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LAFCADIO HEARN

VERA McWILLIAMS

LAFCADIO HEARN

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To Van Wyck Brooks in gratitude

years ago. But the attempt was premature, for, despite his letters and his wife's conscientious reminiscences, the picture of his Japanese home life would not come clear until his eldest son chose to speak. Seven years ago, after Kazuo Koizumi's 'Father and I' had supplied this last large segment of needed information without a definitive biography subsequently appearing, I again set to work. Four drafts were required to reduce the manuscript to an appropriate length and yet include all relevant material. The third revision was completed before the epoch of Pearl Harbor, and though the manuscript received its final polishing while we were at war with Japan, that coincidence resulted in no shifted accents in my treatment of Hearn's Japanese period. A few newly pertinent phrases were added, but otherwise the material remains as it was in the previous drafts. Concerning my treatment of the entire body of material, I should like to say that this book is offered as biography in its fundamental sense — the history of a life — and I have therefore confined myself as closely as possible to an objective recital.

Original research and investigation have enabled me to correct a number of errors and to make, I trust, certain specific contributions toward a better knowledge of Hearn and his history. The greater part of my material, however, has been drawn from Hearn's own words — his letters, journalistic and periodical writings, and his books. Yet I should be most remiss if I did not acknowledge my indebtedness to the earlier work of those who rescued and published valuable material without which this book could not have been written.

I have obtained most of my information concerning Hearn's paternal family, his mother, and his schooling from 'Lafcadio Hearn' by Nina H. Kennard, his early English biographer, whose diligence also resulted in the preservation of his journalistic writings while in Japan. Elizabeth Bisland, Hearn's staunch friend and first biographer, collected and edited three volumes of his finest and most informative letters, and in the biographical section of 'The Life and Letters

of Lafcadio Hearn' she included autobiographical sketches which throw a revealing light on Hearn's childhood. In 'Letters from the Raven' Milton Bronner presented a number of notes and letters Hearn wrote during his Cincinnati period; and Oscar Lewis, in his 'Hearn and His Biographers,' assembled the recorded evidence of Hearn's Cincinnati relationship with Alethea Foley. Albert Mordell, collecting Hearn's American journalistic and periodical writings, likewise presented valuable Cincinnati data in the introductions to his 'An American Miscellany' and 'Occidental Gleanings.' In 'Lafcadio Hearn's American Days' Edward Larocque Tinker furnished important facts dealing with Hearn's life in New Orleans and his later winter in New York. Setsuko Koizumi's 'Reminiscences of Lafcadio Hearn' and Kazuo Koizumi's 'Father and I' gave me most of the information Hearn's letters did not supply concerning his Japanese home life and family.

During the past forty years, in America and abroad, many others have collected Hearn's fragmentary writings and have published letters and reminiscences. I have also examined a mass of periodical and journalistic material built up through the years; and I have been grateful for any bits of information I used from these sources. While biographical treatment of Lafcadio Hearn has been, to repeat, necessarily slow and difficult, it has been effected by the labours of many faithful participants.

As to the personal assistance I have received during the course of my work, it is a deeply felt honour to acknowledge my greatest indebtedness in the dedication of this book. It is also a pleasure to acknowledge here, in remembering gratitude, an early-day debt to Mr. Nicholas Wreden, and a later one to my friend of long standing, Mr. Joseph A. Brandt. My sincere thanks are extended to librarians in New Orleans, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and at Harvard; and I wish particularly to express my appreciation of the invaluable assistance given me in the various departments and divisions of the Library of Congress. Finally, with much

gratification I acknowledge my indebtedness to the distinguished dean of Hearn authorities, Mr. Ferris Greenslet. It has been my prized good fortune to receive his advice and criticism as my publisher, editor, and friend.

LAFCADIO HEARN

CHAPTER

1

ANTIQUITY lies on the Ionian Islands like a tattered veil of Old Greece, shredded over landscapes and snared in names and customs. The perfume of its myth is especially redolent on the mountainous patch of land lying closest to the mainland. Originally a small cape twisting out from the shoreline, it was cut free seven centuries before Christ to shorten Corinthian sailing routes. The island thus formed was little more than an insulated cluster of chalk hills, from which it derived the name 'Levkas,' meaning 'white.'

Of no practical use to man, Levkas gradually became a sanctuary for his gods, its rugged beauty affording both seclusion and propinquity. At its southwestern corner a towering white promontory jutted far into the Ionian Sea, breasting the blue water in Olympian grandeur. This was later to be known as the 'Leucadian Rock,' and close by it the Greeks erected a temple which they tactfully dedicated to Apollo, the

god of righteous punishment. Ilex and cypress trees sloped downward from the temple site to form a shadowed retreat for the entire host of Grecian deities. It was even rumored that heroes of the past fraternized there with the immortals.

The most dramatic of the pagan rites celebrated on the Rock was a ceremony petitioning Apollo. During certain Hellenic festivals criminals were led to the temple and securely bound. Birds were then tied to their prostrate bodies, and with ritualistic fanfare they were carried to the gleaming headland and hurled down to the sea. As frantic wings beat against their fall they plunged toward destruction with hope threading their terror; and the Greeks peering down from the tall cliff were tense with a brief expectancy of their own. If the birds could save the criminals from death, their freedom would be granted in universal rejoicing over the divine pardon thus signaled for all mankind. Since each shrieking death clearly indicated that enough expiation had not yet been made, the celebrants year after year brought sacrificial victims to Levkas, simultaneously testing and propitiating the Olympian mood. Paths were worn smooth through the wooded hills, and word of the macabre rites spread over all Greece.

Soon the irreverent were visiting the island, and some of them discovered the isolated promontory ideal for purposes of their own. They would return, then, furtively, and make the Rock the setting for deaths not determined by Apollo. The stories of such surreptitious tragedies often branched out from a meager spine of fact into the wide range of fiction, and one of them became the island's most famous legend.

According to this tale, Aphrodite occasionally appeared on the island of Lesbos during the lifetime of her renowned disciple Sappho. On one of these visits the goddess of love engaged an aged boatman named Phaon to ferry her across the Aegean Sea. During the voyage she disclosed her identity to the astounded old man, and after regaining his wits he gallantly refused payment from so exalted a passenger. Since he offered a favor where most would have sought one, Aphro-

dite acknowledged his humble courtesy by transforming him into a youth of godlike beauty.

Upon returning to Lesbos, Phaon immediately attracted Sappho's alert attention. But with divinity brightening his memory the rejuvenated boatman was impervious to her charms. Such frustration was more than the great poet's passion could endure, and in a frenzy of despair she fled to Levkas and leaped to her death from the Leucadian Rock. It may have been the majestic loneliness of the spot that drew her there for her final appointment. Or perhaps she had hoped Aphrodite would be resting under the cypress trees to be rebuked by the self-destruction of her most loyal priestess. For who after Sappho could sing her praises in such immortal beauty? Who less than the Tenth Muse deserved to die for unanswered love?

So went the story which wove itself into the earliest legend of the island.

As the centuries passed, Christianity rose across the Mediterranean; the Dark Ages spread down from the North; and Levkas deserted its classic gods. The slow transition of the Middle Ages modified its name to Leucadia; and modern times — impatient of the old ways — renamed it Santa Maura. A new era was established on the little island and it became a military stronghold, brusquely pragmatic. Fort Santa Maura was built on its northern tip, and foreign soldiers guarded the strait dug by Corinthian seamen twenty-five hundred years before.

But something of the ancient past had survived, too old to be remembered or forgotten. A nostalgic peace pervaded the modern air, making the martial stir on the north coast blatantly self-conscious. Now and then a wanderer penetrated the hills to stare at the crumbled walls of Apollo's temple or walk in the grove where the gods once gathered. And the old legend was still so faithfully repeated that the Leucadian Rock was now popularly known as 'Sappho's Leap.' It was the middle of the nineteenth century; but, as always, the transient present dwindled before antiquity.

During this period an olive-skinned boy was born on Santa Maura. Three mystic wounds were made on his body; gold rings were placed in his ears; and he was named Lafcadio — an immediate derivative of Leucadia. The full name of the fretful infant was Patricio Lafcadio Tessima Carlos Hearn, and his father was Surgeon Charles Bush Hearn of the British Army.

The tyranny of military orders had designated an incongruous bride for handsome Charles Hearn and had given him an eerie little son. But if this seemed arbitrary, he gave it scant thought. Hearn men had served their country with distinction for more than a hundred years, and as an eldest son Charles was merely following that tradition, and finding no fault with it.

Back in 1730, Lionel Sackville, first Duke of Dorset, had crossed the Irish Sea to bring order among the turbulent Celts as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. But the time had not yet arrived for such an accomplishment, and very shortly His Grace was in need of spiritual solace from the Church of England. Accordingly a Reverend Daniel Hearn from his own beloved Dorsetshire was appointed his private chaplain.

After the stormy termination of Sackville's second viceroyalty in 1755, Daniel Hearn's long services were evidently rewarded with the property of Correagh, in County Westmeath. As Dean of Cashel he was at the same time made an official representative of the Church of England on the rebellious island. In this manner the Anglo-Protestant Hearn family was established in Ireland; and from it issued a good line of Anglican churchmen.

Not confining their English loyalty to the cloth, the expatriate Hearns also produced soldiers in each generation, one of them being Charles Hearn's grandfather. He in turn sent eight sons to Spain to fight under Wellington during the Peninsular War, Charles's father commanding the Forty-Third Regiment as lieutenant-colonel. Then in 1842 Charles entered the medical branch of the service and joined the

Forty-Fifth Nottinghamshire Regiment of Foot as assistant surgeon. He had been pointed toward the Army since childhood and his flexible, carefree nature readily molded itself to the required pattern. If his calling created serious complications in his private life, he let it simultaneously free him from many personal responsibilities, no small compensation to Charles Hearn.

To the clerical and military distinctions of the Hearn men, Elizabeth Holmes Hearn, Charles's mother, had brought contributions of her own. The Holmes family — reputedly descended from Sir Robert Holmes, the brilliant English naval officer and leading court favorite of the seventeenth century — was active in the legal and literary life of current Ireland, and Elizabeth's children inherited many artistic tendencies. The eldest daughter, Mrs. Frank Elwood, was an accomplished singer; while Richard Holmes Hearn, the second son, studied painting as a familiar of the Barbizon group and lived in Parisian studios most of his life. The rest of her children wrote, sketched, or sang with unanimous enthusiasm and varying degrees of skill.

These scattered honors and accomplishments within his paternal family were to impress Lafcadio Hearn very little; but there was one distinction which would please him mightily. This was the 'Romany thumb-print' which appeared sporadically through succeeding generations. The mark was esteemed as proof of gypsy descent — possibly from the Northumberland Francis Hearn, 'King of the Faws' — and Hearn later held it a personal triumph that he, too, had inherited the peculiar birthmark. There seems to be some justification for the family's claim, since Daniel Hearn had come from England's West Country where 'Hearn' was a well-known gypsy name, deriving from a root in many languages meaning, 'to roam, stray, become outlaw.'

By a curious coincidence the etymology of Lafcadio Hearn's name, *Leucadia — to wander*, discloses the basic explanation of his history. For there was an essential exotism in his blood that prodded him two-thirds of the way around the world.

No land could satisfy him. No people were wholly his own. And that exotism came as a heritage from his mother, the darkly attractive Rosa Tessima.

As a worshiper of classical Greece, Hearn found it pleasant to strengthen his tie with that ancient glory by describing his mother as 'Grecian' or 'predominately Greek.' But in doing so he was obscuring the truth, for evidence points to the fact that Rosa was more specifically of Maltese origin, which presents a significantly different picture. The disputed little island of Malta has been colonized down through history by the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Greeks, Vandals, Goths, Arabs, Normans, French, and English. A distillate of all Mediterranean history, the island's natives have become indigenous only through their racial heterogeneity — their supreme exotism. Against such a background Rosa stood acutely hybrid; and ill chance joined heredity in bringing her exotism into even sharper focus through her son.

'We are all compounds of innumerable lives,' he once declared. 'The dead are not dead — they live in all of us and move us, — and stir faintly in every heartbeat.'

While the challenge of strange blood in a warm bright land was a prime factor in Charles Hearn's attraction to Rosa Tessima, the psychological groundwork for his marriage had been laid in Ireland. As an instinctive gallant, the smartly uniformed soldier had serenaded many light romances with his guitar and good tenor voice. Amateur verse embellished with graphic cupids and arrow-pierced hearts had also celebrated his passing fancies. But shortly before he embarked for Ionian service in 1846, such pleasant dalliance had yielded to more authentic and desolating emotions. He had become genuinely devoted to a lovely Dublin girl named Alicia Posy, only to find her parents sternly opposing his attentions. His lack of money was the reason for their disapproval, and their opposition mounted with his importunings. Alicia was promptly surrounded with more acceptable suitors, and shortly before his departure for Mediterranean duty, she was

safely married to George John Crawford, a rich, more home-abiding suitor who was given the categorical blessings of her family. It was pure nineteenth-century melodrama.

Hitherto all Charles had wanted of life had been easily his, and he might have had some lingering hope to sustain him as he left Ireland had not the wedding been timed so cruelly. As it was, he sailed in jealous despair, defenseless before this first surprising blow of misfortune. But morbid introspection was no part of his nature, and by the time he reached his destination he was done with futile brooding.

The soldiers of the British Protectorate were garrisoned on the island of Corfu at the northern end of the Ionic chain, with the medical staff quartered in the city of Corfu, which still bore signs of early Greek, Roman, and Byzantine occupation. As Charles learned his way through the steep, twisting streets of the ancient little city, Dublin each day grew more remote; and he felt a defiant satisfaction as his painful memories began to fade. Welcoming whatever diversions his new life might bring, he soon found adventure to fit his mood.

The Ionians still entertained Oriental ideas concerning the proper conduct of their women and restrained them as best they could from public view. Smarting under British rule, they had further reason for shielding them from the gaze of soldiers of Her Majesty, Alexandrina Victoria. The Britishers in turn accepted this as a challenge, and by circumventing the watchful animosity of the Ionian men they found their ensuing conquests doubly zestful.

In Charles's state of emotional convalescence these exciting flirtations were an answer to vindictive prayer; and Greek and Italian love-songs made a nice addition to his Irish melodies. Nor did he have trouble finding Ionian girls willing to be flattered by his attentions. The tonic of their open admiration revived his pride and self-confidence, and Alicia no longer tormented his thoughts. But an overdose of a prescribed tonic can prove too heady a stimulant, and eventually that overdose was administered.

The soldiers on holiday ranged over the entire Sept-Insula,

and on some such excursion Charles met Rosa Tessima, whose family lived on the island of Cerigo, the southernmost of the Ionic group. Rosa's dark, flashing exotism was in vivid contrast with Alicia Posy's blonde loveliness, and Charles was drawn magnetically. Rosa was as promptly captivated by the handsome young officer whose dashing appearance was matched by the spirited court he paid. It was flame to tinder when they met, and with Corfu and Cerigo more than three hundred miles apart their meetings were accented by their clandestine infrequency.

After a time Charles was transferred to the fort on Santa Maura, much nearer Cerigo, and he was able to see Rosa oftener. This led her family to discover their love affair, and her brothers were enraged. Their anger seems to have been no mere expression of native hostility, however, for word went back to Dublin that they openly accused Charles of having destroyed their sister's good name. Members of the Hearn family scoffed at this and believed the trouble was purely financial. Quite likely, they said, Rosa's brothers were unwilling to give her the dowry demanded by Ionic law. Not, it must be added, that the Hearns were in favor of the romance. And Rosa's dowry could have involved very little money at the best.

But whatever the truth of the matter, the Tessima men were thoroughly incensed, refused Rosa permission to marry, and warned Charles away from the house. The story goes that he took their words too lightly and one night they discarded threats for better weapons and lashed him with their knives. — Perhaps now the foreign soldier would keep to his barracks! To complete the unverified tale, Rosa herself nursed him back to health, hidden away in a barn.

With his marriage wishes being opposed a second time, Charles decided upon definitive action. Rosa needed no urging to help him maneuver an elopement, and the defiant young couple fled to Santa Maura where they were married. The date of the marriage is not known, but Charles had at last achieved matrimony, and his triumph over the bel-

ligerent Tessimas increased his sense of fulfillment. As for Rosa, army-post life was a new excitement, and her prestige as the wife of a popular and capable officer completed her happiness.

The couple's first child was a son, who died shortly after birth, and neither his name nor birth date was ever given by the Hearn family. But on June 27, 1850, Lafcadio was born in Santa Maura; and two months later his name was written in a small Bible Charles's grandmother had given him many years earlier. The inscription was in Romaic-Greek and was probably put there by Rosa. It read: 'Patricio, Lafcadio, Tessima, Carlos Hearn. August 1850, at Santa Maura.'

This was Lafcadio's first entry in the annals of the Hearn family; and there would be but few more. Already his strange baptism had minimized his paternal ancestry and marked him a Mediterranean child.

For the next eighteen months life was pleasantly carefree for the young Hearn family. But in the latter part of 1851, England agreed to withdraw part of her forces of occupation and Charles was assigned to duty in the West Indies. His new post in Grenada provided no accommodations for his wife and child, and with Rosa still estranged from her family he could think of only one solution to the problem. He would have to send her and Lafcadio back to his mother in Ireland. His father was now dead, and his mother had moved to Dublin to be nearer other members of the Hearn and Holmes families. His admiring relatives had always looked upon him as the color-bearer of the family and in the present emergency he decided to rely upon their continued fond indulgence.

A letter to Ireland duly brought his mother's approval of his plans, although both of them were aware that everything had not been said. Next he wrote to Paris asking his brother Richard to accompany Rosa to Ireland; but here there was more frankness, and matters were not settled so quickly. The bohemian Richard had not always been a diplomat in past skirmishes with his family, and he tried to beg off from any part in the admittedly delicate undertaking. — Couldn't

Charles make some other arrangement? Apparently Charles could not, and after much cajoling Richard promised his co-operation.

In the spring the Hearns went to Malta for a farewell visit with Rosa's relatives, and from there Charles went on to the West Indies to report for duty. Rosa and Lafcadio sailed for France, where they were met and anxiously reassured by the smartly continental and strikingly bearded Richard. Since his sister-in-law spoke only a few words of English, he engaged a Miss Butcher as interpreter and companion. Besides teaching English to Rosa, Miss Butcher was to help her become adjusted to the bewildering changes she faced. — Perhaps advise her about clothes, social customs, and that sort of thing, Richard very likely suggested.

After writing discreetly cheerful letters to Dublin, the worried artist set forth with his three chargelings like a nervous general starting a major offensive. But he did not take them directly to Dublin. No, indeed. In England they were bivouacked at Liverpool while he advanced alone to reconnoiter. As he crossed over to Ireland and rode through the Dublin streets to his mother's house, he scarcely knew what to expect.

In Gardner's Place the gentle monotony of Elizabeth Hearn's well-ordered life was shared by her unmarried sister Susan. Still cherishing the manuscript of a novel hopefully titled 'Felicia,' Susan Holmes was also faithful to a diary where each day a Biblical quotation atoned for the mundane happenings she recorded. — The aging sisters making a round of afternoon calls, a new maid to be trained into the household routine, some of the numerous relatives in for tea. At first, undoubtedly, the two women had been thoroughly dismayed over the prospect of accepting into their home a bizarre, uneducated foreigner from an obscure social level. An obscure foreigner who was, in addition, a Catholic. Not a Papist, to be sure, but a member of the Greek Orthodox Church and a Catholic even so. But to refuse to accept her would have been to deny Charles help when he most needed

it, and the entire Hearn clan had therefore approved their decision to welcome Rosa and offer her both shelter and affection. In this vicariously charitable mood, then, they were awaiting her; and, as Susan said, might Almighty God bless and prosper the whole arrangement.

On July 28, Susan wrote in her diary that Richard had arrived from Liverpool and was obliged to return within a few hours. She added that they expected to see him again within a few days, accompanied by Charles's wife and son. The circumspect little journal gave no further details of the conference between Richard and his family, but apparently he had hurried back to England satisfied with the good will awaiting his charges.

Next day a letter arrived in Dublin from Charles (Dear, beloved fellow!) in which he expressed concern over the safe arrival of his wife and child. And on the first of August, Susan's entry read: 'Richard returned at seven this morning accompanied by our beloved Charles's wife and child, and a nice young person as attendant. Rosa we are all inclined to love, and her little son is an interesting, darling child!'

