Lincoln Gossip:

In answer to
/the attached letter I asked Mr. Toffler to bring his daguerreotype which he did this week. A lively, confident little man, rather shabby, proud of his place, a dealer in historical objects.

He had the strangest bit of Lincolniana that I have ever encountered I think, a daguerreotype of Lincoln - unmistakeably Lincoln - do not see how it could have been faked - on his death bed. Toffler thinks. Beside him a woman sitting. It is the form of Mary Lincoln, but the face is unfamiliar, that is, it is a little dim and I would not have recognized Mary Lincoln in it if the natural conclusion was not that it must be she. She is sitting at the right looking at the dead man, a fan in her hand. T's contention is that she is watching him dying, but he looks to me as if he were dead. This could not have been in the house opposite the theatre, as he claims, although I find he is pretty hazy about the events of the night. In the first place he is not in evening dress. If I was right, and I was pretty particular in those days about saying in my Life of Lincoln, that she was in evening gown, flowers in her hair, jewels on her neck, then this daguerreotype was certainly not taken at the Tenth St house. Moreover, this is a calm woman. Mrs. Lincoln was over-whelmed, close to hysterics most of that night. Certainly she could not have been sitting there as she is in this picture.

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

The longer I looked at it the surer I was that it was Lincoln - Lincoln in the White House laid out. I have never heard of a picture of the dead man having been taken there and yet of course it might have been done. The picture is faded. This of course might have been managed by a skillful photographer.

Toffler is vague about the history - has no papers at all. I tell him that before I will consider interesting anybody in it I must have a statement from the man from whom he bought it, giving its history and its authenticity before a notary public.

If T. gets any kind of a clear story I think I better submit the whole matter to Brunyate. He might be a purchaser, but before that, or perhaps with his help the daguerreotype should submitted to an expert and probably Meserve should be consulted. Think I better examine the files of Harpers Weekly and Frank Leslie's Weekly to see what they have of Lincoln in these days.

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