

**PETER AND
SUSAN LESLEY**

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Peter and Susan Lesley by Charles Gordon Ames

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CHARLES GORDON AMES

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J. PETER LESLEY

BORN PHILADELPHIA, SEPTEMBER 17, 1819; DIED MILTON, MASS.,
JUNE 1, 1903

SUSAN INCHES LESLEY

(*née* LYMAN)

BORN NORTHAMPTON, MASS., APRIL 7, 1823; DIED MILTON,
JANUARY 16, 1904



PETER AND SUSAN LESLEY.*

"It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment." — HEBREWS ix. 27 (Rev. Ver.).

EVERY day, by speech or in silence, we pass judgment upon our fellows; and, when they die, we sum up our little imperfect knowledges, mixed with guesses and impressions, and pronounce a qualified sentence of praise or blame for "the deeds done in the body." This fact of itself has made thoughtful men in all ages regard death as a solemn crisis in the history of a man. It is the closing of a chapter, the making up and balancing of an account. Our moral sense, in its small way, affirms that every man must at last pass for what he is, when his life is reviewed and his character scrutinized by the All-seeing.

And how long is the scale of differences! There are all grades of excellence and defect, of merit and demerit, of honor and shame. The clod and the nugget, the pebble and the gem, do not differ

* A Memorial Discourse, preached in the Church of the Disciples, Boston, Jan. 24, 1904, by Charles Gordon Ames.

more than one man and another. In reviewing some lives, we seem to traverse dreary wastes of sand: in others, we are exploring gold mines and diamond fields.

The nineteenth century yielded a rich product of good men and women: death and heaven are still gathering the glorious harvest. The younger generation — so soon in its turn to become the elder — will be impoverished so far as it misses the knowledge and inspiration of such a record. For the best lives, whether great or humble,

“ . . . All remind us
We can make our lives sublime.”

They reprove our neglect, shame our cowardice and sloth, exalt our ideals, and encourage our aspirations. And all just praise to those who have lived wisely and well is really praise to Him from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.

On the 4th of June last, some of us stood in awe around the silent form of Peter Lesley. Rarely have I seen a nobler face in flesh or in marble. We do not talk of any man we have known as perfect. But, after all allowances and deductions for human faults, weaknesses, limitations, and infirmities of

temperament, few men of his time have showed such a handsome sum of personal qualities and services. And when, on Tuesday last, we gathered again in the same Milton cottage, and bent over the precious dust of Susan Lesley, I think the judgment as well as the feeling of those who had known the true story of her fourscore years concurred in the verdict of one who said, "No possible words of praise could seem extravagant." United in life, in death they were not long divided.

Peter Lesley was a city boy, son of a Philadelphia carpenter, a man of high-strung nerves, but of sterling sense and Christian virtues. The children were taught the use of their minds, their eyes and hands; taught also to revere God and keep the commandments. This lad was a passionate lover of knowledge, especially devoted to language and science, and passed swiftly forward in school and college to a course in divinity at Princeton,—more than eighty years after the brief presidency of Jonathan Edwards, who was still the patron saint. These stages were only the beginnings of a course of lifelong study, pursued with a single eye to truth and duty. Any well-born youth who enters on his earthly