The entry was a masterpiece of friendly intention and tactful omission. Judgment was obviously being suspended. Upon sight the scrawny two-year-old was designated 'Rosa's son,' but that was to be expected. His Ionic dress, swarthy little face, and the earrings glistening through his long black hair emphasized his strange blood. He seemed even more foreign than his mother.

Yet, on the whole, this first meeting was a propitious beginning, and the flurry of niceties attendant upon it deceived everyone into premature optimism. Especially the two brothers. Beaming with thankfulness, Richard saw Rosa comfortably settled in his mother's home, wrote the glad news to Charles, and went happily back to Paris. Far away in Grenada Charles breathed a fervent 'Good old Dick!' and eased back into masculine complacency, turning his mind to his soldiering.

'Veritable blunderers,' Lafcadio Hearn later characterized

all Hearn men, himself pre-eminently. But his father's mistakes all stemmed from his Ionic marriage; and both Charles and Rosa were now to begin expiation for that error.

Rosa had few qualifications her husband's family could admire, and the alien, socially superior atmosphere of the Hearn home put her to further disadvantage. Barred from spontaneous conversation by her disparate language, and with no inner resources, she lounged about the house unhappy and disheveled. Each night Lafcadio crossed his fingers before her and repeated in Maltese-Romaic, 'In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' Beyond that she gave him little attention other than to punish him when he irritated her.

Unfortunately she was extremely slow in learning English, and Miss Butcher did nothing to forestall the otherwise avoidable misunderstandings that arose. Quite to the contrary, she reported all of Rosa's tactless complaints to the Hearns and subtly distorted their own words in her interpretations to her mistress. With her undisciplined emotions played upon by such trouble-making duplicity, Rosa grew more and more disagreeable, and efforts to bring peace into the household were needlessly complicated. Soon it was clear that harmony was out of the question, and it would be difficult to say who was more to blame than that 'nice young person,' Miss Butcher.

But if the Hearns saw themselves failing with Rosa, there was still her little son, a more amenable problem. They suggested no change in his odd appearance, but being good Britons they immediately began teaching him English to replace the hodge-podge dialect of his limited baby-vocabulary. One of the most successful in this undertaking was Charles's talented sister Mrs. Elwood, whose affectionate patience won the adoration of her shy little nephew. Soon she was telling him nursery tales wreathed in gay pantomime, and at bedtime she sang him weird little lullabies which he never forgot.

Rosa could not compete with such a gracious sister-in-law, and the unfavorable contrast she made did nothing to en-

courage her. Nor did the sight of dripping, gray Dublin cheer her. Four years earlier Ireland had been devastated by a potato famine, and a great emigration had been started to escape the poverty and tyranny at home. In 1852 the natives were still leaving, over two hundred thousand sailing that year. In the capital the poorer classes, especially the Catholic element, were still living in what Shelley had called 'one mass of animated filth.' In Rosa's nostalgia the depressing scenes around her took on an unbearable permanence, and the sharp cliffs and golden sun of Cerigo seemed lost forever. Life was empty and static, a monotone of bleakness.

The forlorn young woman found her only comfort in Mrs. Justin Brenane, another of Elizabeth Hearn's sisters. Mrs. Brenane was a rich, childless widow who habitually dressed in stiff black silk and closely resembled the Queen Victoria of later years. With a retinue of servants to manage her large house in Rathmines, Dublin, the generous old lady frequently sheltered guests whose only claim to her hospitality lay in their religion. For Sarah Brenane had been converted to Catholicism by her husband, and after his death her fervor had become a consecration. This set her somewhat apart from the Protestant Hearns and gave her a compassionate interest in Rosa.

Seeing the situation in Gardner's Place growing steadily worse, Mrs. Brenane at length suggested that Rosa and Lafcadio live with her in Rathmines. Since Charles had always been her favourite nephew, this new arrangement would be in no way a severance of relationships but merely a readjustment; and the Hearns willingly gave it their approval.

After Rosa, Lafcadio, and Miss Butcher were taken to Rathmines, Rosa for a time was much happier. Each day, weather permitting, a gleaming barouche was driven to the door and she was taken for a drive with her elderly friend. She also attended Mass and occasionally went shopping with her, and before long they could understand each other without Miss Butcher's constant assistance.

Lafcadio was put in the hands of a competent English nurse,

and presently his grandaunt came to a momentous decision. When Justin Brenane lay suddenly dying he had gasped; 'Sally, about the property ——' and had then stopped breathing. Priests thought he had tried to say he wished the estate left to a Catholic heir, and Sarah Brenane accepted that interpretation of his wishes. Now she proposed to make Lafcadio heir to the Brenane fortune if she could take charge of his training and educate him in the best Roman Catholic schools.

Whatever the Hearn family may have thought of this, Rosa immediately gave her consent; and if Charles had any religious scruples they were overcome by more practical considerations. Aunt Sally's guardianship would give Lafcadio a permanent home, the best of care, and financial independence when he was grown. As matters stood, he and Rosa would never be able to do half so much for the child.

'As matters stood.' How they really stood no one could know. And no one could foresee how they would develop. Atavistic traits webbed in an inscrutable past were too secret, and the conflict of personalities and the play of circumstances were too compelling and unpredictable.

Lafcadio was now three years old, and the discordant rhythms and reflexes that ran along his taut nerves were to a large extent still hidden. But already he began paying for his strangeness. Since Rosa would not alter his Ionic appearance, he became an object of scorn for Irish boys to point at. Their robust jeers increased his natural timidity until even his playmates found it good sport to torment him when no protector was near.

One day a little girl challenged his puny strength in a childish tussle, and easily threw him. As forfeit she tied his hands behind him and led him across the garden to her house. Taking him up to an ill-tempered parrot, she shoved his head against the cage, jostling it roughly. With staccato cries the parrot snatched his long, straight hair and pulled savagely each time he tried to jerk away. Humiliation was added to the sensitive child's fear and anger, for he knew that this was happening to him because he was not like other small boys.

His wild shrieking and the parrot's raucous screams brought the hilarious girl's mother to the scene; but she, too, laughed at the little foreigner's predicament.

Though childhood's small cruelties are usually forgotten, this incident gave Hearn the first of many persecuting memories which became the beads of a constantly fingered rosary. Long after his hair was too thin and gray to attract parrots' beaks he said bitterly: 'I suppose [that girl] is the mother of men today, — great huge men, perhaps generals.'

While her son was receiving his bruising introduction to Irish childhood, Rosa's discontent again asserted itself, but this time more ominously. Her conduct began hinting at mental aberration, and one day during a fit of hysteria she tried to leap from a window. This convinced the Hearns that she was predisposed to insanity, although the harassed woman's actions may well have been only the results of an aggravated neuroticism. But sick nerves or unbalanced mind, her mental state grew increasingly alarming; and the Hearns were vastly relieved when Charles wrote in August of 1853 that he was soon to sail for Ireland. Earlier that summer he had contracted yellow fever when an epidemic swept across Grenada, and he was now to be invalided home for an extended rest.

With other convalescent soldiers, the overworked, fever-weakened officer presently embarked for the long voyage north; and during desultory talk aboardship he was given a piece of news his family had evidently seen fit to withhold. A fellow officer told him Mrs. George John Crawford was now a widow, and still living in Dublin.

Seven years earlier Charles had left Ireland with Alicia dominating his thoughts, and now old memories were resurrected as he returned. But there was also the unhappy situation awaiting him at Rathmines.

His ship docked at Southampton in October, and the pleasure he felt upon arriving in Dublin subsided when he saw Rosa. The long, wretched months had cost more than she could afford to pay. The coarsening touch of discontent

was thickening over her brunette features; her animation had sharpened into rancor; and the high gloss of her appeal was gone. It was almost as though he were greeting a stranger. But before he had time to rally from this shock, he received another.

The day after his arrival was Sunday, and he, Rosa, and Lafcadio dined at his mother's, where all the Hearns gathered in to welcome him home. Through the Great Mercy of Almighty God they again had Charles in their midst, and the house hummed with their rejoicing. That night, however, they 'were plunged into deep affliction by the sudden and dangerous illness of Rosa, Charles's wife. Susan was telegraphically brief in recounting the dramatic climax to the day's celebration, adding only: 'She still continues ill, but hopes are entertained of her recovery.'

With that gallant euphemism both the entry and the diary abruptly ended. The tactful spinster probably found herself unequal to further chronicling, for by all common standards of the day Rosa had suddenly gone stark mad. Jealousy, chagrin, disappointment — whatever had unbalanced the spasmodically irrational woman, her accumulated resentment and unhappiness now took their toll in a complete breaking-down of mental control. Periods of grim silence were followed by moments of such wild delirium that she had to be denied the privileges of the sane.

The next few months were a nightmare for Charles; and though Rosa slowly returned to a normal state, the threat was still there. Even if it had not been, Charles would have had little hope; for Rosa in Dublin was not Rosa in Santa Maura. Beyond each hour's immediacy there was no direction to his living, and he took what comfort he could in old scenes and old friends.

Lafcadio was uneasy in his father's presence because he never saw him smile, but it was nonetheless a special occasion when Charles one day took him for his afternoon walk. After a gratifying purchase of plumcakes the petticoated little boy was surprised to find himself being taken much farther

than his nurse had ever allowed him to go. His father seemed to be thinking about something else, and his face looked worried. Watching some rainclouds following along the rooftops, Lafcadio trotted along quietly, eating his cakes and wondering why no rain came down.

Finally his father led him up the steps of a tall house, and when they were inside Lafcadio saw a golden-haired lady coming down the stairway. She spoke to his father and then stooped and kissed Lafcadio; and he thought her more beautiful than anyone he had ever seen. She had two small daughters who also made a favorable impression by neither laughing at him nor pulling his hair. When he said good-bye, the lady gave him a toy gun and a picture-book which he carried away pressed tightly to his chest, remembering how soft and warm her hands had felt.

On the way home Charles bought him more plumcakes and carefully instructed him to tell no one of their visit. There had been too many pleasant surprises, however, and evidently when the little boy saw Mrs. Brenane he told her everything in tumbling excitement. Instantly, in an amazing burst of temper, she destroyed the gun and the book before his horrified eyes, and his gala afternoon ended in bewildered grief.

Charles had, of course, taken his son to call on Mrs. George John Crawford. Mrs. Brenane had known that he was seeing Alicia, and now that he had taken Lafcadio with him her indignation was brought to an explosive head. — If he wished to flout decency and convention, she could not stop him. But there was one thing she *could* do. So long as she was responsible for his son the child was never again to be taken near that woman! Never!

Nor was he.

After he had regained his health, Charles Hearn was ordered to the Crimean War, probably in 1854, and he was not sorry to get away. He was becoming *persona non grata* at Rathmines, and Rosa's condition did not alleviate matters. She had suffered no more violent attacks, but she was expecting another child and no one pretended to be pleased.

During Charles's absence she gave birth to another son, James Daniel, and evidently the Hearns immediately took charge of him. Little is known of his childhood, but it must have been spent away from Dublin. His brother remembered seeing him only once, and then for no more than a few turbulent moments.

'Father had brought me some tin soldiers, and cannon to fire peas. While I was arranging them in order for battle, and preparing to crush them with artillery, a little boy with big eyes was introduced to me as my brother. Concerning the fact of brotherhood I was totally indifferent — especially for the reason that he seized some of my soldiers and ran away with them immediately. I followed him; I wrenched the soldiers from him; I beat him and threw him downstairs; it was quite easy, because he was four years my junior. What afterward happened I do not know. I have a confused idea that I was scolded and punished. But I never saw my brother again.'

A year and a half of strenuous service in the poorly conducted Crimean campaign brought Charles's regiment back to Ireland in the spring of 1856. It had fought through the battles of Alma and Inkermann and the long siege of Sevastopol, and was now stationed at the Curragh for a well-deserved rest.

The Curragh was a British military post some thirty miles from Dublin, and when Charles rode in to the city his scarlet coat, gold braid, and glistening spurs were a thrilling sight for Lafcadio. To be lifted out of his nurse's hands and taken for a canter about the neighborhood was high adventure. When his father brought officers to dine in Gardner's Place or Rathmines, Lafcadio would play among the shining booted feet under the table or squeeze up onto a friendly lap to watch the men eating. Their deep voices and hearty laughter brought an exciting masculine note into his woman-dominated world.

But however pleasant his son found it, Charles's assignment to home duty only aggravated the unhappiness between

him and Rosa. The situation rapidly became intolerable; and within a few months their marriage was dissolved by mutual consent. Glad to leave her wretchedness behind her, Rosa went back to Malta and the comforting warmth of a bright, familiar sun.

Lafcadio never saw his mother again, but in later life he idealized her defensively. 'My mother's face only I remember, and I remember it for this reason. One day it bent over me caressingly. It was delicate and dark, with large black eyes, — very large. A childish impulse came to me to slap it. I slapped it, — simply to see the result, perhaps. The result was immediate severe castigation, and I remember both crying and feeling I deserved what I got.'

To Sarah Brenane the dissolution of her nephew's marriage was an unpardonable sin. The pious old lady put all the blame on Charles's interest in Alicia Crawford, and he was thereafter denied the house — melodrama still dogging his steps. The Hearns felt this dictum was too severe, and it put a strain on relationships between the two houses, making Lafcadio even more 'Rosa's son.'

The following summer, in 1857, Mrs. Brenane took her small ward to her cottage at Tramore, a seaside resort in southern Ireland. While they were there, Surgeon-Major Hearn was again assigned to foreign service. This time he was to be stationed in India for a number of years, and he came to Tramore to bid Lafcadio good-bye. Had there been no more to it than that, his aunt would have had no objections; but Charles had just crowned his former transgressions with a final outrage. Yet here he stood at her door, as he had so often done during his youth, when no guest had been more welcome. And a soldier's departure could never guarantee his return. She would not permit him to enter the house, but since she could not deny him the privilege of seeing his son she let him take Lafcadio down to the beach for a few farewell moments.

As they walked hand-in-hand along the sandy shore, Lafcadio knew from his father's face that something was

wrong. It bore the same troubled look he had seen when they went calling long ago; and again he was alone with him. In dumb discomfort he heard Charles say: 'She's very angry with me! — She'll never forgive me!'

Lafcadio knew that he meant Auntie, but he tried not to listen. Perspiration glistened where his father's hair was thinning away from the temples and he fastened his attention there when he had to look at him. His feelings were hedged in by uneasiness and fear, and perhaps it was his embarrassed reserve that prevented Charles telling him he now had a stepmother — the tall, golden-haired lady he still remembered but dared not mention. He scarcely realized he was saying good-bye, and he was more relieved than sorry when his father went away.

Charles and Alicia had been married in Dublin a day or so earlier, and with her two daughters they now sailed for India, eleven years after the rejected young suitor had sailed for the Ionian Islands in lonely despair.

From India Charles sent letters back to his elder son, simply worded and printed with a pen for easier reading. He told him many interesting things about the strange land where he was now living, and he related an adventure with a tiger that crept into his sleeping-quarters one night. Each time Lafcadio's grandaunt handed him a letter she would say: 'Remember, child, I don't forbid you to write your father.' But the seven-year-old usually had more exciting things to contrive than the laborious composition of letters. Finally the messages from India stopped coming, and he heard nothing more of his father. Like Rosa, Charles dropped out of his life.

CHAPTER

2

ALTHOUGH Lafcadio was now an orphan in all but name, he gained more than he lost through his parents' absence. For the past four years they had been only remotely identified with his life, and now he was freed from the blight of their self-centred unhappiness. He was also released from the handicap of his outlandish appearance, for when Rosa left Ireland, Mrs. Brenane started dressing him in the proper Dublin fashion. With short hair, long trousers, and little jackets with round white collars turned primly over the neckline, he at last resembled other Irish boys. And he spoke English now, the same as they. His grandaunt even ruled that hereafter the cherished possession of the Brenane household was to be called 'Patrick.' Outwardly he was happily transformed.

An inner change was also taking place, for the young boy was emerging from a uniquely baleful phase of his early childhood. From his fourth year it had been evident that Patricio Lafcadio Tessima Carlos Hearn was inordinately susceptible to the supernatural. What strange preoccupations and vague

fears had survived along his queer ancestral chain can only be surmised from the vivid but fragmentary self-analyses he divulged in his writings. But his inbred exotism was aided in directing him away from the wholesome hardiness of boyhood by three powerful allies. A frail physique, nervous instability, and defective vision.

Invariably coming off the loser in physical competition with playmates, the sensitive child soon learned to confine his nervous energies to solitary pursuits, chiefly indoors. This gave full rein to his morbid imagination and intensified its reactions to the effects of severe eye-strain. He was probably nearsighted from birth, although optical attention was rarely given children and his myopia was not diagnosed until he was grown. By that time his other senses had grown unusually keen as partial compensation for his impaired vision, making his response to life noticeably sensuous. But in early childhood there was little such compensation, and his defective sight played on unstable nerves and weird imagination with terrifying results.

As his fears grew increasingly apparent, the experiences Mrs. Brenane was then having with Rosa urged her to curb as far as possible any abnormal tendencies in Lafcadio, and prevailing psychological ignorance led her into some grievous mistakes. When he was five years old she decided to correct his hysterical fear of darkness by forcing him to sleep in a totally darkened room. Heretofore he had slept in a softly lighted apartment with his nurse close at hand, but he was now moved to a more isolated room which became known as 'The Child's Room.' It was a narrow room with only one tall window in the end, and after he was tucked in bed the lamp was removed and the door closed and locked. As the protecting light and the footsteps of his guardian receded down the hall, the frightened child could see something gathering and growing above him in the night air, and he would scream wildly. Although screaming brought punishment, it also brought back the light; but when this was realized, orders were given to disregard his cries. When he

finally fell into an exhausted sleep, he was easy prey for the tortures evoked by his overwrought nerves.

'Why was I thus insanely afraid?' he wrote in retrospect. 'Partly because the dark had always been peopled for me with shapes of terror. So far back as memory extended I had suffered from ugly dreams; and when aroused from them I could always *see* the forms dreamed of, lurking in the shadows of the room. They would soon fade out; but for several moments they would appear like tangible realities. And they were always the same figures. Sometimes without any preface of dreams I used to see them at twilight-time, — following me about from room to room, or reaching long dim hands after me, from story to story, up through the interspaces of the deep stairways.

'I had complained of these haunters only to be told that I must never speak of them, and that they did not exist. I had complained to everybody in the house; and everybody in the house had told me the very same thing. But there was the evidence of my eyes! The denial of that evidence I could explain only in two ways: — Either the shapes were afraid of big people, and showed themselves to me alone, because I was little and weak; or else the entire household had agreed, for some ghastly reason, to say what was not true. This latter theory seemed to me the more probable one, because I had several times perceived the shapes when I was not unattended; — and the consequent appearance of secrecy frightened me scarcely less than the visions did. Why was I forbidden to talk about what I saw, and even heard, — on creaking stairways, — behind wavering curtains?

'"Nothing will hurt you," — this was the merciless answer to all my pleadings not to be left alone at night. But the haunters *did* hurt me. Only — they would wait until after I had fallen asleep, and so into their power, — for they possessed occult means of preventing me from rising or moving or crying out.'

The 'haunters' were dark-robed figures, intensely alive and capable of growing up the side of the room, across the ceiling,

and heads downward along the opposite wall. Only their faces were distinct, and Lafcadio tried not to see their faces. He would struggle to waken himself by opening his eyes, but his lids were sealed tight. As he lay paralyzed by fear, the atrocious black shapes continually elongated and distorted themselves over his helpless body.

These menacing figures, however, were not the worst experiences in The Child's Room. Dreams would come that made all the air heavy, and Lafcadio would find himself in a large room pitch-black at the ceiling but suffused below in a sombre yellowish glow. He would try to wade through this sinister color, sometimes struggling halfway across the room; but always he was brought to a standstill by some hidden opposition. He could hear voices in the next room and he could see light through the transom above the door he had tried vainly to reach. One loud cry would have saved him, but he could not raise his desperately straining voice above a whisper. Then he would hear something mounting the stairs; the door would slowly open; and a hideous shape would enter, gibbering soundlessly. It would reach out clutching hands and toss him up to the black ceiling, catching and tossing him again and again. Fear had frozen at the first nightmare-touch of the ghostly hands, but a nameless sensation 'like some abominable electricity' would rack him with physical and mental agony until his cries wakened him. For days afterward the coming of night would fill him with cold dread.

