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An Answer to Marvin Sidney

Arthur A. Swallow

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Properly speaking, I have no proclivity as a disputatious interrogator, but certain statements in the article headed "New Clothes for Lehigh" wherein Marvin Sidney sets forth what I assume to be sincere, as well as kindly criticism, demand that I question some evident inferences. If I do not err, the sum and substance of M.S.'s article is that, either Lehigh's Arts Department be made pre-eminent, or the university must be considered, *primarily*, an engineering college. At what stage of Lehigh's history, may I ask, was it not *primarily* considered a technical institution? And again, unless the arts department surpasses the technical departments, then, the serious-and the flippant student-pursuing cultural subjects must wallow in a backwash of intellectual apathy!

Admitting of course that there are students in every department at Lehigh (and I do not restrict the assertion to Lehigh alone) who are at college for whatever social distinction a college education may bring, are arts students really interested in the benefits to be accrued, distinct that is, from the material remuneration? For I am of the opinion that therein lies the worth of a cultural course in any college or university, and furthermore, I believe the majority of arts students here at Lehigh are seriously inclined in both purpose and intent.

Fundamentally speaking, buildings, books and classrooms are subsidiary; mere material necessities, so to speak. A statement, for example, by President Holt of Rollins College in a recent number of the "World's Work" interests me very much. President Holt says that there are three things which make a college great: "(a) the quality of those who teach, (b) the quality of those who are taught, (c) the quality of the grounds, equipment and buildings." Certainly, no college or university, or institution worthy of the name can claim distinction, past, or present, upon its physical attributes alone. To me, it is a pervading *spirit* which in itself constitutes a higher place of learning. Lehigh, I insist, has that spirit in *all* departments. A casual perusal of Lehigh's alumni should suffice to convince those who are skeptical. Equipment, then, and even immediate environment are properly relegated to the background, to their proper places of subordination, at the same time bearing in mind their necessity up to a certain point. Lehigh, fortunately, does have men in its arts department who are capable of awakening any aesthetic or intellectual inclinations latent within any member of the undergraduate body. To ignore, intentionally or unintentionally, the true scholars among our arts faculty, or

even the most callous instructor, for each has his contribution to make no matter how small, -is to commit a gross injustice. Undoubtedly there are weaknesses and imperfections within any institution. Happily many of the flaws prevalent here at Lehigh have been, and continue to be, slowly but surely eradicated; the progressive policy in vogue is ample evidence of the fact.

That "the arts department must always remain subsidiary to the technical departments" is not in itself an issue, and serves only a secondary consideration. Lehigh's reputation, it is safe to assume, has been built upon its attractions and endeavors within the engineering field, our administration can only strive to make the arts college equal of the technical colleges, for the moment that the arts department becomes "preeminent" (as M.S. advocates) we would have the paradoxical situation of the whole problem reversing itself.

It is trite, and emphasizing the obvious, to remind the students that Lehigh has no controlling force whereby certain localities may be restricted. Unfortunately, the founders of this university did not foresee the necessity of obtaining certain sectional monopolies. The situation as it stands has grown since 1865. However, each one of us has a happy and consoling thought in that we possess a beautiful campus, and its attractiveness is all the more enhanced by the dull contrasts in the immediate vicinity. Furthermore, "the places of amusement" should not be distorted out of all proportion to their intrinsic worth. The two movie houses in Bethlehem which I have right in mind, should meet the requirements of the greater part of the leisure time which the student may have, *for that particular kind of amusement*. First-class shows and attractions may only be anticipated in towns compatible with the expenditure which such offering involve. To expect such things in a town of the caliber and population of Bethlehem is absurd. I neither wish to expatiate upon nor offer platitudinous adjectives for what beauty Bethlehem may have. I only wish to emphasize the fact that there is beauty coterminous with the individual's desire to see it. The student body of Lehigh, moreover, is not here fundamentally speaking, to indulge in shows; it is here to study.

If Lehigh is an "aesthetic desert" what, pray, constitutes an aesthetic plenitude? The dictum "an aesthetic desert" is nothing more than a play on words, and is fallacious in fact and implication. In the last analysis the endeavors of this student body and all other college bodies are "aspirations over abysses of profoundest ignorance." Whether our students are aesthetically or intellectually inclined is only a question of relativity. The important thing to remember is that there is one characteristic that attunes every individual in a sense, to harmony and concord, each and every one is striving toward one goal, that of enlightenment. I care not an iota whether a man is imbued with admiration for concrete solid facts, or enwrapped in the splendors of Platonic mysticism, the ruling idea, in essence, at least, remains the same. There should be no disparagement in either instance.