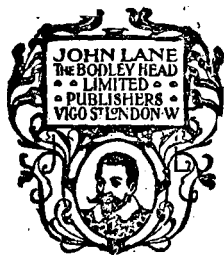


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**LAFKADIO HEARN'S
AMERICAN DAYS**

LAFCADIO HEARN'S AMERICAN DAYS

BY
EDWARD LAROCQUE TINKER

DESIGNED AND ILLUSTRATED BY
THE AUTHOR



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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

TO

MY WIFE

FRANCES McKEE TINKER

FOR MANY REASONS,

ONLY ONE OF WHICH IS THAT, WITHOUT
HER, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO BOOK

Introduction

Some few biographers have been animated by dislike and hate, but more often than not they are quickened to their work by an enthusiastic, partizan admiration for the personality about whom they write. This feeling is often strong enough to warp their judgment to the point of suppressing, or at least glossing any facts that place the object of their admiration in an unfavourable light, and of unduly stressing, even distorting, the creditable ones in an attempt to make of him a hero, a demi-god, or a genius.

So many biographers have been influenced in this direction that the average reader has arrived almost unconsciously at the opinion that a biography is a *very flattering* account of a person's life. But, although this method results in some excellent and even interesting mythology, can its product come strictly under the heading of biography?

By consulting various dictionaries, the composite definition is arrived at that biography is a systematic written account of an individual's life. But that is the extent of their help. It is manifestly impossible to enumerate every minute incident in a life, and on the question of what to include or exclude the dictionaries are mute—each biographer must determine for himself. Right or wrong, I have arrived at the conclusion that any fact or event that would influence in any way the judgment of an average man or woman as to the character of an

INTRODUCTION

other is pertinent and should be included. This is the acid test I have applied to the making of this book; and if some of Hearn's friends and admirers regret my frankness, I ask them to remember that I have honestly attempted to write—not a defence or special pleading,—but a biography, accurate and impartial, without suppressions or undeserved puffings, and that I have used the utmost care and diligence in substantiating the truth of every statement.

In the course of these investigations I have met so much kindly and sympathetic assistance that I keenly appreciate this opportunity to acknowledge it. It was due to the friendly offices of Miss Margaret Douglas that I obtained the Hearn MSS. and letters that first fired my interest and inspired my quest for further knowledge. From that time on the number of my generous collaborators kept increasing until they assumed almost the proportions of a small army. I remember some fascinating hours spent with Dr. Rodolpho Matas, who had been Hearn's physician and friend in his New Orleans days. The Doctor focussed the ripe powers of judgment born of a long and distinguished medical career upon an analysis of Hearn's baffling character and his deductions were startlingly illuminating. Then, putting me under an even greater obligation, he lent me all the letters which Hearn had written him from the West Indies—a most enthralling correspondence.

There were other pleasant memories,—long walks through the old French Quarter with Mr. Harry Michel who was one of the original co-operative owners of the *Item*, and was later City Editor during the time Hearn worked on that paper. To Mr. Michel much of the life of New Orleans of the 80's and 90's was an open book,

INTRODUCTION

and it was through his assistance that I was able to locate most of the houses in which Hearn lived. He passed me on to other newspapermen who had worked beside Hearn in the early days, notably, Mr. Charles Donnaud who had been Commercial Editor of the *Item* and had known him well. Then there was Mr. William Tracy, the Business Manager of the old *Item*, and Mr. James Augustin, who was still a reporter on that paper at the time of his death, about a year ago, and Mr. Norman Walker, who had worked with Hearn on the *Times-Democrat*.

All my informants were not newspapermen, however. Mr. John Phillips, Mr. Louis Claudel, Dr. J. M. Toliver and Professor Kendall of Tulane, all generously shared their memories with me, and Mr. Tom Douglas was a mine of information of the New Orleans of the end of the 19th century. Dr. Birney Guthrie told me of his childhood memories of Hearn and permitted me to use the two charming letters written to his aunt, Mrs. Amanda Guthrie Durno.

Miss Grace King, that distinguished Southern lady of letters, gave me generously of her rich fund of information about all the literary celebrities who lived in, or visited, New Orleans in the 1880's and '90's; and the prodigality of another Southern writer, Mrs. Julia Wetherill Baker, has resulted in a whole chapter. Mme. Augustin, the widow of Mr. John Augustin, told me of her husband's relations with Hearn on the *Times-Democrat*, and Mr. H. W. Robinson has given me much information about the manner in which his father, Major Robinson, helped Hearn through his first hardships in New Orleans.

