

**THE ROMANCE OF THE
MILKY WAY, AND OTHER
STUDIES & STORIES**

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The Romance of the Milky Way, and Other Studies & Stories by Lafcadio Hearn

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By Lafcadio Hearn

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LAFADIO HEARN, known to Nippon as Yakumo Koizumi, was born in Leucadia in the Ionian Islands, June 27, 1850. His father was an Irish surgeon in the British Army; his mother was a Greek. Both parents died while Hearn was still a child, and he was adopted by a great-aunt, and educated for the priesthood. To this training he owed his Latin scholarship and, doubtless, something of the subtlety of his intelligence. He soon found, however, that the prospect of an ecclesiastical career was alien from his inquiring mind and vivid temperament, and at the age of nineteen he came to America to seek his fortune. After working for a time as a proof-reader, he obtained employment as a newspaper reporter in Cincinnati. Soon he rose to be an editorial writer, and went in the course of a few years to New Orleans to join the editorial staff of the "Times-Democrat." Here he lived until 1887, writing odd fantasies and arabesques for his paper, contributing articles and sketches



to the magazines, and publishing several curious little books, among them his "Stray Leaves from Strange Literature," and his translations from Gautier. In the winter of 1887 he began his pilgrimages to exotic countries, being, as he wrote to a friend, "a small literary bee in search of inspiring honey." After a couple of years, spent chiefly in the French West Indies, with periods of literary work in New York, he went in 1890 to Japan to prepare a series of articles for a magazine. Here through some deep affinity of mood with the marvelous people of that country he seems suddenly to have felt himself at last at home. He married a Japanese woman; he acquired Japanese citizenship in order to preserve the succession of his property to his family there; he became a lecturer in the Imperial University at Tōkyō; and in a series of remarkable books he made himself the interpreter to the Western World of the very spirit of Japanese life and art. He died there of paralysis of the heart on the 26th of September, 1904.

With the exception of a body of familiar letters now in process of collection, the present volume contains all of Hearn's writing
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