Following the Gleam
Address by Clement C. Maxwell
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Dr. Sullivan, Commissioner Desmond, Dr. Kiernan, members of the State Board of Education, delegates of universities and colleges, guests, alumni, and students.

Twelve years and a century ago Horace Mann, a leader of vision and conviction, together with certain alert citizens of Plymouth County founded the Bridgewater Normal School. Mann and his followers had thought long and deeply about the problems of teacher preparation and teacher fitness. They were searching for a constructive plan which when organized and set in motion would send out into practical pedagogy “A trained teacher for every child.”

Mann fought persuasively against odds and decimated barriers that would have discouraged a less adventurous soul. To be sure, his was a strange even fantastic thesis, but he knew in his mind and he felt in his heart that teacher education would open new vistas and promise new hope to our country and its youth.

In the very year of our school’s foundation the legislative committee on education filed a report advocating the abolition of the normal schools and advocating the repeal of all acts establishing them. This movement was defeated only after the expenditure of most strenuous efforts on the part of friends of education.

Then too, in the early years, Bridgewater graduates found teaching positions discouragingly scarce, for they were looked upon with suspicion. Yet Horace Mann planned better than he knew for within fifty years the demand for trained teachers far exceeded the supply. And by the end of the Civil War, about ninety-eight per cent of our graduates had engaged in teaching, running the gamut from the grade school teacher through founder of the new Normal School to State Superintendent of Education.

As pedagogy made progress and convinced even unwilling minds of its values, the college course was lengthened from one year to two, from two years to three, and from three to four years, according to the chosen field of the student. Meanwhile the post-World War clamor for more complete teacher education was answered by the State Legislature which empowered the Department of Education to award the degree of Bachelor of Education to those students completing a specifically planned four year college course in our newly created Teachers Colleges. The leaders at Bridgewater having foreseen this development were ready to engage in work of collegiate grade. The Normal Schools did not become Teachers Colleges by the waving of a legislative wand, nor did they like Topsy “jest grow.” Specialists in subject matter had been added, our equipment had been modernized and increased to give new strength and probably some new direction to old Bridgewater.

How fortunate was our school in these years of trial, contest and growth! The first principal, Nicholas Tillinghast, a native of my native Taunton, was a man of fine perceptions. A graduate of West Point, he forsook the science of war for the art of teaching. He brought to the infant project well-considered plans for its development, plans which proposed, as he expressed it, “To educate the Tyro-Teacher beyond his text books.” He labored humbly and solidly. When ill health forced his resignation at the end of thirteen years, our school was firmly established on its own campus and was enjoying the conveniences of the first Normal School building in this hemisphere. What a monument that building would be, did it still grace our campus! Unhappily we have only a rough-hewn stone to mark the site and to point to this early page in the Bridgewater Saga.

Marshall Conant, the second principal, was prepared for his work by the enthusiasm and the zeal of Mr. Tillinghast, whose dear friend he was. He was probably one of the first industrialists in American History
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to abandon the making of machinery for the molding of minds. He, like his predecessor, aimed to make the Normal School a training ground where the faculty might establish a nice balance between theory and practice. After seven years of labor that might have broken his body but never his spirit, he retired because of failing health.

His mantle fell most gracefully upon the able shoulders of Albert Gardner Boyden, a member of the school faculty. Thus began an administration that spanned parts of two centuries, from eighteen hundred and sixty to nineteen hundred and six. More remarkable, Mr. Boyden had been assistant to both the first and second principals. When therefor he came to the office he was prepared by first-hand study and experience for the intricacies of the school’s administration.

His idea of a Normal School is well expressed in these, his own words: The first Normal School of which we have any record was opened in Palestine. Its sessions were held upon the hills and plains of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. The Great Teacher of the world called to Him twelve men, gave them a three-year course in the precepts of human living, gave them their diplomas, saying “Go ye, therefore, teach all nations.”

In this spirit the elder Boyden administered Bridgewater through years that were marked most generously by new buildings, added curricula, and healthy student growth: sixty-seven students in 1860; three hundred thirty-six students in nineteen hundred and ten.

It was during his regime, too -- as Miss Beal has told you -- that foreign students beat a significant path to our door -- young folks from Burma, Japan, Mexico, Chile, Armenia. Today, that desire for a Bridgewater education still obtains among foreign students. Unfortunately the desperate need for teachers in our own Massachusetts schools precludes the possibility of such arrangements. It would be good for us as, I think, it would be good for them and for their countries.

In nineteen hundred and six Arthur Clark Boyden continued the forward march initiated by his far-visioned father who at this time became Principal Emeritus.

