THE NEW EDUCATION

President Chamberlain's Inaugural Address

Gentlemen of the boards of trust and oversight, brothers alumni, students of Bowdoin College: in accepting this solemn trust, I am not ignorant of the high discourse which custom demands. Too deeply am I impressed with the great examples of learning, piety, genius and fame which have made this seat august in the eyes of men, and these inaugurations noble spectacles where even in starting from the goal, the victor stood forth already crowned. Overawed by these majestic shades and compassed about by this great cloud of witnesses, deem it not unmeet that I should falter, standing here, seized upon with a sense of loneliness as if in a strange land, where I had no kindred and knew not even the speech.

I should know how this year to greet and be greeted by the boys of '52. Alas! I see them not; but strong faces, venerable heads, lifted up expectant of some token worthy of the reverence which this high office commands. But the brain still sore under the helmet, feels even the laurel a burden. Bear with me therefore, as deriving weakness rather than strength from your presence and your honors, and let your charity cover what your partiality has made too conspicuous.

As you have departed from precedent in filling this chair, so may I in speaking from it. Perhaps you will freely allow me to use this occasion to take familiar counsel with you as friends of the college. This is alumni day. Be it theirs still, and let me speak with them face to face. It is possible also that in the present condition of things, even were I able to wield the sceptre of overmastering eloquence, a plain statement of the case would be more satisfactory to you and to me than the subtle discriminations of argument or the farthest sweep of theoretic vision.

First then I may thank you, reverend minister of Him without whose aid all our works are vain, for your kind offices; you, exalted chief, benignant Governor, following after me but preferred before me, yourself knowing well the arduous duty I assume, and lending me your smile; you, honored sir, presiding over the board in which the strong spirit of the college has most sway; you, chief minister unto the State of that Majesty whose seat is in the bosom of God and her sceptre throughout the universe, honoring us with a happy omen and admonition of obedience and loyalty; you, young friend, speaking for those whom I love as younger brothers and fellow students; and you also, I salute, <u>olarum et venerabile nomen</u>, who have invested me with the unexpected honor of this historic cap,— would that the learning and grace and dignity which have adorned it, might descend with it; you, also, gentle faces, looking kindness, accept my gratitude and grant your favor to Bowdoin College!

I proceed now to state the case.

With the same authority, and I may say with the same compliment, came my commission and my instructions. It was manifest from both that something was the matter. After all that had been done and exemplified here,

the college still seemed to have need of something— not quite well defined— some hold on the public confidence, some share in the living sympathies through which alone a college can find its life and its work. You set me here, and told me to discover these needful things, and to provide or win them. Gentlemen, the task was too great, or else the force too small. It needed the eye and hand of a master in strategy, and resources equal to a siege, to carry all these points. It must take more than one summer to "fight it out on that line." But with what judgment I had, I have looked over the ground. I have made the preliminary dispositions. I have pushed out reconnoissances; those able chiefs of divisions hold the strategic points of the field. We are ready to move, and I report back to my government the situation.

First I looked at the dear old college. It stood erect, thought it moved not; apart from the people, its voice reaching not far into the din of the times; supported by few, yet not forlorn; proud even in its isolation. Yes, after all its glorious history, the high purposes of its founders, the gifts of the state, the prayers of the church, the broad character and fame of its Presidents and Professors, its most distinguished roll of graduates and most noble record of good works, something had gone. Men meant all too much when they said "Old Bowdoin." Something about the tone seemed like the Ilium fuit; some pius AEneas had borne off the old Anchises, and the story took on an antique, epic style, whereof in like fashion the first books were the best; beginning with the strife of heroes, but ending with slippery games. At the most its grand old legends lived as the voices of heralds, sounding the claims to a proud ancestry rather than the ringing watchwords of an onward cause.

Yes, gentlemen, something had come between the college and the life of the people. Maine men sent their sons abroad even to less advantages; the state in relinquishing its control withdrew its countenance; the church which claimed the college began to think the college had no claim on it; the trustees and overseers did not trust the college with their sons; the officers of finance satisfied themselves with the laudable duty of preventing the funds from being spent instead of studying how they might be enlarged; no covenant of blessing held the alumni unto the third and fourth generation; even the professors, it is said, wrapped themselves in their virtue at the sight of a returning graduate, as if there were something chilly in his atmosphere; no circuit of mutual interest and advantage bore the same life-current through the heart of the college and the heart of the people; until at last in the strange melee of cause and effect it seemed that church and state, orthodox and liberal, aristocrat and democrat, alumnus and alien had entered into league to hold aloof from Bowdoin. Meanwhile the times had shot past the college. Left out of the current of living sympathies, whirled in the vortex of these self multiplying evils, she stood still, while the world at full flood and flushed with new life swept on. She stood, however, vital with the spirit of her early faith, true to all the trusts that had ever been reposed in her, holding fast all the good ever given her, giving back what she could, without stint or stay, hardened and knit together by the struggle with adversity, polished and made bright by the rough contacts in which she had been involved, she stood, solid, self-reliant, characteristic, grand in her solitude, shining from afar!