Because of his nervousness Mrs. Brenane gave him no intensive religious instruction, asking only that he memorize a few simple prayers. But the invocation Rosa had taught him in his native tongue had now to be learned in English, and he shrank back from the word 'Ghost.' Some careful explanation gave him the idea that the Holy Ghost was white and 'not in the habit of making faces at small people after dark,' but he remained stubbornly suspicious of the word. When he learned to spell it in his prayer-book, the letter 'G' seemed mysteriously formidable.

He was also afraid of the pointed archways of the doors and windows and the deep groinings of the lofty ceilings in the old Irish cathedral where his grandaunt sometimes took him to Mass. But this fear was more acute, virtually transfixing him with terror. As he stared up at the apexes of the high sweeping curves, all kinds of goblins were associated with them in his mind. Yet 'Those points!' was the only explanation he could make.

To introduce Catholic doctrine to such a weirdly hypersensitive child without injurious results would have required more insight than Sarah Brenane possessed. Yet it was not she who inspired a grisly experience that taught him first to fear and then to hate the Roman Catholicism of his youth. That rôle was unwittingly played by one of her friends whom Lafcadio was taught to call Cousin Jane.

Jane was a rich young woman who had recently been converted to Catholicism. With no living relatives, she spent her summers in a convent and lived with Mrs. Brenane during the cold months. She dressed in unrelieved black, and above it the pallor of her face was emphasized by her large dark eyes and wavy black hair. She reminded Lafcadio of the long angels on the French prints in his room — beautiful, but sad. In fact, it was generally known that she had a secret sorrow and had made Mrs. Brenane her only confidante. Had not the tragedy in her life prevented it, she would have accepted the permanent refuge of convent walls.

Although Lafcadio never heard her laugh, she was always kind and at times tenderly affectionate toward him. Her solemnity made him uncomfortable, however, for she seemed to be looking at him and speaking to him from another world. Also, a metallic ring in her low voice irritated him, especially since she persistently cautioned him to be truthful and obedient. No one else talked to him in this manner and he felt she was finding fault with him. At the same time, her patient kindness made him think she pitied him, challenging the defensive pride he was already developing.

He was six years old at this time and his fears of the super-

natural were multiplying under a ban of silence. No one was allowed to tell him fairy tales, and he was strictly forbidden to speak of ghosts.

One dull morning he was sitting on a stool at Jane's feet, listening to her tiresome admonitions. She had branched off on a new theme and was telling him that he must please God in whatever he did. This he must never forget. Above all things, God must be pleased. In gusty petulance he at last broke in upon her and asked why God must be pleased more than anyone else. It was a legitimate question to ask, since for him God was as yet only a name; but his boldness brought catastrophe.

For a second Jane sat stunned by amazement; and then a reflex of shattering indignation cut through her habitual calm. Her self-control crumbled in rising hysteria and she snatched Lafcadio to her lap, whirling him about to face her.

'Is it possible you don't know who God is?' she cried in a high, jangled voice.

Lafcadio stared at her in astonishment and answered 'No,' scarcely above a whisper.

'God Who *made* you?' she continued in shrill vehemence. 'God Who made the sun and stars and trees and flowers and *everything?* You don't *know?*'

By this time the child was too alarmed to answer at all. Her white face was bending down over him, and her eyes gleamed fanatically. He grew rigid under their menace as her hands tightened on his shoulders.

'You don't know,' she went on wildly, 'that God made your mother and father and you and me and *everybody?* You don't know about *heaven and hell?*'

Then came words that seared into the boy's consciousness.

'Think of it! — Send you down to hell, *alive*, to burn *forever!* — Always burning, screaming and burning! Never to be saved! — Your whole body burning forever and ever! — *Screaming and burning, and no one to help you!*'

Lafcadio cringed between her hands, horror-stricken by the unbearable picture she was painting.

Suddenly she stopped, choking and gasping for breath. Then she kissed the terrified boy, burst into tears, and hurried from the room.

Lafcadio stood where she had left him. Utterly helpless. There was no need crying out or running away, for the world was gone and he was alone. Hell's fire crackled beneath him and he was going to be burned alive! And he couldn't even *die* — he would keep on burning! God was everywhere and hell was underneath everywhere, and there was no place where he could hide!

At this point his terror became too cosmic for a small boy to face, and a new thought came to his rescue. — Why had Cousin Jane told him all this? He hadn't been afraid as long as he hadn't known! There hadn't been any God or hell to be afraid of until she had told him. — It was all her fault!

With her piercing voice still sounding in his ears, the full impact of his reactions bore down upon her in vicious resentment, and the sickening intensity of his raw young emotions slowly turned into hate. With his whole aching body he hated Jane's pale face, big eyes, and black-clad figure. This gave him something tangible to oppose, and physical reality came back to him. Hell and its God of vengeance were still there, but they were pushed into the background. If brimstone were flaming under his feet, there was still the carpet he stood on. And there was still Cousin Jane who had given him this new, worst-of-all fear.

Until Jane went back to the convent in the spring, Lafcadio defiantly nursed his resentment and hatred. And when she left, he gave them secret expression in the most terrible way he knew. He wished that she would die so he would never have to see her face again. He was afraid even while he worded his awful wish, but after it was done he felt better. — For the time being Cousin Jane had been disposed of, and heroically.

During the summer he forgot Jane entirely, for warm weather meant a long holiday at the shore in Wales or South Ireland, where he spent most of his time in the water.

Swimming was the only sport in which his puny physique was no drawback, and he became an excellent swimmer very early in life. But when he was taken home again and early autumn failed to bring Jane's customary return, he remembered his wish. — Had she found out about it and been frightened into staying away? He hoped so, but he was afraid to ask about her; and each day the possibility of her return spoiled the pleasure of her continued absence.

Late one afternoon he went upstairs to get a toy from his room. The sun had just set and he could see its afterglow through the windows as he climbed the stairs. When he reached the third-floor landing, he noticed the farthest door down the hall seemed to be slightly ajar. This was the door to Jane's room, and it was usually locked when she was away. As he peered through the gathering dusk, the door slowly opened and he was surprised to see Jane come out in her familiar black dress. — So she was back again, and no one had told him!

He waited at the head of the stairs as she started down the hall toward him, but she was looking at something high up on the wall and did not see him. When she was nearer, he spoke her name, but she seemed too preoccupied even to hear him. Her head was still turned to one side and tilted back so far that he could see only her white throat and the curling mass of her dark hair above it. Without a word she walked past him and entered the room nearest the stairway.

Wondering at her strange actions, Lafcadio ran after her and called her name more loudly. She was going around the foot of a large four-poster bed, but now she stopped and turned, as though suddenly aware of his presence. As she bent down toward him, he looked up to meet her smile and ask when she had come back. But the question froze in his throat.

Cousin Jane had no face! — The front of her head was as smooth and round as an egg!

As the child stiffened in an orgasm of horror, her faceless head and entire figure abruptly vanished, like a flame blown

out, and he was alone in the darkening room. He was afraid as he had never been afraid before, and though he opened his mouth to scream, silence gagged him. For a minute's eternity his body was stone, and then a sudden frenzy convulsed every muscle and hurled him sprawling out of the bedroom and down the stairway, over and over to the floor below. This minor disaster gave back his voice, and his cries brought help and sympathy. Only for his bruises, however, for the panic-stricken little boy did not tell what he had seen. No one would believe him, and he would be punished for talking about ghosts. — He might even have to tell about the awful wish he had made!

At the beginning of the cold season, Jane finally came back to Dublin, and the chastened Lafcadio was prepared to be more friendly. He was still fearful, but penitent. Seeing his stubborn hostility gone, Jane welcomed the opportunity to make amends for her unfortunate outburst of the preceding winter. Lest his mood change, she invited him to go walking that very afternoon and stop at the suburban shops to look for toys. This was the most human approach she had ever made and he was sufficiently reassured to accept her invitation.

As they went off through the brisk winter air, she devoted herself to entertaining him, telling him of her trip back from the convent and inveigling him into conversation with questions about his summer at the beach. His fear subsided before her indulgent attentions and before long he was responding in timid bursts of childish enthusiasm. Thoughts of the toy shops ahead warmed his appreciation of this new Cousin Jane.

When they came to the stores, she bought him cakes and toys and pictures, smiling down at him as he debated each purchase in excited self-importance. After they had collected an armful of gifts, they started back toward home with Jane carrying all the packages. By this time Lafcadio's new sense of comradeship was reaching little peaks of spontaneous gaiety and he skipped along happily, eager to get home to examine his gleaming booty.

But as they neared the house, he noticed that Jane was walking more slowly, and he realized that for some time she had been silent. Through the deepening twilight her face looked even whiter than usual, and a chilling thought subdued him. — Might not this Cousin Jane be only the outside shell of the faceless Cousin Jane? — Tonight would the inside Cousin Jane slip out of her shell and glide into his room, chin tilted upward and away so he couldn't see that her face was gone?

Fortunately, before he had time to elaborate on this fantastic idea, they had reached home, and dinner was waiting to be served in the warm lamplight. Afterward Jane played with him until bedtime, and he went to sleep tired and happy. That night The Child's Room was unmolested.

The next morning when he went down to breakfast, Jane was not at the table. Someone said she had a bad cold and was too ill to leave her room. A doctor was called, and after he arrived he sent for another. The bad cold was pronounced consumption — 'quick consumption,' because it had entered its final stages before being detected. Jane had been late leaving the convent because she had not been well.

In the anxious confusion that followed, Lafcadio was instructed to stay away from the sickroom, and he was then left more or less to his own devices. Everyone was sad and seemed to be waiting for something, but no one would tell him what it was. More curious than concerned, he watched and listened; and soon the explanation came to him in gruesome simplicity. He saw two men carry a long wooden box up the stairway and into Jane's room; and presently they carefully brought it back down again and took it away, walking heavily.

The small boy hardly noticed the muffled flare of grief and the subsequent mourning that disorganized the household. The calamity of Jane's death whirled him too quickly into a vortex of terrified forebodings. He had wished never to see her face again, and he had seen her without it. He had hoped she would die, and now she was dead. His wish had come

true exactly as he had made it; and since it had been such an awful wish, awful punishment would surely follow!

'Dim thoughts, dim fears enormously older than the creed of Cousin Jane,' closed down over him. Especially a terror of the dead as evil beings who menaced and gibbered and hated. Since Cousin Jane had been able to haunt him while she was alive, surely no one could protect him from her now that she was dead! — Maybe her God could, but he doubted if He would.

In some way she had found out about his wish and hated him for making it. That was why she had sent her goblin to frighten him. Now that she was dead, wouldn't she hate him even more and send an even worse goblin to haunt him? Anyhow, she had lied to him; for she had assured him over and over that there were no such things as ghosts. Yet the egg-headed thing he had seen had certainly been her own ghost — worse still, her goblin! — Perhaps everyone had lied to him. — Were all the people he knew so afraid of the things that lived in the dark that they didn't dare tell him the truth?

As he floundered among his unanswerable questions, his new terror of the dead Cousin Jane revived his earlier hatred; but now it included the God she had worshiped. He was desperately afraid of both of them, and could escape neither.

Unaware of the fear and hatred she had already bequeathed him, Jane had affectionately remembered him in her will. Her money was left to the convent where she had spent her summers, and Lafcadio received her books. Plutarch, Milton, Byron, Pope's 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey,' Locke's 'Essay Concerning Human Understanding,' 'The Arabian Nights,' and a complete set of the Waverley novels were in the collection. An eclectic range of titles, the best of translations, the finest bindings, but not one religious volume. Her library had evidently been assembled before tragedy sent her to the confessional shriving of the Catholic faith.

Eagerly the seven-year-old boy hunted out the few pictures in the books, and though he learned to read long before he could write, he was disappointed because he could understand

so little of the printing. He asked questions about the pictures, and wanted the books read to him; and he made such an issue of it that Mrs. Brenane realized he had outgrown his nursery books and was ready for something more advanced. She had been holding just such a book in reserve, and it was now given him as his first piece of juvenile literature.

The book was entitled 'The Pictorial Church History' and was often used as an early step in Catholic training. It was the last thing that should have been placed in the child's hands at this time, but his grandaunt knew nothing of his experiences with Jane and she had delayed his religious training overlong as it was.

Soon he could read his new book unaided, and from its pious contents he indeed drew enlightenment and inspiration — but unholy beyond anything his guardian could have imagined. The first few pages introduced him to the pagan gods, and since he had heard of no other god than Cousin Jane's, he found this discovery of monumental importance. The heathen deities were said to have been demons who had assumed the aspects of divinity to defy the Church and lure its worshipers to destruction, and he vaguely imagined them to resemble fairies or goblins. But like the devils and all other spirits which the Church called evil, they were the enemies of Cousin Jane's vengeful God, and he straightway gave them his heartfelt support.

After some hesitation he undertook to pray to these strange new gods, fumbling for words and at first hoping not to be answered too grimly. When no sign of their friendship was forthcoming, he prayed more earnestly, using new words and including all the devils in his supplications. Finally he even ventured to reproach them for not answering his prayers. But however unresponsive they remained, he stood by them in fierce steadfastness, for only the pagan deities and their fellow demons were powerful enough to stand between him and the threats of Cousin Jane.

Before his interest in the ancient gods waned, he one day happened upon a collection of large classic art volumes in a

hitherto unexplored corner of the Brenane library. In their drawings and reproductions the pagan gods were no longer shrouded in the maligning hatred of a sworn enemy, but stood joyously revealed in all their glittering beauty. Their splendor was enhanced by the addition of nymphs and fauns and all the 'charming monsters' — half man, half animal — of Greek mythology.

'Breathless I gazed; and the longer that I gazed, the more unspeakably lovely those faces and forms appeared. Figure after figure dazzled, astounded, bewitched me . . . I adored them! — I loved them! — I promised to detest forever all who refused them reverence. . . . Oh! the contrast between that immortal loveliness and the squalor of the saints and the patriarchs and the prophets of my religious pictures! — a contrast indeed as of heaven and hell. . . . In that hour the medieval creed seemed to me the very religion of ugliness and of hate. And as it had been taught to me, in the weakness of my sickly childhood, it certainly was. And even today, in spite of larger knowledge, the words "heathen" and "pagan" — however ignorantly used in scorn — revive within me old sensations of light and beauty, of freedom and joy. . . .

'The first perception of beauty ideal is never a cognition, but a *recognition* . . . a dim deep memory, — a blood-remembrance. . . . I think that something of the ghostliness in this present shell of me must have belonged to the vanished world of beauty, — must have mingled freely with the best of its youth and grace and force, — must have known the worth of long light limbs on the course of glory, and the pride of the winner in contests, and the praise of maidens stately as that young sapling of a palm springing by the altar at Delos. . . . All this I am able to believe, because I could feel, while yet a boy, the divine humanity of the ancient gods.'

But the young boy's joy in his newly found gods was soon checked. Now that he was learning to read, the books around him were more strictly censored, and his enthusiastic response to Grecian art was discovered. A child prying into the questionable esoterics of classicism was a scandalous

situation, and Mrs. Brenane met it with all the firmness and tact she possessed. Without a word of reproof the books were taken from the library, and for a long time Lafcadio looked for them in vain. When he was supposed to have forgotten them, they were put back on their customary shelf, but only after they had been ridiculously mutilated. The offending nakedness of the Greek gods was corrected with baggy bathing drawers, while various parts of the dryads, graces, and muses had been condemned and obliterated with a penknife. Breastless female figures adorned the pages, and tiny Loves fluttered about with pen-and-ink trousers attached to their chubby bodies.

The child-acolyte was stunned and chagrined, but his interest was by no means lessened. Secretly he tried to reproduce the ruined lines, and though unsuccessful even in his own eyes, he returned to the task time and again. His laborious efforts gave him his first intimation of the classic idealization of the human form; and they also uncovered a marked aptitude for informal sketching. The most important effect of the art folios, however, was psychological. As he patiently worked over his mutilated pictures, his fear of Cousin Jane and her God receded, and until it disappeared his allies stood on Olympus.

Although vindictiveness and self-pity later made Hearn imply that life with 'an old lady who took care of me' had been all terrors and gloom, his last years with his grandaunt had their lighter moments. As his childish fears and morbid imaginings began to subside, his quick mind turned to mischievous pranks that labelled him the spoiled pet of a rich old lady. His guardian earnestly tried to discipline him, but her incomprehensible duckling now threatened to grow equally unmanageable, and he frequently had her so addled that she knew neither when nor how to apply correction.

Apparently she had now become so estranged from the Hearn family that Mrs. Elwood was the only one with whom she remained on intimate terms. At this time the Elwoods lived on a County Mayo estate near Lake Corrib, and Mrs.

Brenane sometimes took her elated young ward across Ireland to visit them.

The oldest Elwood son was an army ensign whose colorful uniform Lafcadio grudgingly admired; but further than that he would not go. His mercurial emotions invited teasing, and the youthful officer enjoyed pinching him to see the sparks fly. But golden-haired, delicately featured Robert Elwood, only a year older than Lafcadio, received his devoted affection.

One August afternoon the two boys climbed a wooded hill behind the Elwood house to look for fairy-rings (matted swirls) in the tall grass. When they found nothing but pine cones, they abandoned the search, and Lafcadio regaled his cousin with a native myth about the magic circles.

One time, he related, a man lay down to rest on some soft grass under a tree. And he went to sleep. Without knowing it, he had lain down in a fairy-ring, and after he went to sleep he suddenly disappeared! The fairy-ring was empty again, and no one could find the man anywhere. After seven long years he came back to his friends, but nobody knew where he had been or what had happened to him, because he couldn't speak a word! And until he died he never talked again. — What was worse, he couldn't eat anything! So of course he died very soon.

Robert nodded understandingly and added: 'They don't eat anything but needle-points, you know.'

'Who?' Lafcadio asked in surprise.

'Goblins,' Robert answered quietly.

While Lafcadio was considering this astonishing piece of news, his cousin saw a harpist approaching the Elwood house, and the boys raced down the hill to hear him sing. Lafcadio expected to see a picturesque old story-book minstrel, but the bold-eyed fellow more closely resembled a day-laborer — sturdy, shaggy-browed, and dressed in coarse corduroy.

Balancing his large harp on the front steps, he swept grimy fingers across the strings and in a loud, growling voice began singing 'Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms.'

This was Mrs. Elwood's favorite melody, and Lafcadio had heard her sing it in such lyric sweetness that the repulsive throat-tones of the unkempt harpist stung him to flaming indignation. He was about to cry out in protest when the man's voice suddenly broke into the throbbing rich bass of a great organ, and the overwrought boy choked back sobs of beauty-stricken emotion while the house and the lawn and the big harp were blurred through a film of tears. At the same time he was frightened by the witchery of the harpist's voice, and ashamed of its power over him.

After the surly musician pocketed a sixpence and strode off with his harp on his shoulders, the boys climbed back up the hill.

'He made you cry,' Robert observed sympathetically.

For a moment Lafcadio was silent. Then he ventured: 'Maybe he's a goblin!'

Robert said no, he was only a gypsy who often came to the house to sing. But that was almost as bad, he conceded, for gypsies were wizards, and sometimes they stole children!

Upon hearing this, Lafcadio was ready to leave their lonely hilltop, but his cousin assured him they would be safe until darkness came. He settled back on the grass then, still under the spell of the harpist's voice, and silently looked down along the road where the man was disappearing toward the distant village. The magic of fairy-rings was forgotten as he contemplated the new magic he had discovered in music.

A year or so later he again felt the force of the undertoning mysteries of music. Mrs. Brenane frequently took him over to Bangor, Wales, for the summer, but this year he and his governess, Kate Mythen, had been sent across alone. They were guests in the cottage of a retired sea-captain who owned a large collection of Chinese and South Pacific curios picked up during his sailing days. Lafcadio was enchanted by the strange objects and the stories the old man told him about them, and he was particularly impressed by a large gold and silver Chinese gong. But when the old sailor struck it several times and the trembling disk moaned, sobbed, and roared in a

reverberating crescendo that beat against the walls of the little room, Lafcadio's pleasure gave way to awe. In the wild cavalcade of sound he seemed to hear great winds roaring through pine forests, the thunder of Thor's chariot wheels, and the crashing blows of the Norse god's hammer on the skulls of Nordic giants. The violent musical scene was so real to him that it never faded from his memory.