The younger Boyden enjoyed the unique distinction of being principal from 1906 to 1932 and president from 1932 through 1933. In both offices he worked unselfishly to increase and to expand our usefulness to the Commonwealth. Modern Bridgewater owes much to his energy and direction. An educator for democracy, long before the word had suffered debasement at the hands of the slogan maker, he built wisely in the minds and the sympathies of his students.

For a short four years Dr. Zenos Scott, one-time Superintendent of Schools for the city of Springfield carried on the presidential duties, leaving a deep impress upon curricula and faculty.

When Dr. Scott resigned to assume the duties as president of Louisville Teachers College in 1937, my immediate predecessor John J. Kelly became president of the college which he had served as Dean of Men under Dr. Boyden the son and Dr. Scott. If you would seek his monument you have but to look about you -- modernized halls and buildings, a beautiful campus, the organization of an Extension Division for teachers in service, substantially improved curricula, geared carefully to the needs of our schools. His passing just a year ago marked the end of an era, touched and influenced always by the spirit of Tillinghast and those who followed. President Kelly knew the plans, the hopes and the ambitions of Dr. Boyden as intimately as he appreciated his accomplishments. In his years of ministration Dr. Kelly made permanent the gains of his predecessors and then went on to add luster to the glory of Alma Mater.

Now, the question may be fairly posed: What specific advancement has been made in the work begun by Mann and implemented by Tillinghast and those who came after? How faithfully does the Bridgewater of today adhere to educational standards and to what degree does it achieve educational progress? How effectively do administration and faculty labor to keep the College in the forefront of wise pedagogical thought? The answers are not too far to seek. On every hand one may read them as he studies the intellectual and physical equipment of the College. The answers however are most clearly written, I think, across the pages of school growth and school progress in Massachusetts.
The Bridgewater of today might amaze Tillinghast and Conant, for they wrought in a generation that built largely of spirit and zeal, with only a few boards and a little plaster added for good measure. I doubt deeply that they would find great change in the essence of the Bridgewater meaning or the Bridgewater purpose. True, there have been changes, but always those changes have been introduced to give greater realization to the Bridgewater purpose and a deepening of meaning and these after all were written into the very preface of Bridgewater's story.

Today, visitors speak of our pleasant campus, our well-appointed buildings, our always expanding library. Our responsibility, however, is not the creation of great halls and buildings, necessary though they be, but rather it is to fan in to an all-consuming flame the spark hit off from the genius of our founding fathers. The buildings must come, the library must go on growing, our functioning plant must be maintained and enlarged, our standards for admission, promotion and graduation must remain uncompromising and as immovable as the principles of truth and justice.

Most of all, however, in season and out, we must hold fast to the inspirations that breathed life into our school, that gave the early principals courage to go on when they could count their friends on the fingers of a hand, and their enemies as the leaves of the trees. These inspirations will remain with us only so long as we desire to be touched and guided by them. When they become only subject matter for the school's story and are recorded as something that used to be, then indeed Bridgewater will have failed its purpose. Then indeed will it deserve to be relegated to the store room of forgotten dreams, misdirected purposes, and lost causes.

Though we must challenge ourselves continually, I think we need not fear the coming of that tragic day to our college, for we have a zealous student body, a discriminating faculty, a loyal alumni, a fatherly commissioner of education, a wise board of education, a provident Governor and legislature, all of whom are lamps to our feet and flames to our heart. With these sustaining Bridgewater in its position of primacy we have every right to hope that the blessedly happy past may give substance to our ambitious plans for the Bridgewater-to-be.

Naturally we are far more interested in the young men and women who come to us seeking education than we are in physical properties of our College. Again of course, we desire buildings, conveniences, equipment, but only insofar as they will help us to achieve the Bridgewater purpose -- the education of the whole man.

How to realize this purpose, how to educate? These are the questions which give us pause. It is to be assumed, I think, that no proper scheme of education can be adumbrated where there is lacking a clear understanding of man's ultimate aim. If we by-pass man's nature and man's immortal destiny, we are studying him and teaching him not as a human being but as an animal. Dr. [Robert Maynard] Hutchins, erstwhile Chancellor of the University of Chicago has expressed it in one of his writing this way: "We are in despair because the keys which were to open the gates of Heaven have let us into a larger but more impressive prison house. We think those keys were science and the free intelligence of man. They have failed us. We have long since cast off God. To what then can we appeal? The answer comes in the undiluted animality of our authors, in the emotionalism of the demagogues . . . man attempts to cease to be a rational animal and endeavors to become merely animal. In this he is destined to be unsuccessful. It is his reason which tells him he is bewildered.” So with Dr. Hutchins.

Let us look for a moment at this diversity of approach in the matter of defining education through its purpose. Aristotle teaches that the true end of education is the attainment of happiness through perfect virtue. [John Henry] Newman's idea of a university suggests that education is the preparation for knowledge and it is the imparting of that knowledge in proportion to the preparation. [Francis] Bacon writes of education as a means to a sinister kind of end -- man's dominance over things.