To Miss Margaret Corcoran and to D. J. and Ben-

INTRODUCTION

Jamin Corcoran I owe many of the details of Hearn's life at the house of their relative, Mrs. Courtney, at 68 Gasquet St.

Even yet there remain still more favours to be recounted. Mrs. Pearl Davis Jahncke put at my disposal the most interesting literary scrapbooks and material of her mother, Mrs. Mollie Moore Davis, the New Orleans authoress, whose salons are still remembered as charmingly unique. Mr. S. J. Shwartz has afforded me free access to his remarkable collection of Louisiana items and has permitted me to quote from certain Hearn letters in his library. My thanks are due to Mr. James M. Thomson for placing the files of the *Item* at my disposal, and to Mr. Nicholson for a like favour in the matter of those of the *Times-Democrat* (now the *Times-Picayune*). To Mr. William Beer, the librarian of the Howard Library, I am indebted for many courtesies and the use of all the resources of his institution; while Miss Freret, the librarian of the Louisiana State Library, was kindness itself in affording me every facility for examining the files in her charge.

I have a particularly tender feeling for the memory of the late Mr. H. E. Krehbiel, for so many years the distinguished musical critic of the New York *Tribune*. He spent hours enriching me with tales of Hearn's life and his when they were both reporters together in Cincinnati, and of their later remeeting in New York. He finally lent me all his Hearn letters. On the back of one appeared a pencilled note which read: "I shall be sorry when these become the property of mere curio hunters, H.E.K." After Mr. Krehbiel's death, Miss Emma Brazier kindly supplemented some of the information I had received from him.

INTRODUCTION

An evening spent with Dr. Ellwood Hendrick will long remain in my memory. He talked of Hearn for two hours and told the full tale of their friendship. At the end I thought that only twenty minutes had passed.

Mrs. Henry M. Alden was good enough to give me certain facts she had obtained from her late husband, who so long lent distinction to the editorial chair of *Harper's Magazine*; and Mr. C. D. Weldon, the artist who accompanied Hearn to Japan, has given me the benefit both of his memories and of his correspondence. He has done a sketch, which appears in another part of the book, of Hearn as he looked, weighted down with enormous bags, when they were leaving New York together for Canada on the first lap of their journey.

Last but not least, I must acknowledge my debt to Mr. Joseph Pennell for some very acute and kindly suggestions which resulted in unearthing some important information.

These are some of the people who have made my path pleasant and my work a joy. I only hope they will realize how truly grateful I am.

EDWARD LAROCQUE TINKER.

July 14th, 1924.
ROADS END FARM,
EAST SETAUKET,
LONG ISLAND.

THE PRINCIPAL DATES IN HEARN'S LIFE

- 1850 June 27th. Born on the Isle of Santa Maura, Ionian Archipelago.
- 1852 }
to } In Dublin, Ireland. Most of the time at his aunt's, Mrs.
1863 } Brenane.
- 1863 }
to } September 9th. Went to St. Cuthbert's College, Ushaw,
1868 } England, and remained there until the latter year.
- 1868 }
to } A short time at the Jesuit School of the "Petits Precepteurs"
1869 } at Yvetot, France. Some few weeks in Paris.
to } A few months in London at the house of Catherine, Mrs.
1869 } Brenane's ex-parlor-maid. These dates are not absolutely
1871 } provable.
- 1869 }
to } New York City.
1871 }
- 1871 }
to } Cincinnati, Ohio, until October of the latter year.
1877 }
- 1872 to 1875, on the *Enquirer*.
1875 to 1877, October, on the *Commercial*.
- 1877 }
to } November. In New Orleans, La., until June of the latter
1887 } year.
- 1878, June, to 1881, December 3rd, Associate Editor of
the *Item*.
1881, December 4th, to 1887, June 1st, Editorial Staff
of the *T-D*.
1884, April, short trip to Florida.
July and August at Grand Isle, La.
1886, Summer, at Grand Isle again.
- 1887 June 3rd to the middle of July, New York City.
July (middle) to first week of September, first West Indian
trip.
September to October 2nd, New York City and Metuchen,
N. J.

