

The Real Abraham Lincoln: A Complete One Volume History of His Life and Times. By Reinhard H. Luthin. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960. Pp. xviii, 778. Bibliographical note, notes, index. \$10.00.)

In spite of its presumptuous title, this biography deserves the careful scrutiny of amateur and professional historian alike. Laymen will enjoy its rich detail, its fresh anecdotes, its many apt quotations from Lincoln's speech and writing. Professional historians will be impressed by its confident generalizations based upon exhaustive research.

Professor Luthin portrays the Great Emancipator "wart and all." Organizing his material topically as well as chronologically, he presents enlightening chapters and new evidence on Lincoln's backwoods beginnings, his legal career, his political fortune and misfortune, his domestic life in Springfield and Washington, his personality, his lieutenants, his conduct of the war, his plans for reunion, and his assassin.

Lincoln's legal career is treated in more detail than one finds in most one-volume biographies, and the reader gets new insight into Lincoln's relationships with his partners, John T. Stuart, Stephen T. Logan, and William H. Herndon, and into his remarkable ability to influence human behavior. Some no doubt will be surprised to learn that Lincoln once defended a Kentucky slaveholder in a *habeas corpus* case involving a jailed Negro.

Although less sympathetic to Mary Lincoln than the account of Ruth Painter Randall, *The Real Abraham Lincoln* describes Lincoln's home life factually and realistically. From the narrative, one appreciates the difficult role of a circuit-riding lawyer's wife. "I hope," Mary wrote to a friend, "you may never feel as lonely as I sometimes do, surrounded by much that renders life desirable" (p. 133).

In dealing with controversial questions of interpretation, Professor Luthin meticulously marshals the evidence and allows the reader to judge for himself. He relies heavily on quoted material, the well-selected observations of Lincoln and his contemporaries. Seventy-six pages of helpful notes and bibliography testify to his thorough canvass of available sources.

An inspired selection of materials helps to conceal the fact that the author lacks the stylistic excellence of Lord Charnwood or of Benjamin Thomas. Occasionally the writing is repetitious; sometimes it needs greater coherence. At least once, it is misleading. In discussing Lincoln's silence from November, 1860, until March, 1861, Luthin concludes that "most of the South's leaders . . . did not realize how moderate a man Lincoln actually was; nor did influential Southern leaders fully understand that the new President . . . was sympathetic to their cause" (p. 266).

Reinhard Luthin has nevertheless produced a lively biography, certainly the most detailed one-volume account of the Sixteenth President.

Indiana University

Robert G. Gunderson