When his summers were spent at Tramore, the young boy found other story-tellers to entertain him on the wide stretches of wrinkled sand around Tramore Bay. While sharp winds blew in from the distant breakers and familiar patches of shore-weed were washed by the gleaming swells, lusty fishermen fascinated him with recitals of their prowess. (For family consumption he would garnish these stories with deft footnotes of his own which no amount of reproval or punishment could make more accurate.) Or he would sit beside an old Wexford boatman and listen to legendary tales of shipwreck and early Irish warfare. Occasionally the old man would halt his rambling narrative to point out its proof on some distant cliff where a crumbling watch-tower lifted stark against the sky. At such times the present fell away and Lafcadio lived in the excitement of a valorous past, time's door swinging backward at the slightest touch.

When no fishing boats rocked on the edge of the beach, he went swimming in a sheltered cove. Then water, sky, and the flashing white wings of sea-birds were all that was left of the world. Sunlit water; blue sky; swooping, darting birds; and his own young body tingling with lyric freedom and power. These were the happiest moments of his Tramore days; and his Tramore days were the happiest of his youth.

CHAPTER

3

A FAMILY of Hearns prominently identified with South Ireland Catholicism lived in the city of Waterford six miles north of Tramore. Since they regularly vacationed at Tramore Bay, Mrs. Brenane had been acquainted with them for a number of years. The Protestant Hearns were probably correct in denying kinship with this Catholic family, but one of the Waterford Hearns felt differently about it. This was Henry Hearn Molyneux, a religious bigot *par excellence* who had prepared for a commercial career under Jesuit training. His strict adherence to Catholic observance had won Mrs. Brenane's deep respect, and she willingly accepted his claim of connection with the Dublin Hearns. She also considered him an authority on finance and had put a large sum of money in his Oriental importing business, feeling it an astute move as well as deserved assistance to such a devout Catholic relative of her ward.

When Lafcadio was eight or nine years old, Molyneux

moved his offices to London, and during the next few years Mrs. Brenane occasionally went over to England to confer with him on business matters. Under Molyneux's encouragement she grew to think of him as part of her family, and she sometimes took Lafcadio along, the trips being more in the nature of personal visits.

Until Lafcadio was thirteen he received instruction from private tutors, and when it was time to plan his more formal education, Mrs. Brenane discussed it with Molyneux as her logical adviser. Each year the boy's headstrong capriciousness was becoming a more serious problem, but his grandaunt felt he would become more tractable under firm masculine guidance. She wished him to attend one of England's finest Catholic preparatory schools, and Molyneux agreed that Saint Cuthbert's College, Ushaw, was the best choice. Accordingly, on September 9, 1863, Lafcadio entered Saint Cuthbert's; and life in the Yorkshire hills near Durham became more lively.

The new student signed his name 'Patrick L. Hearn' and would explain the 'L' to no one. This was of little importance, however, for he was promptly nicknamed 'Paddy,' and a troublesome plague of clever pranks broke out on the campus which were easily traced back to Paddy Hearn's instigation. The birch was applied consistently but uselessly. Before long his fame had spread through Low Figures, High Figures, Grammar, Syntax, Rhetoric, and the entire gamut of Ushaw classes. His weird imagination won him the reputation of being 'slightly off his mental balance,' but as the masters' *bête noire* he was overwhelmingly popular with the student body.

One of his classmates later became head of Ushaw and from that high position cautiously wrote of him: 'He was always very much in evidence and played many pranks of a very peculiar and imaginative kind. I should say he was very happy here altogether, had any amount to say, and was very original. He was not altogether a desirable boy, from the Superior's point of view, yet his playfulness of manner and

brightness disarmed any feeling of anger for his many escapades. He was so very curious a boy, so wild in the tumult of his thoughts, that you felt he might do anything in different surroundings.'

How Monsignor Corbishly meant his last remark to be interpreted is not clear; but Cannon D —— was more frank.

'Poor Paddy Hearn! I can see his face now, beaming with delight at some of his many mischievous plots with which he disturbed the College and usually was flogged for. He was some two or three classes below my own, hence never on familiar terms. But he was always considered "wild as a March hare," and the terror of his masters. He laughed at his many whippings, wrote poetry about them and the birch, etc., and was, in fact, quite irresponsible.'

As can be expected in myopia, Lafcadio's nearsightedness was increasing during adolescence, and this was placing him under a greater nervous strain. Since he had neither the physique nor inclination for competitive athletics, his pent-up energies were finding a timely outlet through his instinctive opposition to discipline and restraint. That this should add up to distinction among his fellows was incidental but very gratifying.

In later years rumor hinted that Mrs. Brenane had sent him to Ushaw hoping to prepare him for the priesthood, but this is highly improbable. At least Lafcadio knew of no such plan, and if the school authorities did they were promptly disabused of any desire to encourage it.

He was likewise unpromising from an academic viewpoint and lent himself with little grace to the prescribed courses of study. He was intensely interested in literature, and his first paper in English composition put him at the head of that class, where he remained until he left Ushaw. He was also fond of narrative poetry and quoted bits of verse at the slightest provocation. One of his favorite lines went: 'Like Thor's hammer, huge and dinted, was his horny hand.' Swimming had developed his arms and shoulders, and when he quoted this line he would raise his right fist dramatically, displaying

his impressive biceps. In most studies, however, he made below average grades, applying himself only to what challenged his imagination or curiosity. Roman history reduced itself to the Augustan era and Hadrian's attempts to revive Grecian art. He neglected modern Germany and Scandinavia to concentrate on the glory of the Vikings and the Berserks. Mathematics made no impression on him; but he did not seriously resent Latin, and he was affably co-operative in French.

During his first year at Ushaw his closest friend was another student from Ireland, Achilles Daunt, of Kilcascan Castle, County Cork. When they were together the two boys entertained each other with fantastic tales which dazzled listener and narrator alike.

'Knightly feats of arms, combats with gigantic foes in deep forests, low red moons throwing their dim light across desolate spaces and glinting on the armor of great champions, storms howling over wastes, and ghosts shrieking in the gale — these were favorite topics of conversation,' Daunt later recalled.

Achilles' contributions to such fanciful sessions were never as picturesque as Lafcadio's. But Achilles was a more industrious student, and at the end of the year he went on to a higher class, leaving his eerie comrade behind.

Though he never lacked appreciative companionship, Lafcadio's friendships were not intimate, and he never discussed his family or home life even with Achilles. Frequently he roamed off alone to lie down in the grass and stare up at the soft vastness of the clouds. Their everchanging color and pattern made him wish he could live in the sky and be a part of it. Some wholly innocent remark to this effect called forth an unexpected lecture from a religious tutor on the folly and wickedness of pantheism. This opened a new door to the quickly interested boy, and he announced himself a full-fledged pantheist at the callow age of fifteen. But Ushaw was not the place for the agnosticisms of skeptic youth, and his proud declaration created a furor. Soon he

followed it with another bombshell which made authorities speak solemnly of his 'mental and moral tendencies.'

Being constitutionally opposed to the ritual of confession, he was at times inspired to turn it to his own gleeful purposes. One day he told his confessor, Father William Wrennal, that he had committed a terrible sin. He had been guilty of wishing the devil would come to him in the shape of beautiful women as he had come to the anchorites in the desert. Demurely he added that he feared he would yield to such a great temptation.

Father Wrennal was not given to emotional display, but his reaction was all the tormenting boy could have wished. Beside himself, the outraged old priest rose to his feet and cried: 'Let me warn you! Of all things never wish that! You might be more sorry than you can possibly imagine!'

This seemed to imply that such a wish might in some occult manner be granted. But in opposing the Church, Lafcadio had long since relinquished the hope of support from demonology, and he was not surprised when the pretty succubi all remained in hell.

Although Patrick Hearn was a painful subject to discuss, Ushaw conscientiously reported to pious old Mrs. Brenane; and the simple-hearted woman was aghast at the blasphemy of her grandnephew. When he persisted in his pantheistic allegiance, it became in her horrified mind the final step in his acceptance of atheism. She could see the fires of hell licking at his bedeviled heels, and she mourned his fate in honest despair. Being convinced that he was irrevocably lost to Catholicism, she finally took a drastic step.

Her friendship for Henry Molyneux had grown to include his fiancée, Agnes Keogh; and as a mark of her affection she had settled a five-hundred-pound annuity on the young woman. Earlier in 1865 the couple had married, and she had moved over to Redhill, Surrey, and established her home with them. Now she deeded all of her landed property to the bride, and after providing a five-hundred-pound annuity for Lafcadio made Molyneux heir to her remaining estate.

At first thought it is difficult to reconcile this act with her previously announced intentions toward Lafcadio, although presumably she had entered into no documentary agreement concerning him. When Lafcadio was quite young, she had told him of making a new will, and he had sometimes accompanied her to her Dublin attorney. Other than that, nothing definite was ever established concerning her agreement with Charles. But however surprising it may seem that she should cut the boy off with a small portion of the estate she had promised him in its entirety, one thing should be borne in mind. Sarah Brenane was before all else a devout Catholic intent upon fulfilling her deceased husband's wishes. It was Lafcadio's misfortune to be secondary to that purpose, as he had earlier been secondary to his parents' happiness.

From the conscientious old lady's point of view she was doing the best she could. Since Lafcadio would never be an acceptable Catholic, what could be fairer than to make ample provision for him and leave the rest of her money to the Molyneuxs? They were his relatives, she believed, and they were loyal Catholics who were warming her declining years with the family affection she had long wanted. They were openly critical of her ward, but their disapproval was only too well justified by the dreadful reports she was receiving from Ushaw. Any time now she might be going to join her husband, and her finances had to be ordered against that contingency. She could no longer risk leaving her estate in the hands of a non-believer.

His disinheritance meant nothing to Lafcadio at the time. Money had never been anything to worry about, and he would still have all he needed. Nevertheless, he was jealously resentful of the Molyneuxs' hold on his guardian's affections, and now that she was living with them he rarely left Ushaw at vacation times. This was no particular hardship, however, for there were always other boys on the campus to keep him company.

Although his scrawny frame and weak eyes barred him from many activities, his place among the students was as-

sured. 'Paddy' meant that he was a good fellow and one of the crowd. More than that, he was 'P. L. Hearn, Esq., Ushaw College, near Durham, England, Europe, Eastern Hemisphere, The Earth, Universe, Space, God.' It was the longest address at Ushaw, and it was his by divine right as well as prior composition. So successful an authority-baiter was automatically awarded the students' highest esteem.

Until sometime after his sixteenth birthday, he continued to enjoy this personal triumph as a gratuitous by-product of his eccentricities. Then, suddenly, the curtain was lowered on the first act of his life's sustained drama. During a game of Giant's Stride the knotted end of a rope slipped from a schoolmate's hand and struck him in the left eye, totally blinding it. Mrs. Brenane took him to Dublin for treatment, but nothing could be done to repair the damage.

Although his field of vision was cut in half, the visual loss itself was not great. Without glasses one nearsighted eye was probably more comfortable than two, and very likely myopia was already denying him much of the third dimension needed for perspective. But the psychological effects of the accident were calamitous.

In adjusting himself to monocular vision, he lost all the self-confidence the last few years had given him. With the left side of the world blotted away, he was constantly surprised into awkward uncertainties he could not hide. A painful consciousness of disfigurement lacerated his adolescent pride still more, and for the rest of his life he considered himself 'horribly deformed.' Convinced that he was outside the pale of agreeable normality, he shunned society as he grew older and at times wore colored glasses or wide-brimmed hats to lessen his humiliation. What few times his photograph was taken, he either turned his right profile to the camera, shielded his left eye with his hand, or looked down so neither eye was exposed.

Such extreme sensitivity was unwarranted, for though the blinded eye was pearled and sunken beneath a drooping lid, its appearance was less unpleasant than he imagined.

It did, nonetheless, pull his features peculiarly off balance. He had inherited his father's prominent eyes, and by contrast with the sunken eyeball the right eye bulged disproportionately. 'My cyclops eye,' he often called it. It also assumed a divergent cast in widening his field of vision by veering away from the barrier of his nose. Beneath a beautifully molded forehead his thin, dark face was slightly distorted, and from certain angles it suggested the grotesqueness of a carnival mask. One side shrank back in sightless submission: the other thrust itself forward, the protruding eye staring anxiously aslant.

Lafcadio might have escaped the injury had his sight been normal, but his myopia had hitherto been scarcely noticeable. With the accident occurring on the campus, however, his blinded eye evoked attention, and he was corroded with shame by the curious pity of his classmates. Visual bewilderment did whatever else was needed to quell his high spirits until no vestige of his former bravura remained.

To ward off inquiring glances he dropped out of campus activities and avoided other students as much as possible. Along with hilarious rhymed parodies on Ushaw happenings, he had been caricaturing school life with crudely dynamic pencil sketches. But now his verve for such pastimes was gone. Though he occasionally still honored the only muscular development of his undersized body by decorating his notebooks with strongly flexed arms, it was more to revive than to hymn his pride. Solitary brooding tightened his emotions and produced a nascent bitterness as his only defense.

During this same year Henry Molyneux's commercial expansions collapsed of their own weight, and he was declared a bankrupt in the London courts. This threw what was left of Mrs. Brenane's estate into receivership, along with the property she had deeded to Agnes Molyneux. With her faith in Molyneux still unshaken, she asked that he be appointed receiver to liquidate her affairs, and this was granted.

As a first step in retrenchment, the Molyneuxs and Mrs.

Brenane moved back to Ireland, where they established a less pretentious home at Tramore. The next curtailment was the heavy expense of Lafcadio's schooling. His past records and shattered morale were in themselves reason enough for withdrawing him from Ushaw. — But what was to be done with him?

Tramore Bay would have suited him perfectly, and its natural beauties and varying sea-moods might have lured him out of his despondent introspection. But it was impossible to think of him living under the same roof with the Molyneuxs. In their opinion he was 'a scapegrace and infidel, no fit inmate for a Christian home.' And the young 'infidel' did not hesitate to cross swords with them on their own terms. They had broken up his home, robbed his grandaunt, and poisoned her mind against him — sneaking Jesuits!

There was a kernel of truth in all these charges and countercharges, but if Sarah Brenane's affection for her ward was weakening, it was primarily his own fault. He had destroyed the fond hopes and plans she had built up around him, and he had blasphemed her God. She had done all she could for the incomprehensible boy, and would continue to; but the way ahead was no longer clear. Age was tiring her, and her multiple problems and disappointments were losing themselves in a deepening religious preoccupation.

At this same time Surgeon-Major Hearn was on his way home from nine years' service in India. Mrs. Brenane might therefore have put Lafcadio back under his father's supervision had not 1866 dealt out one more blow.

Charles was being invalided back to Ireland to recuperate from a severe attack of Indian fever. With him on the *S.S. Mula* were his wife, two stepdaughters, and three daughters born to Alicia and him in India. Although the convalescent was cushioned in feminine solicitude en route, he suffered a relapse while sailing up the Red Sea; and on the twenty-first of November he died at Suez. He was buried at sea, his service to the British Empire ending in its twenty-fifth year.

Alicia took her five fatherless daughters on to Dublin, but

Lafcadio never saw his half-sisters; for the rift between Mrs. Brenane and the Dublin Hearns was now complete. He was as far away from his father's people as he would be when the Atlantic Ocean or all of Asia lay between.

Having no relative to whom she might send her grand-nephew, the rapidly failing old lady did the next best thing. She sent him to a former servant as a paying guest. A parlour-maid named Catherine Delaney had gone with her to Redhill and later married a day-labourer with whom she was now living in London. Mrs. Brenane knew she could rely upon Catherine to give Lafcadio good care until some other arrangement could be made. She and her husband were respectable God-fearing people whose small house, though near the docks, was clean and modestly comfortable. Perhaps a complete change of environment and the discipline of plain living would win the boy away from the sinful thoughts crowding his head. In any event, the wholesome simplicity of such a life would offer him little temptation; and it might benefit him physically.

These were peripheral hopes, however, for Lafcadio was sent to London chiefly because there was no other place he might go. His former governess, Kate Mythen, was now Mrs. Brenane's personal maid and nurse; and she, least of all, was optimistic. Either she lacked the traditional affection for a former charge or Lafcadio's blanket condemnation of the Molyneuxs was not justified. For Kate Mythen lived in the Molyneux home until she died thirty years later, and she was never known to criticize the part they played in his life.

No one had expected the half-blind, maladjusted youth to accept this new arrangement without complaint. But it was his vivacity, not his spirit, that had been broken; and when he was pushed too far, he fought back with more than words. — Bundle him off to the slums, would they? Very well, then, he'd *live* in the slums! And he stayed with Catherine no more than was necessary. A few nourishing meals, a night or two in a comfortable bed, and he would disappear until cold, hunger, or exhaustion drove him back.

Achilles Daunt had graduated from Ushaw the year Lafcadio was withdrawn, and the rebellious boy wrote him harrowing accounts of his experiences. He mentioned staying in some forsaken quarter of the city which came to life after nightfall, stealthily and in spasms of violence. Now and then windows were suddenly thrown open and screams would cut across the black silence. Sometimes there were heavy splashes in the river which accepted complacently whatever sank beneath its muddy water. He wrote that from day to day his very existence was threatened, by starvation when by nothing worse.

Although his letters were suspiciously reminiscent of the heroic tales he had fabricated at Ushaw, the hardships he reported were real, even though self-imposed. The longer his absence from Catherine's cottage, the greater the anxiety both there and at Tramore; and he stayed away until his stubborn and vindictive pride was beaten down by privation. Once he entered a workhouse rather than return.

As he wandered aimlessly through London's streets with the new and bitter caution of the partially blind, the city disclosed itself as interminable grimy vistas of gray stone and brick shuddering to the flow of heavy traffic. It was a confused nightmare of gloomy vastness which he measured tiringly, step by step.

At dusk he watched the lights come out over the city until the blatant sounds of the streets died down to a steady hum. Then he would roam off to the Embankment where the black Thames flowed like rippling satin between its banks of stone. Through the darkness the spires of Westminster loomed up on the far side, and across the bridges flame-eyed locomotives pulled their vertebrae of cars in swift thunder. What drama the timid and disregarded spectator could find in such scenes made his bleak vagrancy more bearable. Upon occasion his need for companionship was filled by proxy.

'One summer evening . . . in a London park, I heard a girl say "Good-Night" to somebody passing by. Nothing but those two little words, — "Good-Night." Who she was I

do not know: I never even saw her face; and I never heard that voice again. But still, after the passing of one hundred seasons, the memory of her "Good-Night" brings a double thrill incomprehensible of pleasure and pain.'

His pariah existence dragged on for a number of months, and then Mrs. Brenane made one last effort to reclaim him. Molyneux had been able to save a portion of her estate, and Lafcadio was now put back in school. This time he was sent to France, most likely to Les Petits Précepteurs, a Roman Catholic college at Yvetot, near Rouen. Why a French college was chosen is not known, although Molyneux may have had some personal connection with French Catholicism. In any case, if he had again to enter a Catholic school Lafcadio probably preferred it to be abroad. He had had all he wanted of both Ireland and England.

Having been warned of their new student's tendencies, the French college authorities wasted no time in applying corrective measures. This only increased his rebellious attitude; and at seventeen schoolboy pranks were no longer the answer. But London had chastened him, and he was willing for a time to make concessions. Also, there was the novelty of living in a new country and converting his classroom French into daily speech. And before long, even inside his *pays du nord* Catholic walls, he was conscious of the passionate, free-spirited atmosphere emanating from Paris.

Literary France was at this time dominated by romanticism, with impressionism so new an influence that its definition was still being debated in all the rendezvous cafés. Flaubert and Gautier were at the summit of their powers, and Hugo was writing from exile. Maupassant was sitting at the feet of the masters. Posthumous fame was brightening the name of Baudelaire, and that year Sainte-Beuve ceased to be the foremost French critic when death joined the large circle of his acquaintances. Dumas père would be the next to follow, and with the young Zola pondering his realism he often went down to Nohant to sit by the fireside of George Sand. From every country in Europe the talented and aspiring were being

attracted to the French capital by the triumphant 'art-for-art's-sake' cry. Grim or gay, and with war-clouds darkening, life was challenging and rich with accomplishment.