1887 }
to } October 2nd, second West Indian trip, until May (1st week)
1889 } of the latter year.

May (1st week), 1889, New York City for only one or two days.

May to October, Philadelphia with Dr. Gould.

1889 }
to } October, New York City, until March 6th of the latter year.
1890 }

On which date he left for Japan, where he remained until
1904 September 26th, when he died.

Contents

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	vii
PRINCIPAL DATES IN HEARN'S LIFE	xiii
I HOW HE CAME TO THE UNITED STATES	1
II CINCINNATI	13
III HE COMES TO NEW ORLEANS	31
IV <i>Item</i> Days	50
V THE "HARD TIMES"	97
VI A LIBRARY OF EXOTISM	108
VII FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES	122
VIII ON THE <i>Times-Democrat</i>	148
IX MRS. COURTNEY MOTHERS HEARN	190
X DR. MATAS	227
XI STRADDLING CANAL STREET	238
XII ANOTHER RUNG	268
XIII WEST INDIES ONCE MORE	284
XIV DR. GOULD AND MR. HEARN	301
XV FINAL DAYS	316
XVI AFTERMATH	344
XVII POSTSCRIPT: MRS. BAKER SPEAKS OF HEARN	358
INDEX	377

INDEX

INDEX

- Abbey, Edwin, 322
- Alden, Annie, 280, 289
- Alden, Henry M., 257; accepts "Chita," 269; meets Hearn, 276; Hearn guest of, 280; library sent to, 281; refuses "Lys," 290; Hearn appeals to, 294; probable loan, 295; Hearn's letter to, 309; requested to turn over Hearn's books to Dr. Gould, 313, 314; connection with Hearn's Japanese trip, 332, 334, 338, 346, 347, 348, 350
- April Fool's Day, 249
- Anti-Semetic feeling, 253, 366, 368, 370
- Arnoux, M. Leopold, 285
- Augustin, James, Hearn's sympathy with, 91
- Augustin, John, city-editor *Times-Democrat*, 151
- Baker, Page, defends Hearn, 137; editor-in-chief, *Times-Democrat*, 150, understanding of Hearn, 152, 154; Hearn's letter to, 253; good-bye to, 269; meets Hearn in New York, 326; letter to, 356
- Baker, Henry, 151
- Baker, Marion, 151, 358-372
- Baudelaire, influence over Hearn, 27; translation of Poe, 109; "small preoccupations" of, 233, 236
- Bigney, Mark, hires Hearn as member of *Item* staff, 49; altercation with Major Hersey, 89, 90
- "Biographical Clinics," 121
- Bisland, Miss Bessie, meets Hearn, 174; Hearn's description and estimate of, 175-180; Hearn visits, 272; letter to, 281; *Cosmopolitan* article, 311; invites Hearn to Rollins' dinner, 317; Hearn's affection for, 320, 357
- Bookshops, Hearn's visits to, 108, 109, 262
- Brenane, Mrs. Sarah, Lafcadio's aunt, 3; Catholic training for Hearn, 4, 5, 6; sends Hearn to servant in London, 7; influenced by Molyneux, 10; creature comforts of, 193
- Burthe, Honoré, 151
- Bustillos, Mary, Hearn lodges with, 33
- Cable, George, 70; visited by Hearn, 122; "Grandissimes" praised, 126; Creole songs, 128; introduces Hearn to *Harper's Magazine*, 184; Hearn's distrust of, 185
- Camera, Hearn's use of, 287
- Canadian Pacific, 332, 344
- Catholic, first impression on Hearn, 3, 4; Hearn trained for priesthood, 4-7; influence of Henry Molyneux, 10; Hearn's hatred of Catholic Church and Jesuits, 11
- Century Magazine*, publishes "The Scenes of Cable's Romances," 126; Cable's loyalty to, 184
- Chase, William, 323
- Chamberlain, Prof. Basil Hall, 327
- "Chita," origin of, 126; source of distrust, 185; dedication to Dr. Matas, 237; accepted by Alden, 269; proofs of, 303; work on, 364, 367, 372
- Cincinnati, Hearn instructed to go to Cullinane there for money, 11; visits Cullinane, 13; reports for *Enquirer*, 14-18; friendship of Krehbiel, 18-20; climbs St. Patrick's Cathedral, 22; leaves for New Orleans, 29; second visit to, 271
- Claudé, Louis, 11, 165
- Cleopatra, 162
- Cockerill, Col. John, gives Hearn job on Cincinnati *Enquirer*, 14
- Coleman, Will H., agrees to publish "Gombo Zèbes," "La Cuisine Creole" and "Sketch Book," 182; connection with Hearn's "perfume" talk, 233
- "Columnists," Hearn the peer of, 66; contributes to several newspaper columns—Our Book Table, 67; Our Advice Book, 77; Wayside Notes, 79; Odds and Ends,