I submit that this was not a bad college, and its influence though

limited, was more marked than that of any other. The young men who had the courage to come here took on a stamp of rare manliness, and they bore out into the world more good to it than it ever gave back or even confessed to the college.

Still it was a small college and a narrow sphere for the far reaching minds set together in the starry coronet of Bowdoin's early fame. They were called to larger labor or, humbling themselves to these lowly chairs of hers, were exalted thence to higher seats— all gone, save one, who still breathes on us the atmosphere of her youth and his own; distant be the day of his exaltation! But glorious as this history had been, it was but a lingering twilight now, and there was a dull feeling as if the night were drawing near. The brightest day must decline. For it is a great law of nature that things move in periods. All lines on the earth are circles. Epochs of history are throbs, heart beats of the great human life, that complete their work and themselves and pass to other.

No strange verdict was that then by which the college was condemned— "Behind the times!" The condemnation spoke not in the name of justice, but of fate. Things that do not deserve to die, must die. Flickerings of life there were, but no germinant centres of self-cure. The reasons of the decline were linked together; the argument pushed on in a perpetual circle, and the vortex narrowed and deepened toward the vanishing point. The case was desperate, gentleman; You saw it, and in your desperation you resorted to the heroic treatment. There was danger that the remedy might be worse than the disease!

The college had touched bottom, not so much by the fault of men, as by the fate of things. But how to rise again? and how to begin? Young men passed by the college, because they demanded a kind of education she could not give. To meet this exigency, to carry out the wishes of the friends of Bowdoin and the votes of the boards, devolved a labor which I did not err in calling a task. There were two courses of policy. We might confine our efforts chiefly to holding our own, "strengthening the things that remain," and feel our way by cautious and imperceptible degrees; or we might accept at once the challenge of the times, advance boldly to the key point of the position, and begin in right earnest to entrench, before we had force enough to hold it at all hazards, and even before our supplies had come up. This course would have the advantage of cutting off all doubt and debate as to what we were going to do, or whether we were going to do anything. The will would follow close upon the wish, and the way would be made instead of waited for. It would be the track behind us and not the dreaded essay before us. The former and more cautious way would be an easier one for the actors certainly, and would have the merit of awakening less misgiving on the part of friends, less criticism from enemies, and less notice from anybody. But we saw exactly what was to be done; why not go forward then and commit the college to its position, and make the support of its friends not a thing to be desired, but an absolute necessity? This reduced the question to a sharp alternative. Should the college conquer, or should it die? rejecting totally the middle, or I ought to say the mean question, Should it merely live?

It was an adventurous and possibly a rash decision; that it was an unwise one is not yet proved. We said that in this crisis it would be

better to move on, even though it were upon a scale of expenditure that would exhaust our whole capital in a dozen years, and then either die gloriously or be worth saving, than to dwindle along until men began to doubt whether we were worth a decent burial, and left us to rot above ground.

Gentlemen of the boards, we took you at your word. We interpreted you after the strict rules of hermeneutics in the spirit and vigor of your intent. We said it is better to take the ten thousand dollars, and put the college on the front line, rather than to try to induce people to lend us money to see whether we could do it. We did it. We believed that when the friends of the college saw its flag on the heights they would keep it there. And they will!

It was like the story of that Prince of the Crusaders of Baldwin, King of Jerusalem, namesake of Bowdoin, who being like to die, and his enemies taking occasion of his weakness thronging upon him, flung his banner upon his litter and was borne into the front of the fray, scattering terror among his foes, and rescuing both his life and his kingdom.

This is our new departure, and its vindication. Let me bring it clearer to your sight, that you may know more nearly what it is, and why it is. Beside this old course of study grand in its immovable and sphinx-like aspect, we have erected another which is called the new, chiefly because it is the last comer, and also because it begins with the present and takes the past chiefly on trust.

It is a stupid thing to think we should cut entirely loose from the past, or indeed to fancy we can do it if we will; but it is equally unwise to shut ourselves up in the past, and to see with its eyes rather than our own. It is the true way of the scholar to start from the completed past. In order to do that, it is necessary to know what that past is; to understand and accept its treasured acquisition and wisdom, and apply it to the conditions of the present; to learn by the record of what other men have sought for, suffered and even failed of, that we may take a correct departure.

