

William H. Herndon

by Richard Taylor

Discounting bouts with Devil Rum & anti-Mary bias, Billy Herndon nailed the living Lincoln like no other. “The whole man, body & mind,” he wrote, “worked slowly, creakingly, as if it needed oiling.” Who else described Lincoln’s walk as plodding, flat of foot, never landing on his heel, his headgear as a vault for all important papers? No one from outside could stipulate that reason, not imagination nor even heart, steered him through the rough terrain of civil war, the rocky slopes of wedlock, loss that made excavations of his cheeks. Who else loved him so without condition, partners linked *de facto* long after partnership ceased *de jure*.