Index

- 79; *The Item Miscellany*, 79; *Varieties*, 79
Commercial (Cincinnati), Hearn reports for, 28; sends Hearn to New Orleans, 29; "Ozias Midwinter" articles, 37, 42
 "Concerning Lafcadio Hearn," 166, 279, 307, 309, 310, 314
 Conversation, Hearn's powers of, 241, 256, 257, 319, 362
 Corcoran, Denny, description of, 210; wanderings with Hearn, 212-215; Hearn leaves, 269
 Cornilliac, Dr. J. J. J., 290
 Courtney, Ella, only daughter, 192; Hearn's tales for, 198-199; French lessons, 201; her album poem, 202; letter to, 218; farewell to, 269
 Courtney, Mrs., her home, 192; personal care of Hearn, 196, 197; letters to, 216, 218, 220, 221, 223, 304, 356; misfortune, 226; Hearn's farewell to, 269
 Creole, Hearn's interest in, 82; superstitions of, 83; traditions of, 91; Hearn's study of Creole speech, 114; Creole songs, 123; Creole customs, 128; voodoo, 129-137; Creole lore and proverbs, 181; "Gombo Zhèbes" and "La Cuisine Creole" published, 182; Creole family life, 260-267; Creole ladies, 285
 "Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard," 339
 Crosby, Lieut. Oscar Terry, Hearn's affection for, 240; suggests Edison story, 243; Hearn leaves, 269
 Cullinane, receives money for Hearn, 11; Hearn visits, 13
 Davidson, J. O., 183
 Davis, Mrs. Mollie Moore, 240
Democrat (New Orleans), Hearn contributes to, 38; criticism of, 51; quarrel between editor and Mark Bigney, 89, 90; publishes Hearn's translations, 149; absorbs the *Times*, 150; quoted, 158, 161, 163, 164, 173, 208, 243, 265
 Disarmament, 56, 57
 Dodge, Mary Mapes, 316
 Donnaud, Charles, Hearn's friendship for, 91; brings Hearn to Baker, 150
 Dublin, Hearn arrives, 3
 Dupré, George, editor of *New Orleans Democrat*, 38; managing-editor of *Times-Democrat*, 151
 Durno, Mrs. A. C., welcomes Hearn, 240; described by Hearn, 242; "De Yucca," 249; letter from Grand Isle, 251; farewell to, 269
 Duveneck, Frank, 23
 Edison, 243
Enquirer (Cincinnati), Hearn's first association with, 14; reportorial successes of Hearn, 15-18, 22; dispenses with Hearn's services, 28
 "Exotics and Retrospectives," 230
 Eyesight, serious injury to, 4; influences early life, 5; fear of blindness, 26; sensitive about, 91, 219, 280
 "Fantastics," 235
 Farny, H. F., 23-25, 28
 Ficklen, Professor, 240
 Field, Eugene, 232
 "First Muezzin Bilal in Karma, The," 120
 Flaubert, translated by Hearn, 26
 Florida, 222
 Foley, Althea, Hearn's episode with, 26-28; influences Hearn on Negro question, 123
 France, Hearn sent to Yvetot, 6; early impressions of Paris, 6, 7
 France, Anatole, 339
 Frost, A. B., 323
 Gautier, Théophile, Hearn translates "Avatar," 25; "One of Cleopatra's Nights," 26; "The Mummy's Foot," 51; European prestige of Gautier, 77; Hearn's appreciation of Gautier, 161
 Gayarré, Charles, 70, 112
Gazette (New Orleans), 51
 Gasquet, Hearn's home at Number 68, 192
General Throop, tale of burning of, 124
 Gilder, Richard Watson, 256, 316
 "Gombo Zhèbes," origin of, 114, 129; published by Coleman, 182
 Gombo, Hearn introduced to, 36; a Gombo poem, 143; Gombo spelling, 146; "Gombo" French, 288
 Gould, Dr. George, his estimate of Hearn's art, 166; corresponds with Hearn, 301; meets Hearn, 303; influence over Hearn, 306-308,

