IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

ILLUSTRATIONS

for

CHAPTER XLIV

1) Mr. Lincoln and Tad.
This beautiful picture of Mr. Lincoln and Tad was accidentally obtained. The boy had gone with his father to the photographer's gallery and while they were waiting, the two were looking over a book of photographs. The photographer was intelligent enough to see the charm of the group and turned his camera on them. Mr. Lincoln made an interesting comment on this picture. "That's a book of photographs not a Bible. Don't let anybody entitle it, 'The President reading the Bible to his son.'"

2) Mr. Lincoln with Tad on His Pony.
A copy-righted picture made from a photograph, probably made at the Soldiers' Home.

3) Summer Cottage occupied by the President at the Soldiers' Home

(Miss Marshall: Back of this sheet is a picture which I want to use in Chapter XLVI. Either hold it, please, or return to me as may be the more convenient. We can use the title there.

4) Mrs. Lincoln.
The above photograph of Mary Lincoln shows her in the simple black gown which she affected after Willie Lincoln's death. The picture was printed on card de visite and widely distributed during the war.

(Miss Marshall: Please ask Brown if he cannot get a picture of the White House in 1864. I thought I had one in my files, but find I am mistaken. If he has not one at hand, could you send some one to the Library. You could get it in the Print Room, I am sure, and have a photostat made if there is time.)

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IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

CHAPTER XLIV

The Lincolns' Private Life in the White House

No family ever settled more naturally into the White House than the Lincolns. In no way did their stately surroundings, the new demands upon them, change their ways or their attitude towards people and life. Mrs. Lincoln, backed by her consciousness of belonging to a "first" family - a Kentucky family at that! - asserted herself from the start as the "first lady of the land." She might be at times flushed and excited over the prominence of the position in which she found herself, the homage which was paid her - too frequently by office seekers - but she had been flushed and excited over social affairs at home - it was her temperament. On the whole, the Mary Lincoln of the White House was the Mary Lincoln of Springfield.

The Lincolns brought three sons to Washington - Bob, Willie and Tad, as they were called. Bob, the oldest, being at Harvard, spent little time in Washington, but his brothers were conspicuous figures around the White House from the start. They took the Executive Mansion in the most matter of fact fashion, as curious, as interested and as omnipresent as they had been in Springfield. Read the letters from that town written by visitors to the President-elect, and you find Willie and Tad streaking across them in most

unconventional ways. The same thing went on from the first in Washington, the boys were everywhere.

As for Mr. Lincoln, no human being could have been less disturbed by the new setting in which he found himself, less confused by its requirements, or less impressed by its formalities. He went about his way as President in the same simple, natural, considerate fashion that had characterized him in Illinois.

In addition to this immediate circle at the White House there were Mr' Lincoln's secretaries, John Nicolay and John Hay, a tutor or tuters for the boys, and nearly always one or more of Mrs. Lincoln's sisters or cousins or some old and important friend from Illinois.

The public situation was such that Mr' Lincoln himself was held in Washington practically during the entire period of the Civil War. Mrs. Lincoln left frequently, however. Turning over the newspapers of that day, one finds frequent notice of the "President's Lady" being in New York, in Long Branch, in Boston, in Winchester, Ma. Vt. When the hot weather came the family moved out to the Soldiers' Home, a place every visitor to Washington sees today but one very different from what it was then.

The Soldiers' Home is now a part of Washington City, but so small was the capital in these days that it is described as "a few miles out." The beautiful hill was more thickly wooded than now and the roads and paths which led to the top ran through overhanging trees. There were two substantial houses on the hill -

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one of these was set aside for the President, the other occupied by old soldiers. The place was beautiful and peaceful in spite of the fact that as the war went on it was filled with hospital tents, usually for convalescing soldiers. It was Mr. Lincoln's habit to drive from the "Home" early in the morning for his day at his office and out again at night. It was a habit which made him very familiar to Washington people - one in particular of whom has left an excellent sketch. That was Walt Whitman:

> I see the President almost every day, as I happen to live where he passes to or from his lodgings out of town. He never sleeps at the White House during the hot season, but has quarters at a healthy location some three miles north of the city, the Soldiers' home, a United States military establishment. I saw him this morning about 8-1/2 coming in to business, riding on Vermont avenue, near L street. He always has a company of twenty-five or thirty cavalry, with sabres drawn and held upright over their shoulders. They say this guard was against his personal wish, but he let his counselors have their way. The party makes no great show in uniform or horses. Mr. Lincoln on the saddle generally rides a good-sized, easy-going gray horse, is dress'd in plain black, somewhat rusty and dusty, wears a black stiff hat, and looks about as ordinary in attire, etc. as the commonest man. A lieutenant, with yellow straps, rides at his left, and following behind, two by two, come the cavalry men, in their yellow-striped jackets. They are generally going at a slow trot, as that is the pace set them by the one they wait upon. The sabres and accoutrements clank and the entirely unornamental cortège as it trots toward Lafayette square arouses no sensation, only some curious stranger stops and gazes. I see very plainly Abrahan Lincoln's dark brown face, with the deep-cut lines, the eyes, always to me with a deep latent sadness in the expression. We have got so that we exchange bows, and very cordial ones. Sometimes the President foes and comes in an open barouche. The cavalry always accompany him, with drawn sabres. Often I notice as he goes out evenings - and sometimes in the morning, when he returns early - he turns off and halts at the large and handsome residence of the Secretary of War, on K street, and holds conference there. If in his barouche, I can see from my window he does not alight, but sits in his vehicle, and Mr. Stanton comes out to attend him. Sometimes one of his sons,

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a boy of ten or twelve, accompanies him, riding at his right on a pony. Earlier in the summer I occasionally saw the President and his wife, toward the latter part of the afternoon, out in a barouche, on a pleasure ride through the city. Mrs. Lincoln was dress'd in complete black, with a long crepe veil. The equipage is of the plainest kind, only two horses, and they nothing extra. They pass'd me once very close, and I saw the President in the face fully, as they were moving slowly, and his look, though abstracted, happen'd to be directed steadily in my eye. He bow'd and smiled, but far beneath his smile I noticed well the expression I have alluded to. None of the artists or pictures has caught the deep, though subtle and indirect expression of this man's face. There is something else there. One of the great portrait painters of two or three centuries ago is needed."

The coming of the war so soon after the inauguration made it impossible for the Lincolns ever to carry on any formal social life in Washington. Attempts at it were made, but the one big ball that Mary Lincoln gave, largely on the insistence of Secretary Seward, who thought it would be reassuring to public opinion, brought such terrible criticism upon her that she never again tried the experiment. And there were few formal dinners. The real social life was of the most informal and all inclusive character. Saturday afternoons through the season were given to public receptions - receptions to which everybody was welcome and to which everybody came. They were frequently very uncomfortable affairs for the President. Mary Lincoln put him into his best suit, tied his necktie properly and, absurd and incongrous as it would seem, put white kid gloves on him. These white kid gloves frequently figured in the Washington letters of the time.

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Nothing that has come down to us of the regular Saturday receptions is quite so pleasant as the number of stories that have been left - some of them of recent years - of the passing of stray children through the reception rooms. They seem to have followed the crowd in or having heard their elders talking of the affair to have plotted to slip in unobserved, sometimes with all the grime of their play upon them. Ten years ago, on the fiftieth anniversay of the Emancipation Proclamation one of these stories appeared for the first time, told by Henry D. Lyman, who living in Washington, a boy of ten at the time, had heard so much of the New Year's levee of January 1, 1863 - the Emancipation Proclamation, Reception as the loyal residents of the District were calling it, that he and a little girl playmate had made up their minds that they would go. Their parents ordered otherwise, but the two children, once their elders were out of the house, took matters into their own hands, and "just as they were" in everyday clothes joined the procession reaching far into the street. By the time they were inside the reception room their courage had oozed away, and they tried to slip out but Mr. Lincoln had spied them. Mr. Lyman says that his grave and anxious face lighted up as he saw the little girl, and stepping around, he picked her up and lifted her high above his shoulders. For a moment he held her there, then gave her a kiss, saying heartily, "You cannot avoid me in that fashion, little one." It was the boy's turn then. "How do you do, Sir?" the President said. "I am pretty well, Sir," the boy tremblingly replied. Then

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the two passed on.

