

# **REMINISCENCES OF LAFCADIO HEARN**

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Reminiscences of Lafcadio Hearn by Setsu Koizumi

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**SETSU KOIZUMI**

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# REMINISCENCES OF LAFCADIO HEARN

BY SETSUKO KOIZUMI (*Mrs. Hearn*)

TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE BY  
PAUL KIYOSHI HISADA  
AND FREDERICK JOHNSON



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## INTRODUCTION

"When a ship sails away, she leaves smoke behind;  
Alas, that smoke causes my heart to ache."

It is sad to be left behind. After spending years in a land which is not mine, amongst people whose language also is not mine, when I visit home, time knows no sympathy, and my two months pass away like an ever-fascinating dream. It was my last day in Japan, and in the morning I would sail away. I had seen everybody I wanted to meet, except one, Mrs. Setzuko-Koizumi, who lives in Okubo, the outskirt district of Tokyo.

The pouring rain and long distance did not stop my going there. Not having her exact address might have discouraged me, but I felt it would make the visit still more interesting should I succeed.

Tokyo was an utterly strange city to me, and the development of the city

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had advanced with a Herculean stride. Taking one street car after another, transferring two or three times, I reached a station called Okubo, and inquired for the whereabouts of Mrs. Koizumi, but nobody seemed to know. I added the name Hearn, but even that brought no answer, until I said, "A Japanese woman who married a foreigner"; then they suggested the direction. After walking a distance of several blocks, I came to a very artistic gate, which led diagonally to a house, by a stone-paved walk, and there was the name Koizumi on the door.

Opening a sliding door of lattice-work, I said "Dozo—" (please—), and a young Japanese girl responded, who was one of Hearn's children. At my request to see the mistress of the house, she bowed politely, and returned with a young man, who was Kazuo, the eldest son of Hearn, who is in Waseda College. He resembles his father, but his color is typically Japanese. Telling him about my work of trans-

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lation, and my admiration for his father, induced him to bring his mother to join in the conversation. I found her a woman of motherly appearance, and she showed in every way a fine Japanese character. One could tell easily that she was of Samurai descent.

When she observed my intense desire to see Hearn's study, she guided me there, where he worked until his last days, and I found the place in order as neatly as he left it. His desk was built up higher than ordinary ones, on account of his eyesight, and the row of books in the bookcase were as if telling the stories of the days when Hearn worked in this very room. In a corner of the study, I saw a modest Buddhist family altar, where was enclosed a portrait photograph of Hearn, in front of which rose the smoke of incense, like a filmy gauze; and I naturally paid my hearty homage to the spirit of the patriarch, the English writer who linked the East and the West. There is no one who did more to