Index

- 311; library controversy, 313, 314, 348, 356
Gould, Miss Helen, 321
Gould, Jay, 321
Grand Isle, Baker persuades Hearn to visit, 216-222; Hearn fond of, 364, 365, 371, 372
Gypsy literature, Hearn's taste for, 114-119
- "Hard Times," Hearn announces the opening of, 104; advertisements of, 105, 106; failure of, 107
Harper Brothers, connection with Japanese trip, 332, 336, 338, 339, 346, 347, 350, 352, 353, 355, 356
Harper, J. Henry, 322, 324, 339, 346
Harper's Bazaar, 120, 184, 187, 338
Harper's Magazine, refuses "Gombo Zhèbes," 181; publishes series of Quaint New Orleans and Its Inhabitants, 184; "Chita," 269, 272; publishes "Two Years in French West Indies," 278; refuses "Lys," 290; refuses "Karma," 311; buys translation of Anatole France, 343; connection with Hearn's Japanese trip, 346, 348, 354
Harper's Weekly, 349
Hawkins, Armand, Hearn visits bookshop of, 109-112; mentions "The Perfume of Women," 231; poem carried to, 267
Hayes-Tilden election, influence on Hearn, 29
Hearn, Charles Bush, father of Lafcadio, 1, 2; ordered to West Indies, 3; remarries, 10; Lafcadio's regard for, 325
Hearn, James, Lafcadio's brother, 324
Hearn, Patricio Lafcadio Tessima Carlos, birth at Santa Maura, 1; mixed ancestry, 2, 3; sent to Dublin, 3; accident to eye at St. Cuthbert's, 4; Jesuit school at Yvetot, 6; impressions of Paris, 6, 7; sent to London, 7; influence of Mrs. Brenane and Henry Molyneux, 10; hatred of Catholics and Jesuits, 11; arrives in New York, 11; two years of hand-to-mouth existence, 12; goes to Cincinnati in 1871, 13; learns trade under Watkins, 14; first experiences as reporter on Cincinnati *Enquirer*, 15; meets Krehbiel, 16; displays love of the morbid, 15-18; publishes "Ye Giglampz," 24; meets Althea Foley, 26-28; leaves *Enquirer* for *Commercial*, 28; is sent to New Orleans, 29; contributes to *Democrat*, 39; introduction to Major Robinson of the *Republican*, 40; joins staff of *Item*, 49; contributes to several newspaper columns, 77, 79; establishes the "Hard Times," 104; visits Cable, 122; episode of Adrian Rouquette, 138-146; contributes to *Democrat*, 149; joins staff of *Times-Democrat*, 150; publishes Gautier translations, 161; publishes "Stray Leaves from Strange Literatures," 167; meets Miss Bessie Bisland, 174; Coleman agrees to publish "Gombo Zhèbes," "La Cuisine Creole" and "The Sketch Book," 182; break with Cable, 186; publishes "Some Chinese Ghosts," 187; meets Mrs. Courtney, 190; wanderings with Denny Corcoran, 210; visits Florida, 223; meets Dr. Matas, 227; interest in sense of smell, 234; his conversation at Mrs. Durno's salon, 241; episode of Creole girl, 262-267; leaves New Orleans for New York, 269; goes to West Indies, 276; second West Indies trip, 284; visits Dr. Gould in Philadelphia, 303; gives library to Dr. Gould, 313; attends Rollins' dinner in New York, 317; leaves for Japan, 343; estimate of character, 358-372; manner of work, 15, 23, 26, 166, 169, 187, 194, 272, 285, 296, 339; personal appearance of, 4, 32, 79, 152, 195, 200, 215, 303, 317, 322, 341, 360
Hendrick, Ellwood, 312, 314, 316, 318, 319, 321, 343, 357
Hersey, Major, quarrel with Mark Bigney, 89, 90
Higgins, Kate, 193
Holland, Doctor, 229
Howells, William Dean, 323, 324
Huysmans, 233
- Item* (New Orleans), Hearn joins staff of, 49; changes atmosphere of paper, 51; varied nature of Hearn's contributions, 52-79; cartoons added to *Item*, 86, 88;