A beautiful memory, to be sure, and more than one boy has lived to tell something not less gentle and understanding, and which we can believe meant even more to the President, such was his love of children, such the relief that even a momentary contact with them seems to have brought him.

But if Lincoln did not enjoy formal social functions, he sometimes used them effectively. I have already mentioned the adroitness with which he quieted the stories of Douglas' hostility to him at the opening of his presidency by asking Douglas to take Mrs. Lincoln to the first inaugural ball. He used the second inaugural ball as cunningly. At that moment he and Charles Sumner differed radically about the provisions of a certain measure which Lincoln had very much at heart. A group of radicals who had from the beginning of the war done their best to make trouble between Sumner and Lincoln now joyously spread the report that a final breach had come. Sumner himself seems to have been a little uncertain of how the President would take his adverse vote. He found out on the night of the second inaugural ball. He had not been intending to go, but towards evening a card came from Mr. Lincoln:

> "Dear Mr. Sumner:" it read, "Unless you send me word to the contrary, I shall this evening call with my carriage at your house to take you with me to the inaugural ball.
>
> "Sincerely yours,
> "A Lincoln."

Mr. Sumner did not send word to the contrary, and was ready when the carriage called; and it was he who, at the President's request, offered his arm to Mrs. Lincoln. The amazement of the

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gossiping Washington crowd was not less than it had been four years before when she entered on the arm of Stephen Douglas. It can hardly be said that Lincoln did not know how to use formal functions, even if white gloves often did look out of place on him.

The nearness of the members of the cabinet to the White House - most of them had their homes on or near Lafayette Square - soon established something like small town relations: running in and out, dropping in for lunch or supper, without "summoning". It was a good deal like life in Springfield.

The Lincolns lived simply, rather frugally, I take it, in the White House. It was of course not a time that called for much expenditure in entertainment. And moreover the table of the Lincolns, which was their chief expense, was simple in the extreme. Mr. Lincoln himself was one of the most abstemious of men! an egg and a cup of coffee in the morning, bread and a glass of milk at noon, one or two courses at night. When Mrs. Lincoln was away he rarely if ever went to the dining room, he "browsed around" as he said, or let them bring to his office "something on a tray." This gave a chance to save, which pleased Mary Lincoln, who was a thrifty woman, outside of certain occasional outbursts of extravagance in matters of clothes, probably much exaggerated. It was the first time in their lives of course that they had ever had coming in every month a good fat check. Mr. Lincoln's salary as President was $25,000, paid monthly in Treasury warrants. On April 5, 1861 he received the first installment of his salary, $2,083.33. This continued to be the monthly amount until August of '64, when the income

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tax (this applied to all officers of the Government as well as to civilians) cut it down to $1,981.67. It must have seemed a great deal of money to them, and Mrs. Lincoln was probably keener on saving than her husband. That is, she naturally thought more about money than he, and it was probably well that she did. At all events, it seems certain from the estate that Mr. Lincoln left, - over 100,000 dollars - they saved fully half of their whole salary while in the White House. And she managed. One of Mrs. Lincoln's cousins, a great favorite with Mr. Lincoln, who was much with them in the White House, going back to Springfield after her visit, was asked how Mrs. Lincoln was getting along. She threw up her hands: "Oh, Cousin Mary! She is watching the sugar bowl in the White House just as she did in Springfield."

Lincoln's extraordinary capacity for enjoying simple things relieved the sorrow and confusion and anxiety in which his private life went on. It took a very little thing to set him laughing, and his laugh, so all of those who knew him intimately declared, was a joyous thing to hear - hearty, natural, from the very depths of him, - "the President's life preserver", his friend Isaac Arnold called it. He was able to get fun out of the least thing. Frank Carpenter, who spent some six months of '64 at the White House, painting his picture "The Emancipation Proclamation", tells of being at work late one evening, when in one of the official rooms near him, he heard Mr. Lincoln's laugh ringing through the silence from the quarters occupied by his secretary. There he found the "boys" as Lincoln

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called them, all ready for bed, while the President was doubled up over the footboard in convulsed merriment over some simple thing that one of them had been telling.