[John] Ruskin's definition very nearly rings the bell. Education, he tells us, is the manufacture of souls of good quality. Finally, [Henry] Van Dyke expresses it this way: the purpose of education is to create men who can see clearly, image vividly, think steadily, and will nobly.
The right kind of education obviously aims at the perfecting of the whole man in his relationship to God, to his neighbor and to himself. Our young men and women are not only trained, they are taught in class and on campus the values that constitute the good man, the good citizen, the good teacher, the teacher who goes into his profession with a deeply serious sense of purpose and a full, rich, appreciation of the good and the true. We believe with the late President [Calvin] Coolidge that the defenses of the commonwealth are not material but spiritual. Her fortifications, her castles, are her institutions of learning. Those who are admitted to our schools tread the ramparts of the state. The classic halls and the armories furnish the knights in armor to support and defend our liberties. For such high purpose have our schools been called into being. A firm foundation of the commonwealth. A defender of righteousness. Let their towers continue to rise, showing forth the way, the truth, and the light.

Thus do we educate the young men and women who choose Bridgewater as their college. They come to us with a freshness and a surprising maturity, already so developed as to make serious decisions about the future. They are students of honest purpose who come to know as we have long since known that the best influence wielded by the teacher is that of good example as it complements good precept. They know that their pupils will not become the world’s best citizens by studying about goodness; rather they must be reared and inspired not only in the home but also in the classroom by those who practice ethics, whose goodness gives a pleasant glow to the atmosphere.

After all, the goal of our faculty and our “students-to-become-teachers” is more than the mere inculcation of knowledge as tremendous as that task may seem. We are pointing always toward the development of culture, from the kindergarten with its playthings to the graduate seminar with its graphs and statistics. Our students learn in preparation for their role as teachers that culture is not the same as knowledge, a man may possess a very monopoly of knowledge and yet not a grain of culture. That culture implies an ability to estimate facts at their proper value. That it implies, beyond that, an ability to mold character on this proper sense of values.

Our students become dedicated men and women whose happiness in their work enriches a singleness of purpose. They love children and they enjoy working with and for children. Charles Dickens's fondness for childhood is a byword to those who read him. Frequently out of a mingled admiration for happy children and good teaching, he used to visit the schools in and around the city of London. In one of his papers he has this to say about the kindly efficient touchstone of good, effective teaching: Let nobody suppose, he wrote, that any scheme of education can attain its end, as a mere scheme, apart from the qualifications of those who are chosen to carry it into execution. Very young children can be trained by no person who lacks a hearty liking for them and who can take part in their chatter and their play only with a proud restraint. Indeed, it is no condescension to become as a child with children. In this spirit do our graduates fare forth into their profession.

The Bridgewater ideal permeates all curricula -- the cultural studies and the professionalized courses, the spirit breathed into its simple beginnings by men who encouraged learning as means to a glorious end, the spirit that still makes for unselfish service, ministering to others.

The world wants culture so badly, so much more than it wants “bread and the circus.” Believing this, we at Bridgewater attempt the development of every noble aspect of our students' nature. We look upon them as made up of body and spirit. We try honorably to make their souls receptive to all the refining influences of life, sensitive to the beautiful in whatever medium it expresses itself. It is obviously true that man does not live by bread alone, so true that we may take it dangerously for granted that the soul will grow somehow, whether consciously nourished or not.

Too frequently, we probably fall short of our noble planning, but, thank God, we never lose sight of the gleam. We do not, like Gawain of the Idylls, “Follow false fires,” for we have a philosophy of education that is constructed of proven materials.

Bridgewater tries diligently to discharge her duties as the shaper of the teaching mind and heart, as the creator of the teaching attitude. Her standards are planted firmly in the vanguard of those who believe in
sanity in education. We are a small college, as colleges go, yet more than nine thousand of our alumni have carried their Alma Mater’s message to the corners of the world, exemplifying loyally the Bridgewater meaning, the Bridgewater purpose.

May I express my gratitude to the delegates of universities and colleges who grace these exercises this afternoon. We accept your presence here as a generous demonstration of your friendliness and good wishes for a sister institution. Be assured we will not forget your present kindness.

Commissioner Desmond, Dr. Kiernan: I am deeply sensible of the honor which your confidence and good will confer upon me. To you, the Board of Education, Dr. Sullivan, our Alumni and our Students: I express my determination to work tirelessly and, I hope, effectively in maintaining the lustrous, glorious reputation of our College.

In this high purpose I pledge myself to work and to plan for an always better Bridgewater, looking forward to the building of a city, on true foundations, which is God's design and God's fashioning.