Index

- Hearn's contributions to *Item*, 7, 47, 53, 55, 56, 60, 61, 64, 67, 69, 71, 78, 81, 82, 84, 87, 89, 93, 100, 109, 114, 132, 146, 158, 207, 212, 229, 230, 231, 235, 239, 259, 260, 262, 275, 286, 291, 323, 331, 363, 373
- Jager, Dr., 230
- Japan, trip to, 311, 332, 334, 336, 338, 345
- Jesuits, Hearn disputes with them at Ushaw, 5; unable to endure their discipline at the "Petits Precepteurs," 6; conceives intense hatred for, 10, 11, 253, 366
- Johnson, Charlie, 222
- "Karma," 308, 311
- King, Miss Grace, Warner introduces Hearn to, 257
- Krehbiel, Henry Edward, reporter on the *Cincinnati Gazette*, 16; Chinese airs, 19; advises Hearn, 28; bitter letter from Hearn, 40; stages Chinese play, 52; letters from Hearn, 80, 85, 88, 102, 105; receives Creole songs, 123; receives tale of *General Throop*, 124; last page of letter from Hearn, 153; letter about "Stray Leaves," 168; Cable introduced by Hearn's letter, 186; letter about Mrs. Durno, 242; greets Hearn, 271; introduces Hearn to Alden, 274; Hearn does not visit, 281; introduces Hearn to Patten, 326; breaks with Hearn, 341
- L'Abeille (New Orleans), 51, 266
- "La Cuisine Creole," published, 182
- Laveau, Marie, 132-138
- "Lafcadio Hearn's Brother," 325, 343
- Laziness, perfect epic of, 253
- Les Comptes Rendus*, 261
- "Letters from the Raven," 105
- Library, Hearn's, 113-121, 155, 256, 269, 281, 295, 313, 348, 356
- "Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn," Bisland, 80, 209, 241, 302
- Lippincott's Magazine*, 308, 311
- Little, Lina, 240
- London, Hearn sent to live there, 7; describes impression in *Item*, 7-10
- Loti, Pierre, Hearn's love for, 156; correspondence with, 167; "small preoccupations" of, 233
- "Lys," 290
- Mark Twain, tour of Cable and, 128
- Martinique, 276, 282, 284, 304
- Mascotte*, the, 89
- Matas, Dr. Rodolpho, meets Hearn, 227; dedication of "Chita" to, 237; attests Edison article, 243; meeting with Hearn and Warner, 256; Hearn's good-bye to, 269; letters to, 278, 279, 280, 281, 356
- Matas, Mrs., supplies Hearn with Creole information, 181, 237
- Medical Journal*, 227
- Memphis, Tenn., visited by Hearn, 30
- Mercier, Dr. Alfred, 70, 262, 263
- Michelet, 74
- Molyneux, Henry, destroys Hearn's hope of heritage, 10; sends Hearn to Cullinane in Cincinnati, 11
- Morbidity, evidences of Hearn's, 15, 17, 59-66
- Music, Krehbiel's influence over Hearn, 18-19; Hearn attends opera, 99; Cable and Hearn exchange Creole songs, 123; collecting Creole music, 289
- New Orleans, Hearn arrives there, 32; fascination of city, 32-38; the "Ozias Midwinter" articles, 37, 42; yellow fever plague, 46; Hearn's exposure of unsanitary conditions of, 54, 55; French quarter, 82; superstitions, 83; the river front, 84, 85; dwellings, 90, 94, 239; The Quadroon Ball, 91-94; old bookshops in, 108-112; Creole life and customs, 128-137; city noises and calls, 193-195; the "horizontales," 192; the "district," 214; contains several little cities, 238
- New York, Hearn's first visit, 11; second visit, 271; impression of, 282; Hearn returns to, 300; leaves for Japan, 343
- Nicaud, Rose, 36
- Noirot, Dr., 229
- Novel, Hearn's theory of the, 71
- Odours, Hearn's interest in, 229
- Old Absinthe House, 91
- Osgood, James R. and Company, publish "Stray Leaves from Strange Literature," 167