That he went much to the theatre is of course well known. Leonard Grover, a theatre manager in Washington in the '60's, says Mr. Lincoln visited his theatre more than a hundred times in the four years of his administration. He generally came alone, although occasionally he brought Tad or on special occasions, Mrs. Lincoln. Mr. Grover says that it was clear that Mr. Lincoln wanted to be alone. He wanted to be entertained and amused. He was not exacting at all in his plays, though he did enjoy Shakespeare particularly. Once he said to Grover, "Do you know, I really enjoy a minstrel show."

He attended not a few lectures, lectures usually on war. Among these was one given by that brilliant girl orator, Anna Dickinson in the Hall of Representatives in January of '64. Abby Hopper Gibbons was present and has this to say in her reminiscences of the occasion:

> "I went to the capital, heard Anna Dickinson, say the President who was called for after she took her seat. He went modestly to the platform and whispered to the Vice-President, Hamlin, then left the Hall. Upon which, Hamlin, who presided said to the audience: 'The President is embarrassed and says he cannot follow so distinguished a speaker'."

Not a little amusement was brought to him. Of course, entertainers then, as now, felt it an honor and good publicity to be heard at the White House, and every now and then Mr. Lincoln had an hour or two of informal pleasure of this kind at home. The visit of one celebrity that he seems to have enjoyed particularly was that of "General Tom Thumb" whom Barnum brought to see him in the spring of '64.

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There was nothing, however, that gave Mr. Lincoln so much real pleasure in those days as his boys, Willie and Tad. Willie, the older, was a serious, reflective child, the workings of whose mind seemed to have interested Mr. Lincoln particularly. He was heard to say more than once, "He is like me - I thought and talked as he does." Not a few stories of this serious side of Willie Lincoln have been left. A few months ago at Vandalia, Ill., I met a woman, now in her eighties, though just as alive as sixty years ago - who as a girl of 15 or 16 had seen much of the Lincolns, ~~just before they left Springfield where~~ she made long visits to a widowed aunt with a family of children who was their neighbor. Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln had showered kindnesses upon this aunt in the rather hard life she was having, doing many things for the happiness of the children. This lady remembers with particular clearness Mr. Lincoln's coming to the house one day and inviting all the children to go to the circus with him - certainly something to remember. Her recollections of Willie Lincoln are those of a boy of almost unnatural piety, who would frequently gather his playmates together and hold prayer meetings or, like his father when a boy in Indiana, preach them a sermon.

Willie Lincoln took their going to Washington with great seriousness, and there are two or three sober little letters of his now shown in the collection in the Lincoln home in Springfield. He was particularly stirred by the Battle of Ball's Bluff where his father's friend, Colonel Baker, fell and is said to have

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written verses on the death of the soldiers there which were published in a Washington paper.

In February of '62 came Willie Lincoln's death. It was a terrible blow to the President. Death had so often blasted his hopes, his grief at its coming had always approached the inconsolable, and he seems now to have been almost prostrated by his sorrow. Yet now, as before, deep as his suffering, he went on with his duties - serious enough duties in February of '62. He was forced too, to carry Mary Lincoln through this crisis. Her grief was uncontrolled. No sense of her position, of Mr. Lincoln's need and of what her self-control might mean to him in their sorrow, seems to have influenced her. For months it was the one subject of her talk, she went swathed in heaviest crepe, and an acquaintance of Mr. Lincoln who had at the time of her boy's death shown her some courtesy, calling upon her months later, was greeted with a perfect flood of tears.

The death of Willie made Mr. Lincoln from this time on even more tender with Tad than he had been before. The boy stuttered and Mr. Lincoln had always been indulgent with him for that reason. Now that indulgence was greater than ever. More and more, too, he made him his companion. As a matter of fact there were few times from now on when Mr. Lindeln appeared in public that Tad was not at his side. We find him riding a pony at the great review of Gen. Hooker's army at Falmouth in April of '63, hear of him constantly trotting beside the President as he went back and forth on horseback

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from the Soldiers' Home, riding in the carriage to the second inaugural, going down the river on various visits to the army, standing beside him when he read his last speech on the night of April 11, '65, busily gathering up the sheets of paper as they fluttered from the President's hands.