By his own account Hearn spent two years in France. Apparently he made no attempt to write during this period, but evidence indicates that whenever he could lay hands on a current French book he read avidly, exulting in modern romanticism as he had earlier exulted in the classic beauty of Grecian art. And with a similar undying devotion he gave allegiance to the high literary standards which governed the superb craftsmanship of the French writers. In the absence of any specific statement by Hearn, it cannot be assumed that his literary ambitions were conceived during his student years on the Continent. Quite likely even at Ushaw he had dreamed vaguely of a literary future. Nor is there much reason to feel that he was consciously absorbing literary principles to be later utilized in his own work. But it is certain that while he studied under French supervision he was introduced to the school of writing best suited to his nature and predilections and that later in his own romantic, impressionistic writings *le mot juste* was the underlying principle of his finest technical characteristic — his meticulous artistry in word-detail. During his European years his literary standards were formed, and he stored up inspiration and guidance for his future development.

He did not spend these entire two years, however, in college. Records are no longer available to show how long he remained in the French school, or whether he left with or without the consent of the authorities. But the most reliable version has it that toward the end of his second year he refused to submit longer to Jesuit control and ran away. When he left he took with him part of his 'monk's garb,' which supplemented his meager wardrobe for the next few seasons. He also took along a fully developed hatred of the Roman Catholic Church; but this remained part of his impedimenta as long as he lived.

For the next few weeks the young renegade spent part of

his time, and probably all of it, in Paris. Either because he had forgotten his uncle, did not know his address, or preferred to explore the capital alone, he did not make his presence known to Richard Hearn. But however much the City of Light must have pleased and excited him, he could not go on indefinitely without asking his grandaunt for money; and a peculiar ultimatum was sent from Tramore. Mrs. Brenane was no longer able to manage her affairs, and Henry Molyneux wrote the last few letters Lafcadio received from Ireland. Sometime in the later part of 1869, he was sent passage money and told to go to America. He was instructed to go to Cincinnati, Ohio, where a Mr. Cullinane, a brother-in-law of Molyneux, would be supplied with more money to give him from time to time. No more money would be sent him in France.

Later Hearn maintained that this surprising action, virtually amounting to banishment, was a clear case of 'out of sight, out of mind.' He was convinced that with his grandaunt's death approaching, Molyneux wished to remove as far as possible any threat to his remaining inheritance. Although this was rather a far-fetched theory, no one subsequently advanced a more plausible one. His life had thus far been a series of arrangements, most of them bungling, and this latest one seems additionally inexplicable.

Drastic as it was, though, the youth knew by its very nature that it was final; and his pride would not let him protest. — To have the Atlantic Ocean between him and that Jesuit Molyneux might be a very good thing, indeed! And he'd see how much money he'd take from Henry Molyneux's brother-in-law!

He left Europe hotly resolved to cut all ties with his hated Catholic past; and the first step was to drop the 'Patrick' from his name and be, simply, 'Lafcadio Hearn.'

CHAPTER

4

ENTERING 'the great strange world of America,' the nineteen-year-old immigrant was stunned by Manhattan's bedlam. Its roar deafened him, and he was jostled against walls and into gutters while traffic swirled menacingly at every corner. Neither London nor Paris had prepared him for such a violent onslaught, and after a few days he was less sure of himself. Although he was willing to accept any work he could find, employers were not eager to hire a timid, one-eyed little foreigner with no experience or recommendations.

Of his former life Hearn spoke very rarely after he came to America, and concerning this New York interlude he was even more reticent. For a short while he lived in the home of a scholarly old lawyer and copied his briefs in return for room and board. The pages teemed with Greek quotations which he painstakingly duplicated, each letter a tantalizing mystery. Beyond this it is known only that at times he starved.

Within a few weeks he admitted defeat and decided to avail

himself of the money which should be awaiting him in Cincinnati. Through desperate economies he was finally able to buy a ticket and board an immigrant train for the West; but he had no food with him and no money with which to purchase any. After thirty-eight hours he was growing dizzy with hunger when a pretty Norwegian peasant girl (surely a daughter of gods and Vikings!) gave him a piece of cheese and brown bread. 'Take it. Eat it!' she said in broken English, and he was so ravenous he swallowed the last crumb before he realized he had forgotten to thank her. In painful confusion he immediately tried to express both his gratitude and his apologies; but the girl misunderstood, and he was deluged by such a torrent of Norwegian wrath that he wished himself under the train, under the earth, utterly out of sight forever. — This splendid creature was the first person in America to give him help and sympathy, and she thought he had insulted her for her kindness!

In Cincinnati he inquired his way to Cullinane's house and found the Irishman surly and noncommittal. Molyneux had written him just enough about the undersized ragamuffin on his doorstep to prepare him for the worst. He didn't know why the boy had been shipped to America or who his relatives were — if he had any. He only knew that he had been 'a disgrace to those who had tried to help him in Ireland,' and he wanted no more to do with him than was necessary. But in accordance with his brother-in-law's instructions, he duly handed him five dollars.

A few more times Lafcadio went through the galling ordeal of asking him for money, and each time he received the same amount. Later he said Cullinane then told him to go to the devil and take care of himself. 'I did both,' he added. Cullinane denied this, and said Lafcadio had stopped coming to the house after receiving his first small job.

This 'first small job' was probably his experiment with street-peddling, and it proved worse than no job at all. After a whole day's wandering with a tray of small hand-mirrors, he returned without a single sale to his credit. When

he placed the tray on the curb, he misjudged the distance, and as the mirrors slithered off onto the sidewalk one of them was broken. The Syrian who had hired him cursed loudly over the gleaming splinters, and as pedestrians stopped to enjoy the scene Lafcadio ignominiously fled. When he got back to his room without money for his rent, his few possessions were seized and he was turned into the street. Thus he lost a picture of his father which he had managed to keep with him since last seeing Charles at Tramore Bay.

His luggage had also contained a letter from Molyneux telling him of his grandaunt's death, the faithful Kate Mythen attending her last hours. The letter had not mentioned money matters, but had said there were a number of things to be sent him. They never arrived, however, for Lafcadio had written Molyneux a letter 'which probably troubled his digestion,' and he heard no more from Ireland.

With nothing now but the clothes he was wearing, life became a series of increasingly desperate makeshifts. He was discharged as an underling accountant because he knew nothing about mathematics. For a few hours he was a telegraph messenger; but the other boys, who were younger, laughed at him, and he quit without asking for his wages. What little he earned from running errands or doing odd jobs was needed for food, and he slept where he could.

One cold night an English coachman offered to let him sleep in a hayloft and promised to bring him some breakfast in the morning. Gratefully Lafcadio climbed the stable ladder, rolled his clothes into a pillow, and crept into the fragrant hay. Below him the horses moved in comfortable restlessness, and the warmth from their well-fed bodies penetrated his nest. Above him, through cracks in the frosty roof, he could see stars glittering in the sky.

Each star, he reminded himself, was a sun giving warmth to multitudes of other worlds. Perhaps in some of those distant worlds there were cities, and animals resembling horses, and stables for them with hay overhead, and small creatures (somewhat resembling rats and mice) hiding in the hay. He

could think all these things while the horses below him could not. Yet each of them was worth fifteen hundred dollars, and what was he worth? Also, they had earned their shelter while his came through furtive charity. As he dropped off to sleep, disturbing reflections on his many mistakes and follies welled up through his self-pity.

There were less fortunate nights when he slept in drygoods boxes and sheltered doorways. A rusty boiler in a vacant lot was for a time his only refuge from the weather and the vigilance of the city police. 'The wolf's side of life, the ravening side, the ugly facets of the monkey-puzzle,' were the young outcast's grim reality. But his pride held, and he made no plea to Cullinane or Molyneux.

At length he became a part-time servant in a boarding-house, building fires and waiting on tables in exchange for his meals and a place to sleep on the smoking-room floor. Canvassing, showcard-writing, and similar odd jobs provided enough money for tobacco and a few second-hand clothes.

It was a lean and menial existence, but for hours at a time he could forget its drab humiliations by reading in the public libraries. And now, also, he made his initial efforts as a professional writer. Cheap weekly papers printed a few of his stories, although he waited in vain for payment. His most ambitious publication was a serial relating the adventures of an indestructible man who needed no food. Steel filings and diamond dust gave his hero inner nourishment and outer impregnability.

A year dragged by and another was well on its dismal way before an opportunity to improve his circumstances presented itself. Thomas Vickers, librarian of the Cincinnati Public Library, became interested in the shabby, thin young man who spent so much time hunched over books, and in 1871 he hired him as his secretary. But again Lafcadio proved inefficient in the business world, and he remained in Mr. Vickers's office only long enough to be listed as an amanuensis in the city directory for that year.

The attrition of prolonged failure was reducing him to help-

less despair when at last his affairs took a turn for the better. An humble turn, but in the right direction.

In the backwash of Cincinnati's commercial district a small printing shop was owned by Henry Watkin, a robust middle-aged Englishman with a leonine shock of iron-gray hair and a matching beard. His broad sympathies and the liberality of his views attracted many acquaintances to his inkstained little shop, and one of these had brought Lafcadio to see him during his first months in Cincinnati. The printer had realized that the haggard, uneven-eyed young Britisher was no ordinary youth, and he had immediately taken a personal interest in him. When he asked what the newcomer planned to do, Lafcadio had answered that he hoped to become a writer, but Watkin had advised him to find some practical way to support himself before he tried his pen as an author.

Over twenty years later, Hearn recalled the circumstances of his early acquaintance with Watkin, and some ten years after that, the aged printer again told the story. But both accounts of their earliest meetings were hazy and even conflicting as to dates, and neither gave the chronology of their first two years' acquaintance. Apparently Watkin helped the proud and reticent young man find work now and then, but outer evidence leads to the conclusion that it was not until sometime in 1871 that their intimate friendship actually began.

When Lafcadio first came to Cincinnati, chance acquaintances had tried to help him, but had quickly become exasperated with his neurotic timidity and total lack of practical qualifications. Since Hearn always thought of himself as English rather than Irish, Henry Watkin's greater patience may have been colored by sympathy for a beleaguered compatriot. He, too, had come to America as a young man, and knew the price of such a transition. His interest in Lafcadio had steadily increased, and now that the youth had thoroughly demonstrated his inability to find suitable work, the printer offered to teach him his own trade. If Lafcadio was

willing to act as errand boy and general helper, Watkin would let him sleep in the back room of the cluttered little shop and see that he had three meals a day while he was learning to be a printer.

Grateful to rise above the status of boarding-house servant, Lafcadio gladly accepted the offer and straightway became part of the Watkin 'steam book and job printing' establishment. Through the days he worked beside Henry Watkin, and at night he slept on a pallet made of paper cuttings in the little back room. Often the printer sat talking with him far into the night, and a shelf of books on the wall gave him further companionship.

Watkin introduced him to the works of the German novelist Hoffmann and explained the doctrines of Fourier, Saint-Simon, Hegel, and Kant. He listened respectfully while Lafcadio expounded theories on literature, and he was deeply impressed by his strange imagination. Soon he was calling his eccentric young protégé 'The Raven' because his gloomy views and morbid predilections for the weird and uncanny reminded him of Poe at his best — 'or worst, as you might say.' He was mindful of his extreme sensitivity and patient with his difficult moods and high temper; and when nothing else would do, a firm 'Don't be a fool' usually restored order. He accepted the young man's idiosyncrasies as part of his intellectual promise, and his tolerance quickly ripened into a paternally indulgent affection.

Lafcadio responded with filial devotion, 'Dad' Watkin supplying his early manhood with the comforting masculine companionship his romantic soldier-father had been unable to give him in childhood. With the English printer he was now entering upon the longest friendship of his life, and for the first time since he left Ireland he had a sense of home.

Although he was wearing 'a large pair of magnifying glasses' at this time, typesetting caused him too much eye-strain, and Watkin soon shifted his instruction to proofreading. When he felt his apprentice was worthy of hire, he found a position for him with one of his friends, a Captain L.

Barney, who owned and edited the *Trade List*, a commercial paper. Euphemistically, Lafcadio was 'assistant editor' of the *Trade List*, but actually he was a man-of-all-work under Barney's personal supervision. One of his duties was to solicit advertisements, at which he was an immediate and outstanding failure; but he also edited copy, acted as mailing clerk, and made himself generally useful. And occasionally he wrote articles for the staid little journal. They were rarely suitable for such publication, but Captain Barney took a personal interest in the odd young fellow Watkin had recommended, and he allowed some of these offerings to be printed.

One day readers rustled the pages in surprise upon seeing a madcap proposal for crossing the Atlantic in a balloon aided by a floating buoy. In later years, as Hearn's imagination was abetted by a curious blend of scholarly and scientific information, he put forth visionary speculations of a far more startling nature. But this comparatively prosaic idea of a trans-Atlantic balloon flight has been remembered — although it was probably borrowed from Poe — because it was the first of many journalistic sensations with which he shocked and titillated Cincinnati.

Sometime in 1872 Captain Barney's assistant editor seems to have taken umbrage over some minor happening, and he left the *Trade List* to become proofreader for the Robert Clarke Publishing Company. Already having a stout regard for the sanctity of an author's manuscript, he was an unusually conscientious proofreader and insisted upon typographical accuracy. He also discovered many discrepancies between American and English methods of punctuation and undertook to sponsor a local reform. His superiors were unmoved by his suggestions, however, and he succeeded only in winning the name 'Old Semicolon.' In many places he preferred semicolons to commas or periods, and his own writings were later to be peppered with them.

While he was finding his way into print through the unlikely columns of the *Trade List*, the idea of doing free-lance

writing for the Cincinnati newspapers had come to him. But this would necessitate calling on editors, and he had put the dread prospect aside. Naturally shy before strangers, it was virtually impossible for him to face anyone of importance. The violent transition of his adolescent years had left him painfully conscious of his inadequacies and at the same time suspicious of a world before which he had no self-assurance as support. The idea of free-lance writing simmered for a number of months while he read proof on others' copy, but finally his own urge for expression conquered his timidity.

The Civil War had left the nation's Fourth Estate well populated with quondam military officers, and Colonel John A. Cockerill, editor of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, was among them. The *Enquirer* was one of the city's leading newspapers; and Colonel Cockerill had no trouble in managing its newsroom. Although he had a Mark Twainian sense of humour, he was a furious dynamo exercising a tremendous drive over his reportorial staff; and his sarcastic profanity, like his energy, was equal to any emergency or crisis.

When Lafcadio had finished his initial article, he elected to venture first into Cockerill's presence; and his heart was pounding as he started. His courage accompanied him to the top of the stairs outside the *Enquirer* editorial rooms, and there it deserted him. Only his stubborn confidence in his article kept him from fleeing incontinently. Tense and wretched, he paced up and down the hall, trying to marshal enough strength to open Cockerill's door.

Suddenly the door opened from within, and the Colonel himself stepped out, unwittingly cutting off a headlong retreat about to be executed. For a moment Lafcadio stood flattened against the wall, staring up through his big spectacles. Then in a barely audible voice he asked if contributions to the *Enquirer* were ever paid for.

Curious and amused, Cockerill assured him that all accepted articles were paid for, and he invited him into his office, where he promised to consider whatever his caller had to offer. According to the editor, Lafcadio then pulled a manuscript

out from under his long coat, tremblingly laid it on a table, 'and stole away like a distorted brownie, leaving behind him an impression that was uncanny and indescribable.'

When Cockerill read the manuscript, he was astonished by its excellence. No brownie had ever written like this — and in his experience no young reporter had, either! He did not hesitate over accepting it.

This was probably in late October, and after a few more acceptances Hearn came in with a long, ambitious review of the Gareth and Lynette episode of 'Idyls of the King.' The *Enquirer* printed it in installments on November 24 and December 1 and 9, 1872. In it the twenty-two-year-old critic declared that, in gathering together the Arthurian legends and 'adorning them in the jeweled garb of poetry,' Tennyson had produced the only great national poem of his people and would 'henceforward forever' be the standard historian of Arthur's times. Arthur's times, he pointed out, were the most romantic and chivalrous of the English race, and remote enough to allow the mystic and mythical to take their place beside the natural and probable without 'that uncomfortable sense of the mal-apropos generally induced by the employment of the supernatural in modern literature.'

The review was thoughtful and well documented, but it was no attempt at ivory-tower meditation. And its enthusiasm for the 'Idyls' did not include the appearance of this latest one. 'The subject of the narrative,' it said '— the adventures of a promoted scullion in charge of a pert snubnosed Miss — is not romantic, and is related in a language so completely complicated that it all seems like a first-class parody on the "Idyls of the King." Words of the author's own coinage are so tangled in with forgotten forms and phrases that the structure reminds the reader of the carvings on the great gate at Camelot. New things and old co-twisted (as if time were nothing) so inveterately that men grew giddy gazing there.'

For Mid-Western journalism in the eighteen-seventies this was a remarkable piece of work; and Lafcadio had been wise

in his choice of subject. During his student years he had 'learned more English from Tennyson' than he had learned in any other way, and when the new 'Idyl' was published, he was ready to speak with originality and force. That the *Enquirer* had been willing to give him voice was his first important victory.

When he started working for Captain Barney, Lafcadio had given up his paper-shavings bed, but his unoccupied hours were still being whiled away at Watkin's shop. Often when he stopped by and found 'Dad' gone, he would slip an amusing note under the door, a droll little raven usually serving as signature. Sometimes there was no message at all, only a small bird from whose expression Watkin could guess what his caller's mood had been. The printer was still his only intimate friend, and the two had rejoiced together over the acceptance of his first newspaper article. His Tennyson review brought more rejoicing in the little back room of the printing shop, and in January 'Mortuary Literature' was his most celebrated sale. During the next few months Cockerill accepted more articles, and by summer Lafcadio was a regular space-rate contributor to the *Enquirer* and no longer proofreading the writings of others.

The new feature-writer was installed in a corner of the Colonel's private office, where he gave him no more trouble than a bronze image. For hours at a time he sat at his table with his long, thin nose almost touching the paper as he scratched away with his pen. Sometimes he had as many as twelve or fifteen columns in a single Sunday edition. This was during years when the *Enquirer* never carried over sixty columns and usually boasted only forty-eight — advertisements, editorials, and all.

Cockerill himself was very considerate of Lafcadio, but his odd appearance and abnormal shyness invited a response of flip buffoonery from some quarters, and it was quickly evident that an unkind remark cut him like the lash of a whip. 'Sensitive as a flower,' the brusque Colonel put it. But such a phenomenon did not interfere with his value to the

paper, and Cockerill was proud of the scholarly tone his new find gave to the *Enquirer*.

This distinguishing touch was imparted by more literary criticisms, including one on Henry James, who was then practically unknown, and by a variety of recondite articles based on painstaking research. Fascinated by any aspect of folklore, Hearn wrote 'The Hebrews of Cincinnati,' which widened out into an unusual account of racial history and customs. 'Caste' was the first of his many writings on Hindu topics, and in 'Ancient and Modern British Amusements' he worked in an opportunity to editorialize on practical jokes. Seldom succinct or objective, he displayed remarkable flexibility in approaching or digressing from any given subject, and a wealth of interesting and colorful information adorned the topics he treated.

Presently he began drawing material from the city slums, and then his writings carried a quite different reader-appeal. The impressionistic realism of such stories was so ruthlessly sincere that it seemed to come from the darkly lawless quarters themselves. Cockerill was surprised to find that, while he was 'attuned to the beautiful,' he could 'write beautifully of things that were neither wholesome nor inspiring.' Here was a new kind of sensational reporting for an eager public, and to take full advantage of it the editor made him a regular member of the staff.

This took place in the early weeks of 1874, and it was another step forward for Lafcadio, but a temporary setback for Cockerill. If the gnome-like little reporter was sent out on an interviewing assignment, he generally returned empty-handed and exhausted from pacing the streets while futilely trying to muster enough courage for the interview. As time went on, he necessarily overcame some of this timidity, but his best writings were never based on material obtained in an interview. After a number of disappointments, Cockerill compromised by allotting him the market reports, lectures, and civic meetings where he could be blissfully inconspicuous while taking his notes. This left him considerable free time

for the features he wrote on any topic or event that struck his fancy.

Often he persuaded Watkin to go with him when he gathered his material at night, and his search seldom took him to the places where polite society gathered. In later years he said 'iron circumstances' kept him from theaters and concerts, but he might have added that he was neither at ease nor especially interested in such places. In the sediments of poverty he hunted for the brutalities and frustrations which appeared to him the most vivid realities of existence. Passionately sensitive to beauty though he was, during these years he dealt as ardently with its antithesis. This was scarcely, as his detractors claimed, because he was willing to sell his soul for journalistic success. He was as eager as any to win acclaim, but there was no question of sacrificing his integrity in the process. His greatest literary motivation was his imagination, and he consistently sought out whatever afforded it the most stimulation. Whether through subconscious masochism, sadism, or a perverse balancing of the emotions, during this period he was as strongly attracted by the horrible and revolting as by the beautiful. From a literary standpoint, the resultant writings were the least important phase of his Cincinnati news-work; but sensationalism overshadowed all else that he wrote in Ohio.