But the spirit and fashion of the past have been full strong in our systems of education. The monastery is not exactly the proper training-school for the times. It was good in its day and place; and the world owes much to the faithful hands that kept the cloister lamp alive through ages of night. But the day is come now, in which men can work.

It was the cloister spirit, after all that made most mischief with the old college. Its tendency was away from life; the natural affections rebuked; the social instincts chilled; the body despised and so dishonored; woman banished and hence degraded, so that even to admit her to a place in the higher education is thought to degrade a college. The inmates separate, secluded, grown abnormal and provincial, came out into the world strangers to it, and in its own simple phrase, fools. Now that is not exactly what the college wants to make of men.

This is a peculiar age. It is hard to characterize it by any one

word sufficiently comprehensive and exact. At all events, it is an age of work. Not in any low sense of the word, nor yet in the highest. It is not guided by the inspiration which, beholding the transcendant Ideal, sees nothing between. It is guided by thought however and follows the line of certain laws; regarding them indeed too narrowly, and following where they lead, blind to all else. But there is one good thing about this; as fast as any advance is made, all men are called up to see it, and to share it, and to profit by it, if they can. So both the work and the thought are freely turned to human use. It is called the age of Science, more than anything else. Now I want to say a few things about this, for it is the fashion for those who do not know much about it, to say at least something, so as to have their hand in it. I do not fear these men of science, for after all they are following in God's ways, and whether they see him now or not, these lines will surely lead to him at the end. Sooner or later, if not now, they will see and confess that these laws along whose line they are following, are not forces, are not principles. They are only methods. And those powers which they so triumphantly behold are not primal but transmitted powers; not creating but only reproducing. Laws cannot rightly be comprehended except in the light of principles, which is almost the same thing as saying that God is the only interpreter of his works, and we can only understand them by recognizing Him as the center and soul of all. Bear with me, if I venture to define; for that is what is most needed in these things. Speaking now of the realm of nature, I would say that Laws are God's ways seen by men, while Principles are God's thoughts to himself, when he projected the universe and appointed the bounds and consummations towards which all things tend; in the light of which alone can anything be understood as to its nature or destiny. Laws show how only certain ends are to be reached; it is by insight into Principles that we discover the great, the integral ends, where all things are satisfied and rest. Other ways there are also of God's true working, seen only by anointed eyes, or when to the unbelieving the veil of earthly atmosphere is lifted for a moment to reveal the mighty Presence. For that which is a miracle to one state of vision, may to another be the known familiar way. Now the knowledge of these Laws I would call Science, and the apprehension of Principles I would call Philosophy, and our men of science may be quite right in their science and altogether wrong in their philosophy. These principles may be seen by the intuitive reason looking straight forward, or they may be reached by working back through the ways of laws. So I do not fear the advance of science whatever may be or become of individual theories or men; for I know that all true working and real discovery must lie directly in those lines which lead surely to principles, and can rest in no other theory than truth, and no other goal than God.

Now I return to my point. It is the age of Science; and Science that generously turns its winnings to human use, and invites man to a thousand new activities. It shows how knowledge may be power. That is, a certain kind of power. For poetry too, for example, is power. But this works by the unknown, the incomplete, the unsatisfied. It reveals capacity, stirs cravings, and wakes the cry of aspiration. It impels and inspires. But science becomes power through the known, the exact, the attained. It shows aspiration the way, and satisfies the longing cry. This casts down the self complacency of man and teaches him the

limit of earthly aspiration. This breaks up the daring dream of Faust and Manfred and the spirits of discontent, that they could attain to the life of the gods through the intensified self. Thus it saves the infinite cost of life-long struggle ending in guilty and unforgivable despair.

I hear the age called materialistic, because it renounces the intense subjectivity of the past and is content to follow the smallest footsteps of the Creator. But in the last analysis of science we stand face to face with force, and not matter; and force is of the spiritual, as the essence of the divine.

I hear the age called servile, because it would turn thought to human use. But in this life of ours— the ceaseless round of service, mastery, skill, achievement— nay in the Highest where the human blends with the Divine, when the final motive is reached, when the last revolution is made and the needle stands still, it points not to the sake of Being but to the sake of Doing. Law is Love and Principle is Good.

