

Riding Circuit

by Richard Taylor

Half each year Lincoln took the road as nomad, sometimes by rail though usually on Old Bob, days arguing cases in a drawl that became his trademark, nights swapping tales at some inn or farmhouse, often sleeping on the floor—a life he loved. A fellow rider wrote him up as something out of Dickens: boots unacquainted with blacking, hat innocent of nap, ill-fitting clothes that never met a whiskbroom, papers up his hat or sleeve. “A very great and very insignificant lawyer,” Billy Herndon pegged him. His gifts were common people, common sense, gab, a passion for the right—law, to him, less a circuit than a way-stop on his journey east.