In writing his sensational news-stories, it should be added, he was introducing nothing new to American journalism, but merely following the dictates of his time and profession. American life as covered by the daily press was crude and violent, and journalism recognized few prohibitions in reporting it. The East was soon to have its shocking Henry Ward Beecher trial, the West its Indian uprisings and the ghastly Brigham Young-Mountain Meadows Massacre trial; and in the Mid-West words were plain and blood was cheap. In Cincinnati horse-pistols, cotton-hooks, dirk knives, and bars of pig-iron were handy weapons for quick tempers. Old women were attacked by drunken young ruffians. Pickpockets circulated among mourners at public funerals. A frozen foetus or

a grisly scalp might be found along the river bank; and if a woman drove a nail deep in her skull to stop severe headaches, the incident was published when accidentally discovered, but largely out of deference to lay-interest in medical phenomena. To catastrophic fires, train wrecks, riots, panics, and all manner of suicides and murders, nature during these years added tornadoes, cloudbursts, floods, landslides, withering heat and record-breaking cold. Newspaper headlines were worthy of the events they announced, and the news-stories endeavoured to be worthy of the headlines. Only Hearn's, on the whole, succeeded.

In the spring of 1874 he became interested in the merits of cremation as opposed to burial, and he wrote two provocative articles on the subject. That same year he exposed the shuddering cruelties of abortionists, told of the activities of ghouls in local graveyards, and wrote about dealers in second-hand tombstones. 'A Dance of Death' was inspired by his observations in a dissecting-room. He visited the midnight missions, charity hospitals, and the city morgue. And he gathered material on pickpockets, counterfeiters, and escaped murderers. But his masterpiece came early that winter.

During the second week of November, Cincinnati was convulsed by a horrible killing which became known throughout the nation as the 'Tan-Yard Murder.' The murder occurred on Saturday night, too late for the Sunday papers, and Sunday morning Cockerill assigned Hearn to write a feature on it. John Chamberlain, another *Enquirer* reporter, went along to gather the routine data; and H. F. Farny, the staff artist, accompanied them to draw sketches. Now the rival papers would see what the *Enquirer* could do, given the chance! And the rival papers assuredly saw.

On Monday, the ninth of November, Hearn's story was spread over the greater part of the front page — nearly five of the six columns. This in itself was not without precedent; but there were five illustrations, four by Farny and one by Hearn, and no one could remember illustrations in a week-day edition. Headlined 'Violent Cremation,' the sensational

story shocked the most blasé newspaper men and sold out all editions and extras of the triumphant *Enquirer.*

The murder had been atrociously inhuman and the contributing circumstances loathsome and repelling. Hearn wrote of it in indignant horror, but he spared no details. He told the repugnant story behind the slaying and deduced what had happened during the various stages of the killing. He mentioned three vicious watchdogs strangely silent during the murder, and a piteously terrorized horse in whose stall the crime had been partially consummated. He also described the remains of the murdered man: crumbling bones strung together by half-burnt sinews and glued one upon the other by hideous adhesions of half-molten flesh — the eyes cooked to bubbled crisps in their blackened sockets, the skull exploded at the top like a gun shell — yellow brain fibers writhing like worms in the coroner's hands. His story was quoted from coast to coast, and it established his name in enviable glory in the annals of Cincinnati journalism.

The following Sunday, in 'The Quarter of Shambles,' he described the district in which the murder had taken place. For blocks in every direction, he related, slaughter-houses, rendering-plants, soap and candle factories, hogpens, and tanneries loomed up through an atmosphere heavy with the stench of animal filth, decay, and death. Along narrow, twisting streets and alleys the gutters ran with blood, while rats propagated and grew gigantic among the dungheaps. At night the street lights shone like yellow goblin eyes above the broken, slimy pavements of the ghastly labyrinth.

These two stories earned the little one-eyed writer recognition as the *Enquirer's* star reporter, and his salary was raised to twenty-five dollars a week. He was at the same time elevated to the position of police reporter to insure no suitable material escaping his macabre pen. Now he had less time at his disposal, and it was as well that a personal literary venture he had entered upon during the summer months had been recently concluded, even though in failure.

Farny had secured a small financial backing and invited

Hearn (with his own savings) to join him in bringing out an odd little weekly publication. It was called *Ye Giglampz* in honor of Hearn's large spectacles, and the first issue was dated June 21, 1874. Farny governed the editorial policies and drew the illustrations, and though Hearn's name was not used in print, it was an open secret that he was literary editor. What he jestingly termed 'that ephemeral bantling of artistic and journalistic enterprise' carried the young men's views on art, literature, politics, and current events; original stories, editorials, and cartoons; and translations from Parisian magazines and clippings from *Punch*. The generously illustrated little journal was dedicated to 'art, literature, and satire,' but its enthusiastic editors had dulled the keen edge of their satire with too much belaboring, and this misfortune they had required time to discover. Nine weeks, to be exact. Four times during those nine weeks Hearn had withdrawn from the enterprise and returned to his table at the *Enquirer*, because Farny insisted on editing his copy and 'mangling' his English. But *Ye Giglampz*, nevertheless, had been a gay adventure, lost savings and all.

Shortly afterward Farny had probably been instrumental in bringing about another lighthearted episode, which gave Hearn notes for a story titled 'Beauty Undraped. What a Wicked Reporter Saw in an Artist's Studio.' But as 1874 drew to its close, the *Enquirer's* star reporter was losing his taste for levity. Sensationalism had not confined itself to his writings during the past year, and the repercussions of a scandal in his private life were beginning to torment him.

At times Lafcadio Hearn's revolt against convention was more courageous than wise, and more instinctive, perhaps, than courageous. In making his adjustments to a world which held no prescribed place for him, he was worse than helpless. As he went his impulsively rebellious way, he seldom made a move that did not further complicate his life. His most notorious step was taken in the summer of 1874, and it came as the culmination of circumstances dating back to the summer of 1871.

While he was Mr. Vickers's secretary at the Cincinnati Public Library, he lived at the Haslam boarding-house at 215 Plum Street, in a rundown neighborhood where both whites and Negroes lived. He was never at ease among the other boarders, and he fell into the habit of spending his evenings in the kitchen talking with the cook, a pretty mulatto named Alethea Foley. She had a rich creamy complexion, and the crispness of her black hair was her only marked Negroid characteristic.

A little younger than he, Alethea gave him his first feminine companionship in America; and since he, too, had known a servant's place in the kitchen, they were not without certain mutual experiences. After telling her something of his background and family — filling in with romantic inaccuracies, for he appears never to have known even his complete name — he listened to her own story. She had been born a slave, reputedly the daughter of her white master; and after a few years she had been given to a relative of her owner as a wedding gift. There she had started her training as the personal maid of her new mistress, and her life had not been hard. But the Civil War and the emancipation of slaves had separated her from all protection and guidance, and developing into an attractive young woman had not helped. A white man named Anderson had found her mulatto youthfulness too tempting, and she had become the mother of a quadroon son. The child, William Anderson, was at this time four years old, and she was working in the Haslam kitchen to support him.

To Hearn this story was more pitiful than degrading, and his gratitude for Alethea's friendship was genuine. There is no denying, however, that it was increased by her enticing comeliness and the out-of-bounds allure it held for him. All through life he was to be attracted by darkly tinted skins. Saffron, amber, bronze, golden brown, even black — there was something in the deeper skin-tones that appealed to his frankly sensuous nature. In Cincinnati, as time went on, it was easy for the two young strays to find in each other a consolation which took little heed of racial distinctions.

After Hearn's apprenticeship with Henry Watkin, he moved back to the Haslam boarding-house. There is no record of how long he remained there, but as his fortunes improved he did not lose his interest in Alethea. He continued seeing her while he worked on the *Trade List* and later as proofreader for the Robert Clarke Publishing Company, his circle of friends being no larger than it was in 1871. When he became a member of the *Enquirer* daily staff, he had acquaintances of his own class and calling, and money enough for decent living; but even this did not encourage him to break off his relations with Alethea. He remained devoted to her, and in the late spring of 1874 he proposed marriage to the surprised mulatto.

Some of his friends said he was caught in a flair of quixotic chivalry. The more critical insisted he merely wanted to flaunt his heterodoxy. Three or four fellow-reporters, including John Chamberlain, who often walked home with him from the *Enquirer* late at night, tried to dissuade him. And Alethea later said that she herself pointed out the effect such a marriage would have on his reputation. But Hearn was not to be swerved. He could now afford to support her, so why shouldn't they get married? His complexion was as dark as hers, if not darker, and he was supremely indifferent to what society might think — if it bothered to think at all. Evidently he was also indifferent to the state law which prohibited such unions.

He asked G. Mortimer Roe, a newspaper friend, to go with him for the license; but when Roe learned who the bride was to be, he refused. Although the courthouse records for that period were later burned in a riot, Hearn seems to have secured the license himself, apparently through withholding the fact that Alethea was a Negress. After his death Alethea's claim to a widow's share of his estate was denied on the grounds that such a marriage could have been performed only by fraud; but the court felt compelled to believe her testimony and supporting witnesses. She stated that Hearn also had difficulty finding a minister willing to perform the ceremony, but eventually a coloured Episcopal divine named John King had con-

sented to use his authority. A Negro woman, one of Alethea's friends, was willing to let the ceremony take place under her roof, she and another coloured woman agreeing to act as witnesses. Secretly, then, and thus attended, Hearn and Alethea made their vows to each other on June 14, 1874.

Although the twenty-four-year-old reporter refused to consider social condemnation, he had not entered into this union without serious thought. He planned to assume all the financial responsibilities of marriage and support not only Alethea but her son. Having himself been separated from his parents, he felt a sympathetic concern for the little quadroon Willie. Since their wants would be simple and their life together would force them to live in a raffish neighborhood, he was confident his *Enquirer* salary would suffice. And by moving into a shabby little house at 114 Longworth Street, next door to the Adams Express stables, this proved to be true.

However lamentable the misalliance was, Hearn undertook it with good intentions, and for a few months he was happy. Alethea's associates provided him with a piquant new interest, and he began writing studies on American Negro life. He also started tutoring Willie, now of school age; and he gave him the spur of ambition which later made him an educated and successful printer among his own people. But it was not in the nature of things that his happiness should last.

Prepared to handle any scandal but its own, a newspaper knows anxious moments when a member of its staff is disgraced. Should it scoop rival papers by announcing its own misfortune, or will professional courtesy, appealed to, magnanimously uphold the dignity of the press? Evidently the *Enquirer* fell between two stools, for it neither exposed its star reporter nor succeeded in persuading rival papers to refrain from doing so. Comment in the local newspapers, however, was more or less veiled.

But after the crescendo of Hearn's gruesome writings reached the peak of his Tan-Yard Murder stories, personal reactions to the muted scandal grew more pronounced. He was

no longer an odd little hidden reporter, but something of a celebrity, and gossip concerning his private life increased. By the end of the year acquaintances were shunning him, and some of his friends avoided him entirely. Watkin remained steadfastly loyal and the two men were still frequently together. Together, too, they viewed the gathering clouds.

As social condemnation bore down more heavily, Hearn answered with outbursts of waspish temper; and scathing diatribes against cultural organizations and 'drawing-room, hot-house etiquette' appeared in his news-stories. Perhaps this encouraged Cockerill's decision no longer to risk the Foley scandal besmirching his paper, for sometime during the last days of July, 1875, he discharged his finest writer.

Up to this time Hearn had gone his way in bitter contempt; but now his morale was shattered. — If public opinion could govern a man's life to this extent, why go on? He would never give up Alethea to satisfy the mean-mindedness of local busybodies. But if he was not to be allowed to earn his living, if he was again to be forced into the streets and starvation, there was only one other thing to do. It is said that two or three still-loyal friends arrived at the Vine Street Bridge as he was preparing to leap into the Miami Canal.

One of these men was Jerry Cochrane, a likeable young reporter on the *Cincinnati Commercial*, another of the three morning newspapers in Cincinnati. After promising to help the distraught Hearn find other work, Jerry went to Edwin Henderson, his city editor, and pleaded his friend's cause. Fortunately Henderson was a gentler man than Colonel Cockerill, and in a better position to overlook Hearn's private transgressions. The gossip, already an old story, would die down now that it had brought about Hearn's dismissal from the *Enquirer;* and at the moment the *Commercial* was certainly in need of distinctive writing. Not averse to gaining from a rival's loss, Henderson reorganized his staff and on the first of August made Hearn his new police reporter.

In the *Commercial* columns Hearn's writings continued along

their same general lines, contributing, despite his official designation, to every category of reporting but the financial news. During the first weeks he wrote comprehensive reports on the disastrous effects of cloudbursts which visited Cincinnati; and he carried the heavy load of publicity for an Industrial Exposition and the opening of new zoological gardens. He handled news for such public institutions as the workhouse, orphan asylums, and the Old Men's Home; and when the Covington Stars from across the Ohio River introduced organized baseball to Cincinnati, he was called upon for the first story. He related tales of local ghosts and haunted houses, and he composed brief prose-poems as well as writing 'Notes on the Utilization of Human Remains.' He pursued esoteric research on any topic or aspect of a story that interested him, and his was the best medical knowledge in journalistic circles. When he was not busy with routine police work or special assignments, he often chose an unnewsworthy object as a focal point and wove around it pertinent curiosa of literature or history until he had accomplished an article of intriguing interest and artistic merit.

He also offered more stories on the slaughter-house district, 'Halcedama' being a frightful account of slaughtering technique almost too harrowing to read. In telling of consumptives who went to the Jewish slaughter-house to drink fresh blood for its curative effects, he confessed that he himself had drunk a glass of the 'crimson cream' fresh from a severed vein, and had found it delicious.

Although this story encouraged fantastic innuendoes which he probably enjoyed, there were other rumours he could not have found so pleasant. No newspaperman denied his literary ability, but his strange predilections coupled with the Foley scandal had made him lose caste among the more conservative writers. His disposition made matters worse by arousing little confidence, less understanding, and only the most forbearing of friendliness. Some of his colleagues claimed he would sacrifice every humanity to develop his art, and they told painful stories of his 'spontaneous lickerishness.' One time, they

said, while investigating a murder, he 'skated' in a pool of blood where the victim still lay.

Many of the specific charges against him were undoubtedly true, although professional jealousy played its part in maligning him; for factual reporting could never compete with his highly impressionistic writings. In describing a murder or suicide, he minimized routine data to concentrate on a blood-stained flower or the skilful technique which left only a delicate rim of scarlet where the bullet had gone in to the heart. Hearn, his associates grumbled, could write anything on God's green earth, and the editors and public would accept it.

If this was not true, Edwin Henderson was at least a far more indulgent editor than most. He gave Hearn *carte blanche* in following his own inclinations, and since at this time they led him into a study of the Negro race, much of his best work was done in that field. Some of his stories he picked up while going about with Alethea. Others were the result of purposeful investigation.

He became acquainted with a self-confessed victim of voodoo and stretched the story into a record of secret poisons dating from mythological times. He attended Negro theatricals and told of the fashionable white people who were escorted to the performances by policemen. He prowled through the gaslit chiaroscuro of Bucktown where outcast whites and Negroes lived in criminal degradation and motley-tinted creatures sprang up from the borderland life of miscegenation. And he watched Negroes juba-dancing along the levees and studied their half-savage, nostalgic simplicity. Their vices he pronounced for the most part acquired, and their virtues original.

In 'Levee Life' he presented the melancholy, immoral, rollicking songs of the black stevedores working on river boats between Cincinnati and New Orleans. The following paragraph concluded the long article.

'They know of no other life; they can understand no other pleasures. Their whole existence is one vision of anticipated animal pleasure or of animal misery; of giant toil under the

fervid summer sun; of toil under the icy glare of the winter moon; of fiery drinks and drunken dreams; of the madness of music and the intoxication of fantastic dances; of white and dark mistresses awaiting their coming at the levees, with waving of brightly coloured garments; of the deep music of the great steam whistles; of the torch-basket fires redly dancing upon the purple water, the white stars sailing overhead, the passing lights of well-known cabins along the dark river banks, and the mighty panting of the iron heart of the great vessel, bearing them day after day and night after night to fresh scenes of human frailty, and nearer to that Dim Levee slope, where weird boats ever discharge ghostly freight, and depart empty.'

Edwin Henderson held such copy as this sufficient reward for the indulgence he extended his often exasperating police reporter. Yet Hearn's most famous *Commercial* story was not written about Negroes. One day three alert steeplejacks suggested to Henderson that he send a reporter along that afternoon when they climbed the tower of Saint Peter's Cathedral. They were going up to remove some temporary decorations from the cross, and from that height, they told him, a most striking view of the entire city could be obtained. Henderson saw the possibility of a good story, although not the one they suggested, and he gave the assignment to Hearn.

As the four men climbed the creaking wooden stairs spiralling up the rough stone walls inside the tower, the *Commercial* reporter shivered appreciatively and thought of the unusual notes this adventure would yield him. With gas torches to light the way, they ascended through lacing nets of cobwebs to the great rusty bells of the cathedral clock, crawled through rafters and bracing beams, and finally stood in a narrow octagonal room with small louver windows. Hearn looked out at the river flickering silver in the south, and at the yellow canal creeping away to purple hills in the north. He looked down at the sheer precipice of stone below him, looked up at the two cornices twenty-five and fifty feet above him, and at the tall, bare peak of the spire reaching another fifty feet into

the sky — and fervently wished himself back in the *Commercial* news-room.

Climbing out the window, he ascended sickeningly swaying grappling ladders, feeling all the while as though the tower were reeling, and was hauled up to the cross with a block-and-tackle. The steeplejacks persuaded him to sit on an arm of the cross itself, strapped to it, and as his head cleared, he gazed about in all directions. Above the smoke and evening mists the sky seemed very near; and sounds came up from the city like echoes from another world. But his ethereal sensations were suddenly interrupted when one of the climbers grasped the stone cross and rocked it back and forth, shaking him violently on his perch.

'Stop!' he shouted in terror. 'For God's sake, *stop!*'

'It's perfectly safe,' the steeplejack assured him, grinning happily. 'I shook it just to show you how safe it is.'

Hearn would have preferred to forgo such reassurance, but a few moments later he allowed his straps to be unfastened and he capped his experience by cautiously standing up on the arm of the cross and for a breathless second extending his arms wide, two hundred and twenty-five feet above the earth.

The story he wrote of this giddy ascent to the cross of Saint Peter's became almost as well known as his Tan-Yard Murder story. That he wrote only one paragraph on the panoramic view from that vertiginous height was characteristic. As Henderson had anticipated, his whole body had been alive to the sensations of the climb, and the recording of those sensations made his story famous.

A number of moot questions have arisen concerning what Lafcadio Hearn did or did not see on certain occasions — how much information his sight supplied and how much was fabricated by his imagination. These points can never be satisfactorily settled, for ophthalmology does not lend itself readily to generalizations. Furthermore, myopes become educated to a dimness of vision with which they can accomplish much more than can be readily understood. Also, it is said that their vision may be spasmodically cleared, and this

may explain Hearn's occasional boast that he could see distant objects with hawklike sharpness. It is likewise worthy of note that no record exists of his visual descriptions having been contradicted by anyone viewing the same object or scene.

That colour played so large a rôle in his writings is easily explained. He possessed an extremely high colour-sensitivity, and while myopia blurs outlines and details it lets colour come through undimmed, giving it greater comparative value.

As for the help supplied by his imagination, Hearn himself confessed it to be a great factor in his impressionistic, interpretative writings. Sometimes he was even willing to admit his nearsightedness a blessing in disguise, since it shut off many of the distractions of the outer world.

His blinded eye was a constant source of mental anguish, and his useful eye during the last half of his life caused him a varying amount of physical pain. Since his poor sight was also a harassing handicap in his daily life, its effects cannot be minimized. To a large extent, indeed, it fashioned both his life and his writings. But speculation over which details in his writings were the result of purely visual information is little more than an academic pastime. His remaining sense-perceptions were so keen, and his mental reactions so invariably called into play, that he did little purely visual reporting. When he did, his contemporaries never challenged it; and his meticulous attention to detail gives, rather, the impression that his handicap only urged him the more anxiously to accurate description. During his years in Cincinnati his myopia had not yet reached its maximum development, and since he was wearing glasses, he was probably meeting the full demands of his work without too much difficulty.

