Looking At All Sides of a Question

As before said, the study of national politics was pursued with unusual interest by both Mr. Lincoln and his partner. Beside the full use of all the Illinois State Journal's exchanges, they took regualrly at the office, up to the closing of southern mails by the Confederate States in 1861, the Charleston Mercury, the Richmond Enquirer and the Loduisville Journal, also the Southern Literary Messenger, and able monthly political and literary magazine, formerly edited by Edgar A. Poe, and later byHon. J. R. Thompson. This was a periodical of unusual ability, published at Richmond, Virginia, and he gave no periodical that came to the office the attention he did to this. He had preserved an accunulation of these Southern Literary Messengers on top of one of the office presses, and he directed my attention to them a few weeks before setting our for Washington, while sorting up odds and ends about the office, -- saying he wished me to take charge of and have them bound and kept for him until his return to the office life again, which he often spoke of as being his intention. This I did, and they are now in my library. They comprise no one year's numbers complete, but the broken set is highly valued, for with it are associated memory of the interest Mr. Lincoln received them with, number after number, and his wish to have them put in preservable shape for his future use.

The State Journal's editorial rooms began to have more alluring attractions for Mr. Lincoln that the Springfield court room. He contributed political editroials for the Journal, more or less regualrly; and so did Mr. Herndon more often. The latter had several correspondents among prominent abolitionists of Ohio and New England, and he shared their letters 'reading and discussing them)/ as well as his replies, with Mr. Lincoln.

The most remarkable circumstance that now impresses me, as I look back over daily intimacies with this law fism form 1850 to 1861, was the studeus like way they both steadfastly kept the average political affairs of the whole nation under attention; using all sources, and in their private conferences and

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

discussions with each other, reviewing and sifting all conflicting opinions on national questions that came to their office table from North and South, East and West.

Had they foreseen the political and executive battles before Mr. Lincoln, his preparation could not have been more thorough, exact and comprehensive to fit him for his Presidency in 1861 - 65. It was his wish that led to subscribing for southern papers and periodicals, and he was a more diligent reader of these than his partner. The latter had first supplied the office table with the leading abolition papers of the North. It was their first discussions on the extreme opinions which northern papers presented, that brought the southern views represented in their papers to the office table. This was Mr. Lincoln's suggestion and choice, for, as he then expressed it, -- "Let us have both sides on out table. Each is entitled to its 'day in court'."

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library