So now I say this is a good age, and we need not quarrel with it. We must understand it, if we can. At least we must do our work in it. We must have the spirit of reverence and faith, we must balance the mind and heart with God's higher revelations, but we must also take hold of this which we call science, and which makes knowledge power. To fit a man for these countless activities he must learn something else than the past, though that were "all the wisdom of the ancients," and if he has only ten years for instance, to fit himself in, and the bitter issue comes, then he must slight the past and not the present. I said some time ago that things move in periods. So this seems to me the gradual evolution of a new era. We draw our sustenance less directly from Greece and Rome; the nourishing cord that held us to them serves now to hold our hearts in place, and we begin to breathe for ourselves.

We fashioned our new course by this plain demand. But in building this up we did not tear down the old, for there may be some giants even in this day, who wish to scale their Heaven from Ossa and Pelion. "Old Bowdoin" holds all its place and prestige; we have even yielded back to it certain property that had been wrested from it by forays or coaxed by compromise. We have restored the symmetry of its proportions and the fulness of its spirit. We detract nothing from its high estate, but we look up to it as a monument and landmark— a pyramid upreared by even more toiling hands and more skilful arts than our own— an object of reverence and admiration to all.

But the times have changed since that course of instruction was laid. Neither men nor things are where they were, and the question for us is, whether there may not be other courses that might also be worthy of something better than scorn. Let us take no unfair ground. Let us say education is for the man and not the workman. Very well, and by education we mean that training of the man by which he will be enabled to summon and concentrate all his energies upon a purposed end. Let us say that discipline is the chief thing in education. The question is now clear— whether there is only that one course prescribed in an age and society far different from ours, to which every man shall be brought who

aspires to liberal culture and disciplined powers.

These earnest young men who seek the new course do not seek to avoid discipline or toil. They want their studies to face outward towards action, as well as inward towards life. They want to acquire discipline through studies which take hold on present activities, and whose results abide and can be turned to use. They do not wish to practice with masks and foils that must be thrown away in the field of action, but with the edge and point with which they are to win their way.

Suppose for instance that we were to replace Greek and Latin by French and German. And that because these languages open rich fields of literature and culture, and incomparably the richest in the results of philosophic thought and investigation. May not discipline now be acquired and possibly as good results attained in the modern as in the ancient tongues? For my part, I wish every man could learn both and more. The Sanscrit, and Persian, and Hindoo might be worth a man's while for discipline, and that grand old Hebrew— itself so like the creation it describes, Tohu vau vohu, without form and void, unfixed and vast—might wake up manly strength to grapple with the giant work offered.

I would certainly, that every one might know the culture of Greece and the hardihood of Rome and all the deep lessons that lie in the history of these great nations. But I would not dare to say that a man might not have a thorough discipline and a liberal education without knowing these from what are called original sources. Even at the best they are borne to us through other minds. Why might they not be still better translated, still more searched and sifted and analyzed and established? Why would it not be possible by taking the results of the latest lights and wildest studies to enter into all men's labors that have gone before?

I am not arguing for narrowness or mere economy. For me the past is great. The old which is also the young has a glory all its own. It speaks of freshness, of impulse, of heroism, of aspiration, of devotion. The broad spirit, unfettered by the multiplied wants and conventionalities of civilization, unweakened by the accumulation of transmitted evil, working its way in darkness it my be, glorious even in its seeking, grand in its sacrifice and sublime in its despair! Better to me is this than the self satisfied, self felicitating spirit of him who in these days of abundant fruitions, easily wins and wastefully uses, that makes haste to be rich and is slow to do good, that increases possessions and dwarfs the possessor. Take not away from me the knowledge of youthful antiquity! Take not away the classics that transmit it. But I speak for myself alone. I would not be so weak and so narrow as to say there is no way but my way, I would not say to our youth you shall only come by the eastern gate into the Temple of the Universe. I would not say to the earnest seeker, you shall not know what God hath wrought in the deeps of nature or written in the soul of man, unless you can first tell me what Demosthenes said about Philip, or what Virgil knew about farming.

Life is short, and Art is also short in these days of the world, and men must be walking in the ways in which they would go; they must be

learning the instruments they are to use; they must be disciplined for the life they are to build. At anyrate they may as well be disciplined and trained by these things as by anything else. Nothing is lost from manhood, but much is gained to mankind. The times will not let every man thread all the labyrinths of knowledge before they take him into service; they will not let him bury himself too long in the catacombs of the dead, when life summons him on every side. Therefore I can say to the young man who comes to me across his native meadows and not by Parnassus or Helicon, and pleads that he too may have part in these harvest times of the world. Sit down with me, and see if there be not in this English tongue heroic words and inspiring history, no less than literature, science and philosophy. See if in the mastery of this a man may not find culture, liberal and invigorating; united to the infinite variety of human concerns. Or cross over to that cousin-speech, and see where from the glooms of German forests, the consummate man "sent forth his deep voice from his breast, and his words fell thick and wide as the winter snows." Or pass to the French, that Mediterranean of tongues, in whose bosom are the wrecked treasures of nations and the lost ransoms of kings! There is enough there, good friends, I believe for discipline and culture for work and inspiration too.