CHAPTER 5

In 1876 America was still in the grip of a panic which had started three years earlier, and economic distress was everywhere in evidence. But Hearn's personal fortunes had run counter to the national trend, and had he been even moderately thrifty he would have been in comfortable circumstances. His tastes were simple, he still wore second-hand clothes, and books were his only extravagance. But thrift was not in his nature. If he was strict with himself and saved a few dollars, they were sure to vanish without leaving a trace.

During the next year a grave political crisis would claim national attention, but again his personal life would hardly be touched by the broader course of current events. Within his private immunity he would be busy with events and crises of his own.

In June, 1876, the National Republican Convention was held in Cincinnati, and Rutherford B. Hayes, governor of Ohio, was nominated for the presidency. Immediately an acrimonious campaign flamed across the continent with the

Ohio city as its Republican headquarters. During the same sweltering weeks Cincinnati was the setting for a United States Centennial Exposition, and all city reporters carried an extra load of work. Hearn was assigned to exposition publicity, and during his work he became reluctantly involved in a romantic friendship.

The wife of a prominent local physician was in charge of the Oriental exhibits and supplied him with information for many of his articles. She was a woman of culture and secure social position, and though she was many years older than he, she developed a personal interest in the far from prepossessing little writer with his shabby clothes, drooping mustache, and nervous hesitancies. But the years from sixteen to twenty-six had not graced Lafcadio Hearn with easy mannerisms toward women. While he had inherited his father's gallant tendencies, he had none of Charles's bright dash as a necessary concomitant. His diffidence before women could be thrown into precipitate flight; and his life with Alethea was added reason for the half-tones and quarter-gestures of his touch-and-go romance with the Cincinnati matron.

At first it was a purely platonic friendship, conducted largely through notes and letters. The physician's wife admired Hearn's writings, and he admitted himself human enough to enjoy her too lavish praise. He also admitted her to be his first contact with polite society since boyhood, and he begged her to forgive his social awkwardness. On her birthday he even spent a quiet Sunday evening in her home with a small group of her friends. But when her interest grew more personal, he tried to discourage it.

She must not pity him, he insisted; for however it might seem, life had not been particularly cruel to him. If she knew, she would realize that much of the fault had been his own. — No, there was no way in which she could help him. At the moment he was doing very well, and he would be doing even better but for a certain escapade.

Though he was unfailingly grateful and confessed that he felt toward his gracious correspondent 'like Prosper Mérimée

to his inconnue,' he was amusingly cautious. His letters began 'Dear Lady' and seldom ended with a more intimate closing than 'Very respectfully yours.'

'Your last kind letter makes me in some sort ashamed of my diffidence and coldness,' he wrote her. 'Yet you must be aware how peculiarly I feel myself situated, — constrained, watched everywhere by a hundred eyes that know me, hemmed in with conventionalities of which I only know the value sufficiently to have my nerves on a perpetual strain through fear of breaking them. I am not by nature cold, — quite the reverse, indeed, as many a bitter experience taught me; and I beg you to attribute my manner rather to overcaution than to indifference to the feelings of others. . . . You have only seen me on my best behaviour; perhaps you might think less of me under other circumstances.'

This only brought a warmer response, and shortly he was hearing from his Dear Lady almost daily. Sometimes he received two or three notes within twenty-four hours; and she was soon displaying all the foibles of a woman in love. Her letters were filled with tender anxieties and unreasonable requests, while his own were patient and kind, but firm. Usually he wrote to her at the *Commercial* office late at night, after he had made his last round of the police stations, and brain-fag and self-consciousness allowed him to say things which she frequently misunderstood. After a number of such skirmishes, and a few returned letters, he wrote whimsically: 'I cannot sit down late at night without saying something outrageous; and I must be possessed by the Devil of Heterophemy.'

Even so, his letters were growing less formal, and he was seeing his fond admirer oftener.

'You may hear many things which on the impulse of the moment might affect you unpleasantly; but you need never yield to such an impulse. I am very well known in the city; and you might often hear people speak of me, but you must not think foolish things, or dream annoying dreams therefore. . . .

'What a funny little bundle of pretty contradictions your letter is! How can I answer it? By word of pen? No, not at all. I must only say that I like you quite as much — well, at least nearly as much — as you say that you wish. I won't say "quite," because I don't know myself, and how can I yet know you?'

Before long, however, he knew her better and was handling the situation more gracefully.

'I have still your letter, — I fancied it might be asked for again, but I do not like to return it, dear Lady, — I had rather make a Gheber sacrifice, and immolate Eros, a smiling and willing victim, to the White Lord of Fire.'

Sometimes his own pen was none too discreet and he would apologize for his 'sentimental' letter. But when occasion demanded, he could still be resolutely firm.

'You have acted throughout, or nearly so, upon sudden impulse, which was injudicious; and when you found me acting in the opposite extreme, the necessary lack of sympathy in our actions prompted you to believe that I was "heartless." Now I can fully sympathize with your impulsiveness because I have had similar impulses; but I have been forced to control such impulses by the caution learned of unpleasant experiences. I will run no risks that could involve you or me, — especially you. I did not for one instant . . . think that I could not trust you with my letters. But I could not trust the letters.'

Though he protested that he somehow disliked receiving gifts, his enamoured friend sent him books, occasional *objets d'art*, and one day a basket of flowers. She also extended more invitations than his work-filled hours permitted him to accept. But there was more regret than annoyance in his attitude, and had circumstances been different his feelings might have become more seriously involved. Now, however, he knew the power of social opinion, and his discretion held firm against the deepening emotions of the physician's wife.

Eventually his Dear Lady realized the hopelessness of the affair, and returned all his letters. For the first time he had

circumvented an impending complication instead of rushing headlong into it.

At the beginning of the year, Hearn had inaugurated a *Commercial* column filled with bits of news garnered from his varied reading and foreign and domestic publishers' bulletins. It was titled 'Literary Notes' and was now appearing every few days, offering a rich *mélange* of bibliographical notes and information on authors, publishers, books, and periodicals. Although it was reportorial rather than critical, it reflected the trend of Hearn's reading and contained the seeds of practically every interest he was later to amplify in his writings. Famous or promising writers in America, Great Britain, France, Spain, and Germany were given due attention; but the tone of the column was constantly growing more esoteric, and Grecian, Byzantine, Arabian, Egyptian, Scandinavian, Russian, Irish, Italian, Persian, Indian, and Hebrew works were receiving more and more mention. It was not a service to be expected of a Mid-Western newspaper, but the *Commercial* for some time had been running an occasional column of brief reviews called 'New Publications,' and it welcomed Hearn's more interesting and unusual feature.

During the autumn and winter of 1876 his literary activities again expanded; but they took a new direction, and he had fewer long stories in the *Commercial*. His earlier translations for the *Giglampz* had given him a growing ambition to bring into English some of the works of the French romanticists. Their colourfully handled sensuous themes, careful phrasings, and elaborate concern with detail thoroughly delighted him, and he had been buying all the French books he could find in Cincinnati. Now he began a series of translations from Gautier, starting with 'Avatar.' But upon being told no American publisher would dare print it, he 'purified it with fire' and selected less sensational Gautier stories to work on.

After the last piece of copy had gone across the city desk and the news-room was deserted in the hours before dawn, he would bring out his books and manuscript. Bending his head far down over his desk, he anxiously adjusted first one English

word and then another into the pattern of the original French. It was lapidary work he was doing under the flickering gas-light, and his nerves tightened as he concentrated on perfection. Sometimes his finely cramped handwriting had covered only a fourth of a page when the shops began opening for the morning trade; and after locking his work away, he would go home giddy with fatigue and eye-strain. But within a few months he had finished six of Gautier's *contes*.

This same year he also began his translation of Flaubert's 'The Temptation of Saint Anthony,' and now he was reading more French than English and American literature. One day Henderson sent him to the scene of a mad-dog disturbance, expecting a graphic story. But for the first time Hearn disappointed him. Passing the Mercantile Library, he stopped to glance at a newly arrived French book, became blissfully absorbed in it, and completely forgot his hydrophobia assignment. Henderson himself went out for the story, and on the way back he tracked down his errant reporter, knowing exactly where to look for him. Hearn confessed he was losing interest in news-work, but the editor felt justified in being lenient, since he was still filling more than his share of *Commercial* columns.

During these years a perfect foil for Hearn's news-stories was being supplied by the writings of Henry Krehbiel, the *Gazette* police reporter. Krehbiel, later to become the noted music critic and author, was of German extraction and conservative to the point of orthodoxy. He could neither understand Hearn's journalistic methods, agree with his artistic theories, nor approve of his morals. Nevertheless, a companionship sprang up between the two which Hearn fed with devoted fervour, eager to please this well-balanced, orderly 'son of Odin.' In his own way, Krehbiel accepted and returned the compliment of his regard, but with acknowledged reservations.

One night the two reporters were in a police station when a curly-haired young prostitute was brought in. Krehbiel began jotting down notes about the 'notorious cyprian' and

the city's 'determination to mitigate the social evil,' and Hearn argued in vain for a more lenient treatment. Before they left the station, however, a guard's shout sent them running to the pretty streetwalker's cell where they found her hanging by her shawl, half-dead. Abashed by this turn of events, Krehbiel altered his notes to read 'unfortunate cyprian,' and next morning the *Commercial's* story chided his belated pity.

The girl, Hearn wrote, was 'just old enough to be wicked, just ignorant enough to be stupid, and withal good-looking enough to excite compassion for her naughtiness and ignorance.' And in applying the term 'cyprian' to the outcasts of modern society, he went on, one thing should be remembered. What was held as the greatest of social evils had been cultivated rather than restrained in older civilizations and had entered into the rites of ancient religions. He then gave a long history of the famous *hetairai* of ancient Greece, adding that, as the old world grew wiser and more wicked, the goddess of love and beauty had expired on a thousand pale altars. Hellas and all its glories had passed away, along with its sensuous religion of beauty and its beautiful sinners, and in modern times a prostitute was no more than a triple curse — to religion, society, and nature. Returning to the Cincinnati prostitute, he concluded: 'Poor cyprian . . . a few more Maenad orgies, a few more years of shame, a few more visits to the workhouse . . . and then — the dissecting room.'

On another night, however, it was not Krehbiel but Hearn who was disconcerted. He and another *Commercial* reporter visited a brothel and agreed to return downstairs at a given time. When Hearn failed to appear, his friend went up to call him and found the door to one of the rooms open a few inches, revealing a strange sight. In the centre of the room a nude prostitute was obligingly standing under a strong light while Hearn studiously examined her fine lines. His eager, near-sighted eye was no more than six inches from her body as he slowly crouched and straightened. After laboriously circling his impromptu model, he announced his findings in a low, ex-

cited voice. 'Yes, indeed. The Greeks were right! No line in nature is as beautiful as the curve of a woman's hip!'

Most of Hearn's friends were hilarious when they heard of this unexpected tableau; but Krehbiel was all scorn and disgust. Almost thirty years later he was still of the same mind. 'The little beast!' he wrote in recalling the incident.

On the part of his more hostile critics this attitude was one of the leit-motifs of Hearn's life in the Western Hemisphere. It was not so much that he was erotic as that his eroticism did not always observe the colour-line and that it frequently had aesthetic undertones. This latter characteristic aroused a suspicious pique and was put down as so much poppycock. 'We know what we know,' one of his Cincinnati associates declared enigmatically; and others undoubtedly could have said the same had the mood and provocation arisen. But as time went on, what innuendoes were based on truth fanned up a miasma of half-truths and outright falsehoods which were accepted as fact by vindictive critics. It was so easy to believe the worst of the sensuous, shrinking little exotic that American gossip and hearsay won him more enemies than he honestly earned.

Krehbiel's antipathetic nature would have made their Cincinnati friendship impossible had it not been for the musical research he was already undertaking. Such work opened a new field to Hearn's intellectual curiosity, and he backed Krehbiel's projects with gusto. The anthropological aspects of music interested him greatly, although he had no musical ability or technical knowledge. With indefatigable enthusiasm he delved into ancient and modern folk-music and all the ramifications of its racial characteristics.

Along with his researches, Krehbiel was collecting unusual musical instruments, and one day Hearn rushed to the *Gazette* offices in great excitement. A collection of Chinese instruments had been brought to one of the police stations, he told Krehbiel, and was to be sold for payment of delinquent rent. Here was a chance to pick up some desirable items at low cost, and the two reporters hurried back to the police station to

examine the impounded instruments. But they arrived too late. The Chinese Char Lee had somehow solved his financial difficulties and had taken the instruments away in fuming indignation.

Insisting that Krehbiel at least see the collection, Hearn obtained Char Lee's address and they hastened on to his troubled laundry shop. There they found the Oriental proprietor with no intention of risking his redeemed instruments to anyone's inspection. They were not for sale and they were therefore not for inspection. Changing his tactics, Krehbiel asked Char Lee if he knew the ancient melody 'Mohli-hwa,' the Jasmine Flower song, and he hummed a few bars encouragingly. This softened the obdurate Char Lee, and soon he and a companion were playing and singing their ancestral music in shrill goodwill. The two reporters were so raptly attentive that the afternoon was gone and night darkening the windows before they left.

Joseph Tunison was another Cincinnati reporter whom Hearn prized as a friend. Tunison's literary interests centred about the classical age, and like Krehbiel and Hearn he was later to win distinction through his writings. Hearn, therefore, had friends of similar interests and ability during his last years in Ohio. But that was not enough.

Overwork, irregular hours, and the social opprobrium which his disdain could not nullify were combining to undermine his strength. He did not know whether he was ill, or tired, or both. He knew only that he was miserable and unhappy — in his work, and at home.

He grew captious and quick-tempered with Alethea, and nothing she did pleased him. No matter how hard she tried, she could not iron his linens to suit him; and he complained continually of her cooking. Though each day she prepared the food he had ordered, he would often push the meal aside when she placed it before him. Frequently she would then have to go to an Italian restaurant blocks away and hurry back with some favourite dish before it cooled.

However sincere Hearn had been in insisting upon marrying

the mulatto, he now realized that he had made a grave mistake. During their three years together the liaison had lost its ardour, and there was little mutual ground left to them. It was an echo of the situation his father had once faced, but in his own case there were no contributing circumstances to keep the unhappy couple together. No offspring, and, indeed, no marriage. For Hearn no longer found private significance in the outlawed ceremony he had arranged.

Each day of the summer of 1877 brought a separation nearer, and it occurred early that autumn. Alethea pleaded for one more opportunity to talk with Hearn, but this he refused. She then sent him a little gift and a lock of her hair in a final effort to win back his affection. But for him the story was ended and the book closed. When she realized this, she moved away from Cincinnati, taking her son with her to Indianapolis.

Seventeen years later, to counsel and comfort one of his Oriental students, Hearn wrote: 'When I was a young man in my twenties I had an experience very like yours. . . . All the rest of the people stopped speaking to me, and I hated them for it. But I was too young then to understand. There were other moral questions, much larger than those I had been arguing about, which really caused the whole trouble. . . . After some years I discovered that I was quite mistaken — that I was under a delusion. I had been opposing a great national and social principle without knowing it. And if my best friends had not got angry with me, I could not have learned the truth so well, — because there are many things that are hard to explain and can only be taught by experience.'

After Alethea was gone, Hearn again spent his leisure hours with Henry Watkin, whose business was now threatened by bankruptcy. But the two friends no longer left the printing shop at night in search of material for Hearn's writings.

In a grisly review of the outstanding suicides of 1876, Hearn had earlier written: 'Suicide is an attaché of civilization — a lackey that dances attendance on refinement. . . . As civili-

zation looms forward, suicide haunts it as a shadow. Luxury and comforts father supposed wants and nourish tender passions and delicate sensibilities which the rude blasts of practical life chill and blight. . . . To suffer well is proof of patience, fortitude, and firmness; but boldly to seek deliverance from suffering is the office of courage.'

A few more Negro studies had likewise come from his pen, and he had also written 'Tennyson and the Two Lords Lytton,' three columns on 'The Music of the Masses,' and a very long article on Poe's life. But he could no longer find yeast for his imagination in a town he was viewing with weary contempt. He continued reporting fires and murders and petty crime, and occasionally he stirred himself to a few paragraphs on 'Natural Bone Setting' or 'A Talk with a Butter Man.' Such work, however, had become an insufferable waste of time, and he tried to lose himself in reading. As a result, his 'Literary Notes' had grown and ripened, and at times the column was appearing every day.

He had queried an Eastern publisher on his Gautier translations, but nothing had come of it; and he could not bring himself to consider a new literary project. Soon he began talking of leaving Ohio for one of the Southern States, and he assured Watkin that no worth-while literary work could be done in Cincinnati. Moreover, the slavery of newspaper work left too little time for independent study and writing.

He had always disliked Ohio winters, and the last one had been exceptionally severe, with three months of snow, slush, and ice-covered streets. He might write: 'When a man fell yesterday there was no chance for rebate; the thing was complete.' But he could find little humour in the record-breaking cold. And when towering ice-floes broke loose in the Ohio River, he caught the drama of the event as hoarse river-whistles sounded a wild alarm and all the bells in the city took up the cry. But the drama was short-lived, and the hated cold and treacherous footing seemed a permanent curse.

Once after a battering night of news-work in the stormy cold, Edwin Henderson had told the tired reporters of a trip

to the Gulf States. He spoke particularly of a cotton plantation he had visited, where a majestic avenue of live-oaks led up to the pillared front of the mansion, and whitewashed Negro cabins were grouped under moss-hung trees. The air had been heavy with perfume, he said, and magnolias gleamed in the yellow sun. Hearn had listened silently but with quivering nostrils, for to him Henderson was describing a veritable paradise on earth.

Now, as frosty September nights brought the dread of another frigid winter, a tropical Circe seemed beckoning him to a friendlier land. He enlarged upon the ease of living in a warm climate and told Watkin there was tropical blood in his veins. Or, as he had put it to his Dear Lady a year earlier, the blood of a lizard that sought the sun.

Watkin agreed that he would be happier if he left Cincinnati. — But where would he go? He had no friends in the Southern States, and he was unwilling again to enter a strange city without assurance of work.

Eventually, after consulting Murat Halstead, the owner of the *Commercial*, sympathetic Edwin Henderson found a possible solution to his problem.

The presidential election of 1876 had resulted in a recount in South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana, giving Hayes the victory by one electoral vote. Charges and counter-charges had been hurled by Northern Republicans and Southern Democrats, and for a time a second Civil War had threatened. The spotlight of national attention had been turned especially on Louisiana, where the infamously corrupt 'carpetbagger' rule had been met with native 'bulldozing' outrages, and for many months the *Commercial* had carried a regular column of 'Louisiana Politics.' Repercussions were still being felt, and Halstead thought important follow-up news could be discovered in New Orleans. If Hearn wanted to go to the Crescent City, he told him, he might act as the *Commercial's* political correspondent. The paper would not be sending him there, he emphasized, but it would use whatever political news he could find if he decided to go.

This was all the encouragement Hearn needed, for no American city could offer him more than New Orleans. Its European background was rich in colourful history and emotional tradition. Its mixed-blood peoples were swathed in romantic folklore. The picturesque, semi-tropical city was the nation's second port, and ships from all parts of the world sailed up the Mississippi to dock along its wharves. His articles to the *Commercial* would keep him going until he could find work on one of the local papers, and before long he would give only part of his time to reporting. A wealth of material awaited his pen in gay, indolent, mellow New Orleans — new sensations, new inspirations, a fresh start and a new life!

While he had been wishing himself out of Cincinnati, he had also been saving his money, so there was no need for delay. One late October night Henry Watkin, Edwin Henderson, and Murat Halstead accompanied him to the railway station, Henderson carrying his one large piece of luggage. He was leaving his books to be sent on later.

As the four men waited for the train's departure, Hearn apologized expansively for his bitter condemnation of Cincinnati. Maybe it wasn't the lack of opportunity there, he summed it up, or his want of appreciation for the friendships he'd made, but the beastly climate. He would have had to leave Ohio's rigorous climate sooner or later in any case, and it was Henderson's description of the sensuous delights of the South that had really started him.

