

ABOUT STUDENTS!

BY DR. T. F. MAYO

College Librarian and Staff Columnist "Lets Us Have It" for Our Editorial "About Professors"

Any faculty reply to "About Professors," undoubtedly the ablest editorial which has appeared in the Battalion in our time, must take largely the form of the "honest confession" that is said to be so "good for the soul." In fact, the only objectionable feature of Mr. Blank's editorial was its truthfulness.

Which of us profs but must admit with shame, for example, that we have been grossly guilty of "stifling the creative impulses" of that richly creative animal, the Texas Aggie? Every one of my readers can undoubtedly recall with ease a dozen instances of eager young minds, simply sprouting with brilliant ideas, but chilled and crushed by the callous indifference or blighting sarcasm of the professor. As a matter of fact, it is notorious that we teachers often discuss among ourselves the problem of keeping down originality among our students, bewailing their widespread interest in new ideas and their dangerous tendency to think for themselves, in spite of all that we can do to stifle their "creative impulses."

As for Mr. Blank's second accusation, that we lay too much stress on detail in asking questions, I very much fear that we must also plead guilty. Everyone knows how cramping it is to the soaring Aggie intellect to be called upon for such sordid matters as facts and figures. Think of the otherwise pleasant dormitory evenings that we have spoiled by demanding, on our quizzes, such detailed knowledge as requires whole minutes—nay, sometimes an hour of concentrated study to acquire!

We professors must (reluctantly) admit our "laziness," too,—a laziness all the more inexcusable in view of the snappy alertness of the brisk young minds with which we are privileged to deal. Surely we ought to have realized by this time the teacher's sacred obligations: (1) To prepare the student (painlessly) for making A's on quizzes without undue effort outside the class-room; and (2) to keep him entertained in the process. And of course we cannot fulfil these lofty functions without practically incessant toil in preparation. Truly, we ought to be up and doing if we are not (dreadful thought) to bore the dear fellows. (Waiter, a quart of midnight oil, please!)

The last count in Mr. Blank's indictment is particularly interesting. Some professors, he says, instead of confining themselves to nice, stimulating questions beginning with "Why?" questions to which it is a real pleasure to reply in vague and quickly thought-up generalities—have developed the embarrassing habit (drat 'em!) of wanting to know, specifically, "What is



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interest"; "What is a utility?"; "Who won the battle of X?" In spite of our own guilt in this matter, we can sympathize with Mr. Blank. We can imagine his annoyance on some morning when, after having been unavoidably detained in an important crap-game the night before, he came to class without having bothered about the detail of reading the lesson, but fully capable (in spite of a slight headache) of discoursing in an entertainingly imaginative manner on "causes" which no one can prove or disprove, or on vast, cloudy "tendencies." How boring, on such an occasion, to find that the professor wants definitions and facts instead of flights of fancy!

On the whole, then, Mr. Blank would seem to be right. We profs are indeed a sorry lot! Above all, we don't appreciate what a bunch of potential geniuses we are privileged to teach, how delicately their sensitive souls must be handled, and how heinous it is to plague them with work or boredom (the two being, it seems, practically synonymous).

We do feel our deficiencies, Mr. Blank. We kiss the rod and promise to reform. In fact, I personally would just love to get you into a course of mine, Mr. Blank—just to show you how deeply your advice has touched me—yes indeed—just to show you!