Lincoln's Moods

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The first I will mention, -- and by far the strongest and most difficult to interrupt, or penetrate while he was controlled by it, -- was his power to strictly concentrate all his mental faculties on the task or purpose immediately before him. In this mood he was thoroughly oblivious to surroundings. Every faculty of this remarkable man, while in this mood, was focused to meet the work he had before him, -- be the subject matter facts, or problems, -- in all their angles and with the keenest logic and most healthy imagination solve any subject, or situation he felt it his duty, or pleasure, to explore or act in. No person or influence couls distract, or hasten any of his peculiar mental processes at such times.

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During the last weeks of his residence in Springfield it was difficult for him to find any place free from the interruption of callers. To avoid this, Mr. C. M. Smith -- his brother - in - law -- fitted up a room in the third story over his store for Lincoln's private use, which could be entered only through the private office of Mr. Smith, which was in the back part of his large store room. This arrangement was know by a limited few -- and he was to be seen when there, only by bringing a line to Mr. Smith from Herndon. It was in that room he prepared his first inaugural address, and where I was sent twice by Herndon with books and clippings the latter had, at Lincoln's request, selected from the State Library, the law office, and Herndon's home library for study before preparing that remarkable state paper. On my return the last time, Herndon asked me if any work was sent back. I replied I had none, and was sure Mr. Lincoln had not seen me come in and place the packages on the table before him, or when I left the room. To this he replied with a satisfied smile, -- "That's what I expected -- he wished nothing now so much as to be left alone."

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The second mood was a blank, unapproachable habit of inner meditation; at times almost a sombre, black melancholy. There are depths in every great sould where none should intermeddle. The Lincoln of this mood was a mystery that even those nearest and dearest to him were strangers with, and failed to understand. I approach this part of my record with awe and not analysis. It was part of his remarkable make-up that I reverened then, and in memory I now refrain from any extendd mention of this peculiar eclipse that occasionally shadowed his life. When in this mood it was best to leave him severely alone. He wished it, and if he had then companionship which was silent also, he plainly manifested him appreciation -- I might almost say, his gratitude -- for the silent, friendly companion who understood him and granted the sociability of sympathetic silence. He would express this by sometimes turning those deep, sad tender eyes, brimming with the lonelinees of dry tears; as he raised them in a blank gaze upon his capanion. Herndon's uniform repsect and deference for this silent mood in his partner became one of the strong bonds connecting their long and peaceful relation.

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The third, and the most usual mood of Mr. Lincoln, was that of complete relaxation -- a sheer irresponsibility -- a complete withdrawal from all the affairs that vex or disturb. Happy, indeed, were the times one met him in this mood. He was then the most receptive of men, as well as the most cheerful and bountiful dispenser of all his rich stores of varied experiences, of his quaint original stories, and his thoughts and feelings; ready for the widest variety of subjects -- easily passing from one interest to another -- enjoying equally any and all things, by turns! All this happened without a trace of self-consciousness. This mood was the more habitual, and the one most people who met him found; and I am glad to say it is by this that they remember him, and which history will garner in his memory. But aside from the pleasure of his companionship when in this genial mood, we must remember it was from the two former ones came the brooding and fruitful hours in Lincoln's life. Through the depths of such mysterious silences arose our masterful First American.

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