He was a willful, busy and uncontrolled child, constantly shocking Washington by his escapades. Probably the best description that has ever been given of Tad Lincoln was one written for the Tribune by John Hay at the time of the boy's death in 1871. He speaks of him as "the tricksy little sprite who gave to the sad and solemn White House of the great war the only comic relief it knew."

> "The years that have followed," wrote Hay, "spent in study and travel produced an utterly different person. The Tad Lincoln of our history ceased to exist long ago. The modest and cordial young fellow who passed through New York a few weeks ago with his mother will never be known outside of the circle of his mourning friends. But "little Tad" will be remembered as long as any live who bore a personal share in the great movements whose centre for four years was at Washington. He was so full of life and vigor, so bubbling over with health and high spirits, that he kept the house alive with his pranks and fantastic enterprises. He was always a 'chartered libertine' and after the death of his brother Willie, a prematurely serious and studious child, and the departure of Robert for college, he installed himself as the absolute tyrant of the Executive Mansion. He was idolized by both his father and mother, petted and indulged by his tutors, and fawned upon and caressed by that noisome horde of office seekers who infested the ante-rooms of the White House. He had a very bad opinion of books and no opinion of discipline, and thought very little of any tutor who would not assist in yoking kids to a chair or in driving his dogs tandem over the south lawn. He was a shrewd as he was lawless, and knew whether he could make a tutor serviceable or not. If he found one with obstinate ideas of the superority of grammar to kite flying as an intellectual employment, he soon found means of getting rid of him. He had so much to do that he felt he could not waste time in learning to spell. Early in the morning you could hear his shrill pipe resounding through the

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dreary corridors of the Executive Mansion.

"He had that power of taming and attaching animals to himself which seems the especial gift of kindly and unlettered natures. 'Let him run,' the easy-going President would say; 'he has time enough left to learn his letters and get pokey. Ben was just such a little rascal, and now he is a very decent boy.'

"It was evident that, with all his insubordination and reckless mischief, the spoiled child was at heart of a truthful and generous nature. He treated flatterers and office-seekers with a curious coolness and contempt; but he often espoused the cause of some poor widow or tattered soldier, whom he found waiting in the ante-rooms, and it was most amusing to see the hearty little fellow dragging his shabby protéges into the Executive presence, ordering the ushers out of the way, and demanding immediate action from headquarters. The President rarely refused a grace of this kind, and the demands were not so frequent as to lose the charm of novelty.

"One of the tricks into which his idleness and his enterprise together drove him was the occasion of much laughter to the judicious and much horror to the respectable in Washington. He invested, one morning, all his pocket-money in buying the stock in trade of an old woman who sold gingerbread near the Treasury. He made the Government carpenters give him a board and some trestles, which he set up in the imposing porte-cochère of the White House, and on this rude counter displayed his wares. Every office-seeker who entered the house that morning bought a toothsome luncheon of the keen little merchant; and when, an hour after the opening of the booth, a member of the household discovered the young pastryman, the admired center of a group of grinning servants and toadies, he had filled his pockets and his hat with currency, the spoil of the American public. The juvenile operator made lively work of his ill-gotten gains, however, and before night was penniless again.

"Although still a mere child at the death of his father, this terrible shock greatly sobered and steadied him. His brother Robert at once took charge of his education, and he made rapid progress up to the time of his sailing for Europe with his mother. He has ever since remained with her, displaying a thoughtful devotion and tenderness beyond his years, and strangely at variance with the mischievous thoughtlessness of his childhood. He came back a short while ago, greatly improved by his residence abroad, but always the same cordial, frank, warm-hearted boy. In his loss the already fearfully-bereaved family will suffer a new and deep affliction, and the world, which never did and never will know him, will not withhold a tribute of regret for the child whose gayety and affection cheered more than anything else the worn and weary heart of the great President through the toilsome years of the war."

