a great surprise to them, an event which will never be forgotten—a happening we've long looked for until it has been realized, and this meeting today speaks volumes to me and has a pleasing and touching significance. Of all the 40 Christmas times I have seen, this one is by far the greatest...[some words not visible] wonderful and magnificence carrying with it an up...[some words not visible] and demonstration of our parental love and respect, and I ask each and every one of you how many families do you think there are today in all the nations of the world who are having a family reunion like we are, wherein there is such good fellowship, harmony and peacefulness as exists between the Crowells? I say not many. Therefore, I venture the assertion that this is the extraordinary day and crowning feature of our parents' lives—something they were not contemplating nor thinking of fifty years ago nor forty years ago, nor twenty, nor ten, nor five and not even yesterday—such makes this-to-day's situation still the more marvelous and memorable, which leads me to put the finishing touch on my talk wherein I will endeavor to tell you what my favorite thought of life is—a thought which I have—whether I can express it or not I do not know, but follow me closely and I will try to make it clear enough so you will see the point any way.

Broadly speaking the civilized world is divided into three great parts consisting of two extremes and a place between. One of those extremes is where we hear of and see a class of people who are over-burdened with worldly wealth, who are flooded with diamonds, who live in mansions and have and are surrounded with servants, maids and attendants at every turn, who pass their lives in foolish frivolity and vain display, who are consistently and everlasting vying between themselves to see which one can make the most attractive, costly and elaborate showing, and to do so give competitive bequests and receptions whereat each one is in dread,

jealousy, anxiety and worry for fear that some is wearing more costly jewelry and more expensive dress than the rest, and after indulging in their late suppers, wine and champagne go home and the next day are in headache, misery and disappointment, but such people keep that kind of thing going time after time, are always between the devil and the deep sea until at last lots of them lose their heads, go crazy and to some wrongly decide to commit murder and then escape punishment of the law by pleading temporary insanity.

Say what you please but I say and I base my conclusion upon such people's own admissions and confessions that they are not in a true state of happiness and will never have a key to the pearly gates of heaven.

On the other hand there is the other extreme. We hear of sad cases where poor people are having a hard struggle to get anything to eat or wear and in fact are deprived of the necessities of life to keep the little children in nourishment. There are many families, and I have seen some of them myself, consisting of a husband and wife and as many as seven children all living and sleeping in one little room and eating sometimes only once a day and then only of bread earned by one of the boys selling papers on the streets...[some words unreadable] unable to get steady employment and when he gets work it's only at meager wages. Such children, even if they live, will be puny and unmeasured, are not to blame and are to be pitied.

I have attempted to picture the two extremes. None in this crowd is in either of those extremes but we are all in that position which is between the two in that happy medium where we've not too much nor too little but enough to keep us comfortable and to make life interesting, worthwhile and full of hope, without which we would despair, and although we may not be a Governor, Senator, Congressman or President, nevertheless we constitute a necessary and essential integral part wherein we have our own sphere and circle of relatives, friends and acquaintances, and while performing that part are enjoying life just as much, are satisfied and content to the same degree, are doing our receiving and feeling just as good as those who are traveling in a circle ten times as large and known from one end of the United States to the other. And don't you dare to tell me that because we're not holding one of those high government positions that our lives are failures and ambitions and aims in life lacking and defective.

And if you do I'll tell you that you're full of poppycock and rot. You can't tell me that the ambitions and aims that they have attained are not meritorious and adorable but you can tell me that if more people would imitate and copy after them, our country's national citizenship and Governmental machinery would be a great deal better and when you've told me that then you've said something that is right and true and correct.

And now in conclusion I will present this present and in doing so make a few comments.

This electric lamp was by a unanimous vote of all of us children decided upon as being the most suitable and appropriate of any article we could think of, for the reason that besides being useful, pretty and attractive it is an incomparable reminder and is direct in fine, [words unreadable] and suggestive of their past, present and future, Why? Easy.

They taught their children to avoid and dispel darkness and to see the light. So here it is —light. It's been their motto. Let there be light and there was light. So here it is —Light. In their biographies instead of foolishly carousing around away from home late at night [they]

preferred to be with their family talking, reading and writing in the evenings around the lamp. So here it is again.

This present goes still further. As our parents look upon and see this lamp sitting in this room day after day in the future and as they observe its gleaming and bright light evening after evening when they are here all alone, nothing could be more foreseeable to make them happy and to remind them of this memorable occasion and that they have children who love them from the bottom of their hearts and souls, and although it may sometimes bring tears to their eyes, God bless them it will be nothing more than enjoyable tears of joy.

And I ask you brothers and sisters, as we look upon that lamp are carried back to our good old childhood days when we were school boys and school girls, when the entire family were all living upon that dear old ranch in Kings County and in the evenings were gathered around in that pleasant and cheerful home at Hanford sitting around the lamp studying and preparing ourselves to be good citizens—that which we are to day.

I now hand over this joint present to you both jointly and severally.

End.