

**ESSAYS AND BELLES
LETTRES. PRUE &
I; LOTUS EATING**

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Essays and Belles Lettres. Prue & I; Lotus eating by George William Curtis

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GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS

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EDITED BY ERNEST RHYS

ESSAYS AND
BELLES LETTRES

CURTIS' PRUE AND I &
LOTUS-EATING. WITH
AN INTRODUCTION BY
HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE

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MOST
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FOR THAT
THEY COME
HOME TO
MEN'S
BUSINESS
& BOSOMS
LORD BACON

PRUE & I
LOTUS
EATING *by*
G·W·CURTIS

EVERY
MAN
I WILL
GO
WITH
THEE
BE THY
GUIDE



IN THY
MOST
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INTRODUCTION

THE *Elizabeth and Ann*, sailing from the port of London in May 1635, brought to New England seven passengers who were duly certified by their respective Ministers and Justices of the Peace as having conformed to the orders and discipline of the Church of England, and taken the oaths of allegiance and supremacy; and it is added that "they were no subsidy men." The last name on the list of seven in Hatten's "List of Emigrants to America" was that of Henry Curtis, from whom George William Curtis was descended in the sixth generation. The men of the family were notable for independence of judgment and action; one of them, John Curtis, of Worcester, Mass., was an outspoken loyalist when the War of the Revolution broke out, and was banished from the town; but was taken back later without, apparently, any recantation of opinions on his part.

The great grandson of this outspoken loyalist was George Curtis, who removed to Providence, married the daughter of the Chief Justice of Rhode Island, and in 1824 became the father of George William Curtis. He was conspicuous for integrity, courtesy, and cultivation of taste. In one of the most delightful chapters in *Prue and I*—"Sea from Shore"—Mr. Curtis has recorded his impressions of the wharves of Providence as they appealed to his boyish imagination, sensitive to colour, to the subtle sug-

gestions of odour, to hints of adventure in remote countries. He was fortunate in his companionship with his brother Burrill, a boy of rare beauty and fineness of nature, who looked, in his brother's words, "as I am sure Philip Sidney looked when he was a boy."

The education of the brothers was both irregular and fortunate; and one of its happiest phases was the influence of Emerson, one of the most liberating and inspiring thinkers who have appeared in America. From 1842 to 1844 the brothers were "boarders and boarders only" at Brook Farm, that interesting experiment in plain living and high thinking which was one of the expressions of the stirring of the New England spirit, breaking away from Puritanism. Emerson, who was as witty as he was wise, described it as "a perpetual picnic, a French Revolution in small, an Age of Reason in a patty pan." To the Curtis brothers it was a period of stiff work in the languages, chemistry and music, and free and stimulating talk with the ardent and often interesting apostles of the new thought which came from Germany by way of Coleridge, and was modified and extended by the keen, penetrating New England intelligence, and by a good deal of very human fun. "We were thrown into convulsions of laughter at the sight of G. W. C. dressed as Fanny Elssler, making courtesies and pirouetting down the path," writes one of the chroniclers of Brook Farm. The brothers were embodiments of beauty and vigour; a visitor to the Farm reports that they "looked like young Greek Gods." In later years George William Curtis had a singular distinction of manner,