

The Life Services of Matthew Lyon: An Address Pronounced October 29, 1858; Before the Vermont Historical Society, in the Presence of the General Assembly of Vermont (Classic Reprint)

Pliny H. White

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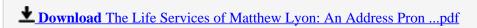
Mr. President and Gentlemen:

It seems to me in accordance with the purposes which the Vermont Historical Society has in view, that the simple discourse, annually delivered in its presence, should be devoted to rescuing from oblivion some latent facts belonging to the history of our State, rather than to any general discussion of the value of historical studies, or to a reproduction of historical narratives with which the public is already familiar, or has easy means of becoming familiar. To exhume one fact from the grave of forgetfulness, to unclothe it from the garments of exaggeration with which tradition has invested it, or to fix with certainty a single unauthenticated date, is more serviceable to you than any amount of declamation, however eloquent, can possibly be. Nor do I conceive it an unprofitable task to record any fact, however trivial or unimportant it may appear to be. The ultimate value of events is almost never apparent, either to him who transacts them, or to him who first puts them on record. It was well said by Franklin that a new fact is like a new-born child, the future importance and destiny of which it is impossible to predict. Looking back through a series of years, the scholar can see that the whole current of history has often been turned by a single expression or incident, so trifling as hardly to attract attention at the time of its occurrence. On the other hand, many events that have engaged the regard of nations, have, in lapse of time, almost vanished from the recollection of men, and have left no abiding impression upon the History of the World.

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