Index

- "Ozias Midwinter," Hearn's pen name, 37
- Parlour, Hearn's dislike of, 257
- Patten, William, 326-333, 339, 347
- Pennell, Joseph, 126
- "Perfume of Women, The," 232
- Philadelphia, Hearn visits, 303
- Physiology of smells, 230
- Picayune* (New Orleans), 51
- Pipes, Japanese, 327
- Poe, Edgar Allan, 109, 120, 236
- Poetry, Hearn's quoted, 47, 207, 259, 291, 331
- Quadroon Ball, Hearn and James Augustin visit, 91
- Reading, early reading of Greek classics, 5; introduction to French Romantic literature, 7; its influence, 25, 68, 71; Hearn's method of reading, 112; Gypsy literature, 114; Oriental subjects, 120; introduction of foreign literature to newspapers, 156; wide collateral investigation, 161
- Remington, Frederick, 323
- Republican* (New Orleans), Hearn applies to editor, 40
- Reporter, Hearn's qualifications as, 15-18; appeal of sensational, 20; leaves Cincinnati *Enquirer* for *Commercial*, 28; contributes to *New Orleans Democrat*, 38; applies to *Republican*, 40; joins staff of *Item*, 49; important innovations in newspaper work, 51-85; joins *Times-Democrat*, 149; popularizing foreign literature through newspapers, 157
- Roberts Brothers, publish "Some Chinese Ghosts," 187; destroy plates, 188
- Robinson, Major William M., refuses Hearn work on *Republican*, 40; obtains job for Hearn on *Item*, 49
- Rogers, William, 323
- Rollins, Alice Wellington, 316
- Rouquette, Adrian, the life of, 138-143; friendship for Hearn, 143-146
- St. Malo, 170
- Scribner's Magazine*, publishes "Jean-ah Poquelin," 122; loyalty of Cable, 184
- Sex, Hearn's interest in, 18; combines physical passion with love of beauty, 22-24, 288, 310; scientific analysis of, 56, 57; the sexual idea in French literature, 71-75; Hearn's suppression of, 76; Hearn's sensuousness, 95; creed of passion, 209; Hearn visits the "district," 214-218; the island Venus, 220; Dr. Gould's influence, 307
- Shwartz, S. J., 328
- "Sketch Book," 182
- Smith, F. Hopkinson, 323
- "Some Chinese Ghosts," 20, 187, 226, 359
- Spencer, Herbert, 240, 252
- Stanton, Mrs. Adele, 240
- Stedman, Edmund Clarence, 316
- "Stray Leaves from Strange Literature," 167
- Style, weakness of Hearn's literary, 188; improvement of, 268
- "Tan Yard Case," reported by Hearn, 15
- Tessima, Rosa, mother of Lafcadio, 2; goes to Dublin, 3; returns to Santa Maura, 4; Hearn's memory of, 325
- Testart, M. A., 285
- Times* (New York), 312
- Townsend, Mrs. Mary Ashley, 240
- "Trade List," Hearn given position, 14
- Translations, early examples of, 25, 26, 51; literary quality of, 157-160; Gautier translations published, 161; "Note Books of Pierre Loti," 169
- Tribune* (New York), 120, 237, 272, 336, 342
- "Two Years in the French West Indies," 278, 292, 294, 311, 335
- Ushaw, Hearn sent to St. Cuthbert's College, 4; eyesight injured there, 4; dismissed for heresy, 5
- Vieux Carré, description of, 34-38; Hearn's regard for, 84; subjects for cartoon, 86; Hearn and James Augustin visit, 91; picturesque but unsanitary conditions of, 97, 98; Hearn tires of, 190
- Voodoo, 82, 129-138

Index

- Warner, Charles Dudley, 256
Watkin, Henry, teaches Hearn a trade, 14; sees Hearn off to New Orleans, 29; Hearn writes for help, 41; invitation to become Hearn's partner, 100; hopeful letter to, 104; Hearn visits, 270, 271
Weldon, C. D., 322, 330, 333, 336, 340, 343-345
West Indies, attraction of, 274; first visit, 276-278; second visit, 284; final leaving of, 300
White, Stanford, 323
Whitney, Charles, 151, 227
Wiggin, Kate Douglas, 316
"Winter Journey to Japan," 354
Woman Suffrage, 55
World (New York), 233
"Ye Giglampz," first published, 24
Yvetot, Hearn sent to Jesuit School of the "Petits Precepteurs," 6
Yokohama, Hearn's arrival at, 345
"Youma," 339
Zenneck, cuts Hearn's sketches on wood blocks, 86; is killed, 89
Zola, 69, 70