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A study of Mr. Lincoln's life in the White House throws into high relief certain greatest qualities: his simplicity, his helpfulness, his unconsciousness of himself and his surroundings. He seems never to have been so burdened there that he was unconscious of others and their needs. His intimates noticed that he was the one who, whatever the cares of the moment, always returned the salutes of the guards in and about the place. It was he who if there was some disturbance - a woman's sobs, the cries of a child in the motley mass of humanity that crowded the halls of the place, seeking an audience of him, who would come out to inquire and who insisted again and again on doing something. There is a story of a woman who had hung about for days trying for an audience and kept back because the case was considered hopeless. She carried a baby and one day it cried. Lincoln was out at once to know what was the matter. She got her audience then and came out with tears running down her cheeks and her lips moving in a prayer of thankfulness. The attendant at the door caught her sleeves: "It was the baby that did it, Ma'am", he said.

Lincoln's unconsciousness of position and surroundings, of everything except the great business in hand, was often irritating to people, conscious above everything else of the proprieties. Charles Francis Adams was disturbed by Lincoln's wool socks and pungent humor. Others had suffered the same annoyance. Men trained in formalism could not understand his indifference to exterior, nor could

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they understand his modesty. To assume, to dominate, whether you know the thing or not, is part of the business of the man in position, so many hold - not Lincoln. He was quite unwilling to pass for anything he was not. Certain gentlemen calling on him one day and greatly impressed with the earnestness with which he talked, repeated to one another a Latin quotation, "which I suppose you are both aware," Mr. Lincoln said, nodding at them smilingly, "I do not understand."

All this simplicity, this unconsciousness, this friendliness, carried with it a curious sense of power. A man must be very great indeed inside, wise men reflected, to be so careless of exterior. The lack of any ceremony at the White House, so irritating to some, had a value to others which the formal did not understand. Carl Schurz tells a story in point. He had a German brother-in-law with him in Washington, Mr. Henry Meyer, eager to pay his respects to the President, and he asked Mr. Lincoln if he could bring him. "Certainly," Mr. Lincoln replied, "bring him tomorrow about lunch time and lunch with me, I guess Mary will have something for us to eat."

Mr. Meyer was overwhelmed with the honor and rather troubled about the etiquette of the occasion. Mr. Schurz assured him that there would be no etiquette at all. He was much more astonished when Mr. Lincoln shook him by the hand as if he were an old acquaintance; and "Mary" being absent, chatted as informally with him as if he had known him all his life, asking many questions, telling many stories.

"As we left the White House, "writes Mr. Schurz" in

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in his Reminiscences, "my companion could hardly find words to express his puzzled admiration for the man who having risen from the bottom of the social ladder to one of the most exalted stations in the world had remained so perfectly natural, so absolutely unconscious of how he appeared to others - a man to whom it did not occur for a single moment that a person in his position might put on a certain dignity to be always maintained, and who bore himself with such genial sincerity and kindliness that the dignity was not missed, and that one would have regretted to see him different." Similar was the verdict of the intelligent who saw him most frequently, watched him the most keenly, in the biting test that the daily life of the White House applied.

Certainly John Hay must be counted among those judges for no man's love for him was founded on a greater sensitiveness to the just and true and beautiful living and thinking than John Hay's.

Upon all but two classes, "Hay says, "the President made the impression of unusual power as well as of individual goodness. He failed only in the case of those who judged men by the purely conventional standard of breeding, and upon those so poisoned by political hostility that the testimony of their own eyes and ears became untrustworthy. The testimony of all men admitted to his intimacy is that he maintained without the least effort or assumption a certain dignityand reserve in the midst of his easiest conversation.

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It is this life in the White House that brings out most perfectly Lincoln's universality of human sympathy. The daily round with its interminable procession of mankind, suffering, intriguing, just, wicked, foolish, wise, shows most perfectly the response he made to all men. Indeed, Lincoln seems, in the White House, to have come as near to him whom Whitman had in mind when he wrote "The Song of the Answerer" as any human being in the American gallery:

> "He has the pass-key of hearts, to him the response of the prying of hands on the knobs.
> His welcome is universal, the flow of beauty is not more welcome or universal than he is."

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