

Simon vindicates Lincoln on the gravest charge against his legislative career, a meticulous study of the legislative journals shows Lincoln to have been gravely defective in his continuous advocacy of a ruinous program of internal improvements that resulted in widespread corruption and a state debt of \$15,000,000, which was never fully repaid. Contrary to general belief, moreover, Lincoln is revealed as an opponent of state aid to education and as a defender of the somewhat dubious State Bank of Springfield. He also undoubtedly jumped out of a window at Springfield (not Vandalia) to prevent the Democrats from obtaining a majority and becoming able to transact business.

Most of all, his years in the legislature gave Lincoln an apprenticeship in politics. He made friends, mastered legislative procedure, became acquainted with public issues, developed the power of analytical thought and expression, and became known as a hero to the voters of Springfield. Kennedy was not the only Illinois All this preparation in his legislative career to Congress and in his historic race in 1858 against his old antagonist, Stephen Douglas. It was this last encounter, and the manner in which Lincoln conducted himself, which won him national fame and propelled him into the presidency and political immortality.

Sen. Simon, who has already made a notable record as legislator as well as editor and publisher, has won new laurels by this magnificent book. It does something that many have believed impossible namely it opens up a new field of research about the life of Sen. Paul H. Douglas.

Long Island, Mass 2/27/66
Tasteless Wit and Theme

MOTHER IN HISTORY By Jean Stafford (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965)

This is a great book for someone sort of reader who could get his head by banging on at the inmates of a state mental hospital.

For anyone else, it is an abominably tasteless disaster, all the more grievous for having been perpetrated by someone of Miss Stafford's talent and renown.

The "Mother in History" Miss Stafford writes about is Mrs. Marguerite Oswald, mother of the man who assassinated President Kennedy and who was himself murdered two days later in the basement of Dallas Police Headquarters. The book is a recounting of a three-day interview Miss Stafford had with Mrs. Oswald.

As anyone who has ever seen her on television or read

her ramblings in newspapers knows, Mrs. Oswald makes an easy target. She has the notion that what her son did somehow should make her a sought-after celebrity, that her place in history is not being properly appreciated. She hungers for publicity, good, bad or otherwise, and she is, to put it gently, confused.

Thus, she can tell Miss Stafford that "As we all know President Kennedy was a dying man. So I say it is possible that my son was chosen to shoot him in a merry killing for the security of the country. And if this is true it was a fine thing to do and my son is a hero."

The book, filled with similar pathetically hallucinatory going on, Miss Stafford seems to find it all terribly amusing and a great opportunity to display her own wit.

Thus when Mrs. Oswald refers to someone as "Mayor Wagner's right-handed man," Miss Stafford, in the kind of wit that is unhappily typical of the book, tells us that she not only did not know the mayor's "right-handed man" but "didn't know who his southpaw was either . . ."

The whole approach is on the level of the mean little kid who thinks it's smart to laugh at someone on crutches. — **Raymond R. Coffey**

★ ★ ★