

allels of precirculated working papers, discussion limited exclusively to participants, absence of clear consequence or explicit agreement on conclusions from the discussion, are all very striking. They suggest the question as to whether the field of information storage and retrieval possesses the requisite coherence to benefit in full measure from these undertakings.—Henry Dubester, *Library of Congress*.

A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing

A Passion for Books. By Lawrence C. Powell. Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1958. 249p. \$4.50.

Commenting on Sydney Mitchell, Dr. Powell says, "His classroom courses had names and numbers, but actually they were all classes in Sydney Mitchell." In the same spirit this review is a discussion not so much of what Powell writes in this book but of Powell himself.

But before wading into this controversial subject, I find it pleasant to say that now and then Powell shows unusually fine descriptive powers as a stylist. For instance, in his chapter "Bookmen in Seven-League Boots" he succeeds as well as any living writer in telling you what it is like to fly across an ocean and a continent in a fast airplane. This chapter is a classic of travel writing.

And then in the first chapter, when Powell is expressing his contempt for some of the experts in management who run libraries these days, he says, "I know that I am not alone in my belief, my love, and I call on booklovers everywhere to close ranks, face the invaders, and give them the works, preferably in elephant folio." This sentence evokes a good clear image and it's good writing. In fact, most of Powell's prose is sprinkled with sentences that bristle with force, although most of the style is reminiscent of Gissing and Trollope. It could be said that Powell himself was born a century too late, although I am glad he was.

Let me say straight off that I am for Powell more than I am against him. He is without doubt a sheep in wolf's clothing and if you are not careful when reading him, you

will be thinking that he cares more about the "velvet" feel of a book than he does its content. Curiously enough, when he begins to wax eloquent on this point, his prose is least evocative and clear. At times it becomes positively mushy.

Powell *does* care about what authors say, he does sometimes write about the contents of books (see chapters beginning on pages 97 and 238, for example) and he does understand that the physical book is a carrier for ideas and expressions. But his point is that the book itself is an artform and that as a work of art it makes an important cultural contribution when its artfulness matches perfectly its contents. Also, he thinks we should have reverence for the physical book as a memorial to the intellectual history of man, just as we revere the medieval cathedral because it expresses the religious life of man.

But, don't all librarians think this? Indeed not. Most librarians who have been trained as social scientists or as humanistic scholars are inclined to regard the physical book merely as an "idea-husk." Their interest is in the idea, the expression, or the intellectual contribution. For them, the microfilm would do just as well as the original edition. This is pretty much the way I feel about books.

And they are right, too, in their own terms, just as Powell is right in his. But these are two different kinds of intellectual worlds. Powell doesn't object to the existence of the other world. He merely says that we librarians ought to be people who want the best—the idea housed in the physical format that best matches, in an artistic sense, the idea.

Since 1931, the year of the Waples-Thompson debates, the pendulum has swung far toward the social scientist-administrative expert kind of librarian. Powell now has his hands on the pendulum and is shoving it back in the other direction, but there are others with him. Who will be happy when it rests, motionless, at the bottom of its arc? Not Powell, not you.

Powell hates to admit it, but he knows that the university librarian, during the last twenty-five years and today, has had to spend much of his time on non-bookish matters—such as developing Farmington Plans, M.I.L.C.'s, centralized cataloging procedures, National Union Catalogs, and many other

projects that keep one from being a bookman, as Powell uses that term. There have been problems to be solved and the librarians have had to face these problems.

But, at the same time, there is truth in his charge that many of us have made a fetish of problems. Perhaps if we had been better scholars and bookmen than we are, we would have solved our problems more quickly and would have gotten on to other things sooner. The truth is that many librarians don't know anything other than problem solving. Such librarians wince under the lash of Powell's tongue.

Powell, from my point of view, is justified in exposing intellectual vapidness in those who can be called personnelists, efficiency experts, management experts—those who think in terms of the science of human management, who think of people as groups instead of as individuals. Our ranks are full of them: A.L.A. loves them: some library schools even give Ph.D.'s in their lore. He is right in saying that these scoundrels are degrading our profession just as they degrade every human institution. They get their claws in, for the very simple and fundamental reason that they have no respect for the sacredness and worthwhileness of each human being.

Powell's point of view does not call for a revival of the Waples-Thompson debates of 1931, because he does appreciate the value of science and of scholarship. He understands that research in librarianship is necessary but he also knows that a researcher doesn't necessarily make a good librarian. He would want the researcher on hand to solve problems but he wouldn't put him in charge of a university library unless the researcher were also a bookman. Powell sees the parallel between this situation and that of the research professor *vs.* the teacher.

Although I share many of Powell's feelings about existing library schools, I find his ideas for the ideal school are not enough. In his chapter on "Education for Academic Librarianship" (page 115), he seems to like the idea of a pre-professional curriculum. This is bad. Even medical schools have stopped this kind of dictating to the liberal arts colleges. We librarians certainly shouldn't be doing it. I regret that Powell becomes a little vague as he talks about what his ideal

school should do to make "bookish" librarians other than getting together a faculty of the right kind of teachers (see his chapter on Mitchell, page 134). Maybe Powell is right in saying that this is sufficient, but I am not convinced. He ought to say that his program will be unpopular with employing librarians who expect to hire young library school graduates properly trained so that they can step into the production line immediately. He ought to say that A.L.A. probably won't accredit his school.

He should say that for university librarianship, the humanistic librarian must also be thoroughly grounded in the bibliographic record of the history of scholarship so that he will be able to place and identify on the great map of man's intellectual history each major idea as well as the books that contain the idea. The kind of librarian we want in universities will have spent 90 per cent of his time in library school on this analysis, after at least a four-year liberal arts education. Powell, whether he likes it or not, will have to have someone in his school doing research in the area of bibliotechnology. He can preach all he wants to about books, but that's only part of the story in a university.

Certainly we won't want graduates of Powell's school if they turn out to be pale-faced, thick-lensed beatniks who insist on running around bleating about the smell of books, that is to say, if that is all they know how to do.

Now, of course, I have been grossly unfair to Powell, but he's got it coming and can take care of himself.

When I said that Powell was a sheep in wolf's clothing, I meant that he never says much about his activities the rest of us clods would approve. There are many of these activities and they are important. In short, Powell is having a wonderful time charging around on his jeep, sticking spears into an old dinosaur that's getting about ready to give up the ghost anyway. He's good for the profession. He makes life interesting. He has a lot on the ball. He doesn't bore you. We need him. And furthermore, he's right about 60 per cent of the time, which is more than you can say for most of us.—*Ralph E. Ellsworth, University of Colorado Libraries.*