It may be thought that the college ought to be conservative and resist this modern fashion. But take care lest in so doing you repel the humble seeker from the only high course of culture within his reach! Take care lest in so doing you offend one of these "little ones," who is journeying also to the Kingdom!

No, I frankly say to you, I think the college ought to meet this demand and if this is too low, perhaps in this way she may raise it by and by. Answer this demand. You need not therefore surrender to it. Interpret to itself this vague desire for the practical. Take it and show it better things than it knew or sought. Nay, I would go out to meet it, and would even stoop down to reach it, if I could thereby gather in and lift up every lowly and hungering one on the face of this earth. Having gained them, you could then guide. I would not have much elective in this new course, because choice is precisely the one thing of which the young seeker is least capable. In a wilderness of options he is lost. So we have laid out certain paths through the fields of knowledge, where each one may choose according to his strength or his aim, but having chosen must follow— some leading by lowlands and some by highlands, some looking to hand-work and some to head-work, but all meeting at last in one grand trysting place in God's own garden.

For all study should be both onward and upward, it should be under the light of something higher than itself and should ever lead to it. For if you teach all these mysteries of art and science merely that a man may do more work, you do but degrade and enslave him, you bind him down to earth and make him the master beast of burden. I would teach him to follow out the thought that is in these ways, that he may rise to these high harmonies of spiritual science in which his true life lies. So I would take in the things that are beautiful and good no less than the things that are true.

Woman too should have part in this high calling. Because in this

sphere of things her "rights," her capacities, her offices, her destiny, are equal to those of man. She is the Heaven, appointed teacher of man, his guide, his better soul. By her own right, however, she inherits here, not as the sister of man but as the daughter of God!

This leads me to one thing higher. No society, no study, no science, no philosophy is sound and complete which does not recognize the highest in man- his relations with the Supreme. Therefore I pray for the highest blessing that can rest upon this college, that it cherish true religion. I see a banner with a legend half obscured and forgotten. I take it up. I lift it to the face of day. I set it boldly and high on yonder towers. Christo et Ecclesiæ! "To Christ and the Church." Not O man of many fears and little faith- not the church of sect and dogma, not the church with a stake in its creed; not the church of the Pharisee or the fanatic; but the church of brotherly love, the church of the Redeemed on earth, the church Universal! Not to Christ the peer of Confucius and Zoroaster and Plato, but Christ the peerless one! Not the Christ that frowns on sinners, but the Christ that died for them!

This is my hope and ideal for the college- that it may be indeed a lofty seeker after truth, but more than all a lifter up of men. I fear not the age, with all its hot haste. Let it come and stir all minds and all hands. Let it be a new Elizabethan age- dazzling discoveries, broadening science, swift-following invention, arts multiplying, civilization advancing, new fields of thought and labor, new prizes of courage, new rewards of toil, new aspects and fashions of all things! Let labor be wedded to thought. Let Vulcan still smite the brain of Jove and the Goddess of all the arts leap full-panoplied into life? God grant that we may do our part!

Brothers Alumni, let old feuds be forgotten. Let love and loyalty rally us here! Joined hands make warm hearts and warm hearts make liberal hands! Let the people understand this college. It is not a rich man's college, but one where we would that all, rich and poor, alike might be trained for man's highest estate! It is not a sectarian but a Christian college. It is not a place to make orthodox ministers (though it has done that too in its day, and done it well, and can do it again) but it is a place to make even masters of themselves and ministers of all good.

Help us then to open these doors, that earnest minds everywhere may come and share our blessing! I am glad there are some lowly doors where those may dare come in, who might not venture through the lordlier portals, if so be that when they pass hence they shall know the way to the "many mansions" and may enter through the Gate into the City!

Let the college rise but let her also stoop a little to reach as many uplifted hands as possible, to gather the burden of as many human interests as she can lift while with strong limbs she scales the heights! Let her reach high, only never to forsake the earth, but be like the ladder of the Patriarch's vision, whereon messengers of truth ascend and descend to make known the things of God to the thoughts of man, the foot still on the earth where our toils and cares make us fall asleep upon the stones, the summit reaching into Heaven whither our dreams aspire!