

Caleb Lyon, "Stanzas," (Brady's Gallery) January 1851

(keywords: Caleb Lyon, Mathew Brady, Francis D'Avignon, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography)

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Published in:

Photographic Art-Journal (New York) 1:1 (January 1851): 63.

—We have been requested to publish the following fine stanzas, and do so with pleasure. We shall never refuse anything of real value connected with the Daguerrean art:

STANZAS,

Suggested by a visit to Brady's Portrait Gallery.

Soul-lit shadows now around me;
They who armies nobly led;
They who make a nation's glory
While they're living—when they're dead,
Land-marks for our country's future,
Have their genius left behind;
Victors from the field of battle;
Victors from the field of mind—

Doniphan, who trod the desert;
Scott, who conquered on the plain;
Taylor, who would not surrender;
Butler, sleeping with the slain;
Houston, San Jacinto's hero;
Fremont, from the Golden shore;
Jackson, as a lion, fearless;
Worth, whose gallant deeds are o'er—

Webster, with a brow Titanic;
Calhoun's eagle look of old;
Benton, freedom's valiant Nestor;
Kent, the jurist, calm and cold;
Clay, "ultimus Romanorum;"
Cass, with deep and earnest gaze;
Wright, of yore the Senate's Cato;
Adams, last of early days—

Pere de Schmidt, the Jesuit preacher.
From the Rocky Mountains wild;
Tyng, Mclancthon of the pulpit;
Charming, guileless as a child;
Barnes, who pondrous themes has written;
Bascom's eye, a gleaming bright;

Anthon, whose unceasing labor
Fills the student's path with light—

Audubon, from out the forest;
Prescott, from historic page;
Bryant, pilgrim of our poets;
Forrest, vet'ran of the stage;
Inman, looking palely thoughtful;
Huntington, with dreams of art;
Father Mathew, mild, benignant;
Jenny Lind, who wins the heart.

Lawrence, type of merchant princes;
Colt, of our mechanic peers;
Emerson, of Yankee notions;
Miller, of our Scripture score;
Mott, the hero of the scalpel;
Cooper, wizzard of the pen;
Flagg, the glorious painter poet;
Powers, of arts own nobleman—

From the hills and from the valleys,
They are gathered far and near,—
From the Rio Grande's waters,
To Aroostook's mountain drear,—
From the rough Atlantic's billows,
To the calm Pacific's tide,
Soldier, statesman, poet, painter,
Priest and Rabbi, side by side.

Like a spirit land of shadows
They in silence on me gaze,
And I feel my heart is beating
With the pulse of other days;
And I ask what great magician
Conjured forms like these afar?
Echo answers, 'tis the sunshine,
By its alchemist Daguerre—

CALEB LYON, OF LYONDALE.

Broadway, Dec. 12, 1850.

[The following notice appears on the same page as Lyon's poem.—ed.]

—We intend to devote portions of our future numbers to the Romance and Poetry of Daguerreotyping. There are a large number of artists through the Union whose peregrinations through the land give rise to numerous incidents, either of an instructive nature, which we should be pleased to weave into narrative for the benefit of our readers. Will not our friends, therefore, assist us, and send whatever may come under their observation? We have already many anecdotes, which we shall relate as occasions may

offer to give them point. These, and any others with which we may be favored, will serve to relieve the more scientific portion of our Journal of some of its monotony, and still be interesting for their connection with the art. We wish, also, by this means, to bring out the talent of the profession, which we believe now lies dormant for want of some such stimulant.

[End of text.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

A half-plate daguerreotype of Lyon, by Brady, is in the collection of the Library of Congress and is viewable on their web site, *Prints and Photographs Online*.¹

Lyon was also among the "most eminent men" featured in the "National Miniature Gallery," an gallery of portrait daguerreotypes assembled by Edward Anthony in company with Jonas M. Edwards, James Robert Chilton, or James [or Isaiah] R. Clark. See the advertisement, "The National Miniature Gallery," *New-York Daily Times* 1:2 (19 September 1851): n.p. (third page of issue).²

A biography of Lyon in A. B. Lyon, ed., *Lyon Memorial: Massachusetts Families* (Detroit: Wm. Graham Printing, 1905): 121, provides the following information:

CALEB LYON was born In Lyonsdale, Lewis Co., N. Y., Dec. 7, 1822, and died at Rossville, Staten Island, in Sept. 1875. Educated at Norwich, Vt., (class of 1841),* and in Montreal. At an early age he became known as a lecturer. He was a man of versatile talent, a writer of verse as well as of prose, a great traveler and conspicuously active In public life. His first official appointment was as consul to Shanghai, China, Feb., 1847. The following year he made a trip to Central and South America, reaching California in time to have a part in the proceedings of the convention called to frame a constitution for the new state. He was secretary of the convention, and designed the state seal, receiving as a substantial reward for the design one thousand dollars. On his return to New York he was elected to the Assembly (1850) but resigned on account of opposition to the enlargement of the Erie canal, a measure which he strongly advocated. In 1851 he was elected to the state senate, and the following year was elected on independent ticket to Congress, serving there from Dec. 5, 1853, to March 3, 1855. Sept. 28, 1860, his residence in Lyonsdale was burned by an incendiary, and he then went to Staten Island, where he occupied the country seat known as Ross Castle. In 1864 he was appointed by President Lincoln first territorial governor of Idaho. Caleb Lyon left one son, Caleb, a physician, and a daughter.

* Caleb Lyon received the degree of LL.D. from Norwich University in 1851.³

A brief notice appearing in the *Sacramento Transcript* (Sacramento City) 2:99 (19 February 1851): n.p. (second page of issue), provides the following:

Hon. Caleb Lyons, of Lyonsdale, Poet, Linguist, L.L.D., F.R.S., and A.S.S.—at one time a sojourner and *distinguished* personage in the Eureka State, has recently been elected to a seat in the New York Legislature. He ran on the Independent ticket, and beat both his opponents by a majority of fifteen hundred. *Selah!*

Francis D'Avignon executed a lithograph of Lyon after a daguerreotype by Brady. See *Documents of the Senate of the State of New-York, Seventy-Fifth Session* (Albany: C. Van Benthuyzen, 1852): 197.⁴ The present editor is unable to locate an extant copy of the lithograph.

The New York State Library holds papers of Caleb Lyon: (NIC) NYRI594-360-0098;
Lyon, Caleb, 1851–1875 papers, 1819–1876.

1. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3c10068>
2. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/advert/N8510030_NATL-MIN-GALLERY_NYT_1851-09-19.pdf
3. <http://books.google.com/books?id=wic3AAAAMAAJ>
4. <http://books.google.com/books?id=AvFKAAAAMAAJ>

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