Henderson assured him of his understanding and the high hopes he entertained for his literary future, and Halstead gave him last-minute instructions concerning the kind of news he was to send back to the *Commercial*. Henry Watkin wished his young friend God-speed and turned aside to wipe his eyes as the train slowly pulled away from the platform.

Since leaving Ushaw, Hearn's life had assumed the outlines of flight; and that pattern was still dominant as the twenty-seven-year-old writer left Ohio. But a new design was now appearing — the twisting thread of an endless search; and

hereafter the two patterns would mount in a synthesis of despairing futility, whatever his literary fortunes. For upon reaching maturity the little exotic was beginning to weary of his outlander rôle. He wanted contentment and a sense of security. He was feeling the first strong pangs of the need for home.

CHAPTER 6

As HIS TRAIN crossed the Ohio River into Kentucky, Hearn once more checked the contents of his pockets. Yes, there was his ticket, his wallet — and his revolver! Pulling his large bag up onto the seat beside him, he settled back happily, feeling like a pilgrim setting out for the Land of Promise. His plans called for a brief stopover at Louisville and a later train to Memphis. From Memphis he would go down the Mississippi to New Orleans on a cotton-boat.

As he approached Louisville, he was unable to get information about later trains and let the Kentucky city slip by his window unexplored. But that did not matter, for the nearer he got to New Orleans the better! Im Memphis, however, his eagerness was brought up short when he found himself constrained to await the appearance of the cotton-boat *Thompson Dean*. The *Thompson Dean* operated on a schedule regally adjusted to her own unpredictable necessities. When she arrived in port, she was there. When she had departed,

she was gone. Beyond that no man ashore knew her intentions.

This second change in his plans was more serious, for he was again alone in the world and trouble was already besetting him. Crestfallen, he registered at a small hotel on October 28 and then sent a card back to Henry Watkin. On it he sketched two ravens, one of them labelled 'Remorseful,' and looking the part. The other was thoughtfully scratching its head above the inscription 'In a dilemma at Memphis.' His spirits were rapidly falling, and he counted his money anxiously.

The next morning he sent Watkin another card, explaining the setback he had suffered. 'Am stuck in Memphis waiting for a boat. Getting d——d poor. New Orleans far off. Board two dollars per day. Trouble and confusion. Flabbergasted. Mixed up. Knocked into a cocked hat.'

Since his small hoard of money must last until he received pay for his first *Commercial* articles, he moved to a ramshackle hotel where he was allowed to eat and sleep for one dollar a day. This he reported to Watkin that same evening, and he favoured him with a life-sized drawing of a native Memphis mosquito, two-thirds of an inch long. 'I don't like Memphis at all,' he added, 'but cannot express my opinion on a postal card. They have a pretty fountain here — much better than that old brass candlestick in Cincinnati.' (This Memphis fountain was a small nude Venus he had seen in one of the parks.)

'Half wish I was back in Cincinnati,' he wrote on the next day, and then he drew a complicated little cartoon. At the conflux of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers a great-eyed raven sat non-geographically in Memphis, dolefully staring southward. In the distance a snail labelled 'Thompson Dean' was creeping up the Mississippi from New Orleans.

Having set out in such fine fettle, he was reluctant to admit his growing depression; but within another twenty-four hours his defences were down. This time he wrote 'Dear Old Dad' a long letter, inspired by the news that the *Thompson Dean*

had only that day left New Orleans. His gloom was deepened by a great public funeral for the famous Confederate general, N. B. Forrest. Memphis was draped in black, its streets were filled with marching troops, and minute-guns were being fired as he wrote. Their booming mingled with death-bells tolling in all sections of the city, and a leaden rain was falling intermittently. The funereal sounds were not shut out by the broken window-panes of his dilapidated room, and his letter dripped his melancholia. By now he was physically ill and thoroughly disheartened.

Presenting Watkin the full picture of his woe, he described his barnlike, uncarpeted room. For fifteen years it had been untenanted, and its size allowed spiders to continue spinning their dusty tapestries heedless of his presence. None of his three doors locked, and he slept with his money under his pillow, beside his revolver. Here and there old blocked-up stairways came down through the ceiling and up through the floor, going nowhere. By one of these lost staircases the wall was daubed with red, as if someone had braced a bloody hand there as he lurched down the steps in some desperate earlier day. The floor planks were loose, and when he walked about at night it sounded as though Something were following him in the darkness.

'I suppose,' he went on, 'you will not laugh if I tell you that I have been crying a good deal at nights. . . . It is a lonely feeling, this of finding oneself alone in a strange city, where you never meet a face you know; and when all the faces you did know seem to have been dead faces. . . . I have not travelled enough the last eight years, I suppose: it does not do to become attached insensibly to places and persons. . . . Perhaps you are thinking to yourself: "He feels a little blue now, and is accordingly very affectionate, etc.; but by and by he will be quite forgetful, and perhaps will not write so often as at present."

'Well, I suppose you are right. I live in and by extremes and am on an extreme now. . . . By and by, if I get well, I shall write only by weeks; and with time perhaps only by

months; and when at last comes the rush of business and busy newspaper work, only by years, — until the times and places of old friendships are forgotten, and old faces have become dim as dreams, and these little spider-threads of attachments will finally yield to the long strain of a thousand miles.'

He also told Watkin he was having trouble with his eye and could not read, or do anything comfortably, to while away the time. And, although he hadn't mentioned it much lately, the thought of Alethea was still trying to haunt him. Just now it had become an absolute torture. He felt all the time as if she were looking at him, or following him — begging to talk with him once more.

Old griefs and old defeats ached raw and new in his wretchedness.

When he went out to post his letter, the imposing funeral cortège passing before him seemed worthy of an article in the *Commercial*. As one of the greatest slave-dealers in the South, General Forrest had fought through the Civil War at the head of his own cavalry, admired and feared by his subordinates and constantly quarrelling with other leaders of the Confederacy. Hearn obtained material for a long account of the general's stormy career, and while he wrote it there was momentary relief from his unhappiness.

Prostrated by the post-war economics of the South, Memphis appeared to its unwilling visitor as old as the ragged bluffs on which it stood. With the *Thompson Dean* still in the distance, he proposed one early November day to be free of the ugly, desolate city for a few hours. As he walked along a dirt road leading out of town, the peculiar actions of a man some yards ahead of him attracted his attention. The man was either intoxicated or beside himself with anger, and as Hearn watched him a small cat ran between the man's feet and tripped him. Bellowing with rage, he snatched the kitten up, and Hearn could see it writhing in his hands for a moment before he flung it aside with a roar of laughter and strode on down the road.

Hearn rushed up to the kitten and found both of its eyes

had been gouged out; and in red fury he jerked his revolver from his pocket and fired at the man four times. Fortunately, his shots missed their mark, and as the brute ran off across the fields, Hearn turned back toward Memphis, trembling and sick at heart. It was to be a lifelong regret that he had not killed the man to avenge the kitten's lost sight. — And but for his own maimed vision, by God, he would have done that very thing!

Sometime during the second week of November, the *Thompson Dean* miraculously appeared; and early on the day she was to leave for New Orleans, Hearn went down to the river, determined not to be left behind. Along with other cotton-boats, the *Thompson Dean* was taking on her bulky cargo; and all day he watched the bales being loaded. As the afternoon wore by, the thumping, bumping tumult around him grew into a veritable nightmare of brown bagging blotched with white. When the *Thompson Dean* finally pulled away from the broken brown cliffs of Memphis, they too seemed to be bales of cotton. And like a floating mountain of cotton, ramparts of brown bales reaching up to her smokestacks, the *Thompson Dean* started ponderously downstream.

That night Hearn slept but little; and dawn disclosed him leaning on the boat's rail. As he stared up into the deep, grey spaces of the morning sky, the first green-and-gold rays of the sunrise touched his face. The sky's splendour widened slowly around the brightening world, and as the broad, smooth river caught and reflected the gilding translucence, the cotton-boat moved suspended in the midst of breaking day. Only the silhouetted shore trees cut into the brightness, and beyond them, faintly, the waving green of cane-fields. With tears of joy in his eyes, Hearn stood bathed in the shining flood of colour.

Throughout the two and one-half days required for the southern voyage, white steamboats panted upstream, their wild greetings and the *Thompson Dean's* deafening responses echoing along the winding shores. The sky never wholly lost its golden-green glow, and the landscape varied from dark

green tinged with blue to emerald shot through with gold. Occasionally the sluggish mouths of hidden bayous opened into the mile-wide river, and the gloom of ancient cypress swamps crept up to the shoreline. The lush greens and blues pressed always nearer; the stars were closer and larger; and the air grew heavy with warmth.

For Hearn the entire voyage was a panoramic adventure, most of which he viewed from a perch beside the friendly pilot. As an outlet for his enthusiasm he was planning another article for the *Commercial*, quite innocent of political connotations despite Halstead's explicit instructions. It was to be a colourful word-painting titled 'A Glimpse of the Mississippi Down Below,' and his notes had already recorded his first dawn aboardship.

The South's devastation was now thirteen years old, and as the *Thompson Dean* penetrated deeper into the cotton country, magnificent but neglected old mansions looked out across the water from shady groves. The vast plantations were blighted with desolation, and vigorous growths of cottonwood were shooting up over the once-fertile fields.

When the *Thompson Dean* steamed through the forest of masts crowding the eighteen-mile New Orleans levee, Hearn stood in the pilot-house with a racing heart. The vast grey docks of London had offered nothing so picturesque and polyglot as this enormous crescent! Huge ocean liners rested at the Southern piers, and in either direction deep-sea ships marshalled their folded sails. Schooners, brigantines, frigates, merchantmen — docked in jostling order were ships from the Orient, from the West and East Indies, from Norway, England, Holland, Germany, France, Spain, and the Mediterranean. Black tugs rushed noisily about like ugly water-goblins. Brightly painted luggers from the lower coasts skimmed over the water with oysters, shrimp, oranges, and pomegranates. All the ports of the world seemed to be represented; all the produce, and all the people.

New Orleans itself was similarly cosmopolitan, holding for each traveller some recollection of his homeland. But the

city's beauty was tropical, and as Hearn went up Canal Street he noted how the Southern ease of living was stamped even on the public thoroughfares. Iron and wooden awnings converted the streets into shaded tunnels under the midday sun, while beneath the awnings wrinkled old flower-women hunched over their fragrant trays, and bandanaed praline-vendors called their wares in softly rhymed patois.

After finding a rooming-house in the American section south of Canal Street, he dutifully sent Watkin a postcard. Sketching a bedraggled raven at the entrance of a house, he wrote: 'Raven liveth at 228 Baronne St. Indite him an epistle. Don't give him particular H—.' He had missed an encouraging letter Watkin had sent him in Memphis, and remembering the printer's admonitions not to be a fool when his emotions got the better of him, he expected to be chided for his lugubrious messages from Tennessee. — Well, maybe he was being a fool now, but he was being a happy one! Up in one corner of the card he added, 'Pretty Louisiana. Nice Louisiana.' And sent it on to wintry Cincinnati.

He had arrived in New Orleans with something over twenty dollars, and most of this he prudently paid in advance to his landlady. With room and board temporarily assured, the unpleasant task of applying for work on a local paper seemed less immediately urgent. After he finished his Mississippi River article, he set out to explore the Crescent City and gather notes for a third article.

First he crossed Canal Street to the narrow dark streets of the historic Vieux Carré — the French Quarter. The faded, peeling paint on the solid old buildings was weathered to soft greys, greens, blues, and yellows. Everywhere there were iron lacework balconies and outside staircases; and arched carriageways tunneled through the larger houses to vineclad courtyards. Covered alleyways, small walled-in gardens, and closely shuttered windows hinted at romance and adventure. Foreign-language bookshops lured him, and the windows of antique jewelry stores. There were more dark skins than fair ones; and softly syllabled dialects took intriguing liberties

with French, Spanish, and English. But wanting an introductory conception of the city as a whole, he permitted himself little dawdling.

Having already glimpsed the large public buildings dating from the financial heyday of the South, he now went out to the finer residential section, the Garden District, with its magnolia-shaded boulevards, velvet lawns, and fountained gardens. 'You can walk through this paradise hour after hour, mile after mile; and the air only becomes yet more fragrant and the orange trees more heavily freighted with golden fruit, and the gardens more and more beautiful.' Here lay what was left of the city's modern glory; but he was an excluded spectator, and he felt his inadequacy in taking notes.

However, when he turned back, inevitably, to the French Quarter and came to the sprawling French Market, he was a palpitating part of everything around him, and his pencil was released. In sharp contrasts of light and shadow, luscious colours and pungent, exotic odours whipped his senses to incoherent delight. Along with the French vendors were crisply neat mulattoes, gaily dressed mixed-blood girls with Latin features, Indian squaws, Acadians, Mexicans, Italians, and buxom Germans — all selling their native wares and delicacies. Blue-jacketed sailors from the ocean steamers, red-shirted fishermen from the luggers, and Southern housewives trailed by their black servants were part of the motley crowds buying drygoods, trinkets, flowers, spices, produce, meats, and sea-foods. Drenched in the bright sense-appeal of the redolent, colourful scene, he tried to put everything into his notebook.

When he completed his initial tribute to New Orleans, it was an emotional orgy.

He turned next to the history and folklore of the romantically rich old city and was willingly assisted by the book-dealers in the French Quarter. One of them directed him to John Dimitry, head of the Board of Education and a scholarly authority on Louisiana lore. Dimitry gave him a courtly, grandiloquent letter of introduction to Major William M.

Robinson, editor of the *New Orleans Republican*. Robinson, he said, had a fine collection of Louisiana source-material and was especially interested in aiding young writers.

The *Republican* editor cordially opened his library to Hearn's researches; and during the next two or three weeks he was frequently in the Robinson home, taking voluminous notes for more articles destined for the *Cincinnati Commercial*.

Meanwhile, Watkin wrote him asking about business conditions in New Orleans, and he answered that there were any number of good opportunities. And would his old friend be surprised to learn that he had been visiting his UNCLE? He had seen only one of his articles in the *Commercial* — the Forrest letter, and supposed the others were too enthusiastic. Nevertheless, he couldn't write coolly of beautiful Louisiana!

The *Commercial* editors were noting this inability; and they were also noting the complete absence of political news. But the articles he was sending were exceptionally good copy, and they were being printed as space allowed, with the hope for later political news. Hearn was signing his articles 'Ozias Midwinter,' having found similarities between his own experiences and those of Wilkie Collins's hero in 'Armadale.' Evidently nothing had been said about the frequency with which he was to be paid, and the *Commercial* editors were apparently waiting until they could send him at least a modestly respectable amount.

This placed him in difficulties when he had exhausted his credit with his landlady, for he was not yet in the mood to look for employment. Pawning what personal effects he could, he moved over to the cheaper rents in the French Quarter and drifted from one mouldering little rooming-house to another. He found that he could live satisfactorily on French bread and coffee, with an occasional plate of thick gumbo soup for dinner. 'One can live here for twenty cents a day,' he wrote Watkin. '. . . what's the odds?'

In a warmer climate the fear of actual destitution appeared not to bother him; but within a short time he confessed himself 'in a desperate fix.' He sent instructions for all but his

French books to be sold, and he wrote to some of his Northern friends for small loans. Watkin himself could send him nothing, for the printer was now making a last stand against bankruptcy.

When the December rains came, Hearn learned how uncomfortable a Louisiana winter could be. Moisture rose from the soil, collected on woodwork, and dripped from stone. Small coal-grates could not drive off the penetrating chill or combat the mildew and rust. Each morning the covers on his bed felt clammy, and he dreaded donning his cold, damp clothes. Negroes were hired to carry people across the flooded streets and over the rushing torrents in the gutters. One day at Julia and Baronne Streets he saw children dragging a dead alligator through the water.

Even in fair weather the 'night damps' crept in from the surrounding swamps — muffling sound, blotting out the stars, and wrapping the city in a ghostly white fog. Hearn dramatized this in another article for the *Commercial*, shivering in his musty little room as he cursed the blurring ink on his damp copy-paper. But he did little or nothing about finding work in New Orleans; and he sent no political news back to Cincinnati. Instead, he began studying and writing about the dialect of New Orleans folklore — the Creole patois.

Strictly speaking, Creoles in Louisiana and the Gulf States were the white descendants of French colonists, usually of aristocratic ancestry, who still reflected the life and language of their European forbears. The term was originally Spanish (*Criollos*) and designated the pure-blood offspring of Spanish colonists anywhere in the Western Hemisphere; but the fewer Spanish Creoles in Louisiana had now adopted the language, manners, and customs of the French Creoles. Latin blood had entered the Negro element of the South, and the Creole dialect was the French patois Negro slaves and these mixed-blood Negroes had evolved. Often the various aspects of Creole folklore were likewise understood to deal with these light-skinned Negro mixed-bloods, although 'Creole' was a term with which to conjure. It might refer to the proudly aristocratic

Creoles (who had learned the Creole dialect from their black nurses and used it only as a household language when talking with their servants), or the more lowly but equally pure-blooded Creoles, or the Negroes with Latin blood in their veins. Eventually the Creole dialect disappeared, and the term 'Creole' then reassumed its original meaning, designating the pure-blood descendants of Latin colonists. But for a number of years following the Civil War its use was confused, not only throughout the North and abroad, but even in the South and in New Orleans itself.

The Creole patois, 'offspring of linguistic miscegenation,' was spoken not only by Negroes and mixed-bloods in the Gulf States, but throughout the French West Indies as well. Unlike most dialects, and even though it varied considerably in different communities, it was consistently symmetrical in construction and observed well-defined grammatical rules. A Frenchman could understand written Creole more readily than the spoken version, and Hearn's knowledge of French enabled him to make rapid progress in his study of the charmingly melodious patois. Soon he was putting Creole poems and songs in his Ozias Midwinter letters, along with English translations — sometimes his own, 'a little free in parts.' He even included a poem in Martinique Creole, comparing it with the Louisiana dialect. And how many Cincinnatians could have had any interest in the lengthy conjugation of a Creole verb?

The *Commercial* editors' irritation grew with their amazement, but they had to admit his Creole dissertations were scholarly. In nineteenth-century American journalism they were also unique. Perhaps after he worked off this latest enthusiasm he would remember his political assignment.

When he received his first check from the *Commercial*, Hearn's spirits skyrocketed. He wrote Krehbiel that he could probably depend upon making forty dollars a month, and that he was determined never again to be a newspaper reporter. For one thing, his eye would no longer stand the strain of night work. 'While acting as correspondent I shall have time

to study, study, study; and to write something better than police news.' Coupled with his foaming literary ambitions was the realization that he could redeem himself socially now that he was away from Cincinnati. Since everyone was poor in the South, his own poverty would be no drawback.

Immediately he mapped out work for a number of magazine articles; and he began studying Spanish. (If he ever left New Orleans, it would be to go still farther south — to the West Indies or South America.) At the same time he began sending Krehbiel translations from rare old French books on medieval music, apologizing because his ailing eye would not permit him to send longer passages.

For a month or so nothing checked his busy optimism. But his Ozias Midwinter letters veered always farther away from current news; and Murat Halstead at last lost patience. As a newspaper publisher with an eye to advertisements and circulation he could no longer condone:

> 'Others say it is your happiness;
> I say it is your sorrow:
> When we are enchanted by love,
> Farewell to all happiness!
> Poor little Miss Zizi!
> Poor little Miss Zizi!
> Poor little Miss Zizi!
> She has sorrow, sorrow, sorrow; —
> She has sorrow in her heart.'

Nor did he consider political news well-lost for:

> 'If thou wert a little bird,
> And I were a little gun,
> I would shoot thee — *bang!*
> Ah, dear little mahogany jewel,
> I love thee as a little pig loves the mud.'

To give his bemused correspondent a last chance, Halstead sent him an ultimatum — and the result was two political articles scarcely worth their postage. With that, a new Lou-

isiana correspondent was hired; and Hearn's last trickle of money was cut off.

This shattering blow came in March and was the prelude to greater wretchedness and despair than he had ever known. He hurried manuscripts off to New York, only to have them rejected. And this time he had nothing left to sacrifice at pawnshops. Nothing unless it was his spectacles, which he never again wore, saying glasses hurt his eye more than they helped it. He also summoned enough courage to ask Major Robinson for work; but the *Republican* was discharging men, not hiring them. Since the preceding autumn Louisiana's depressed business conditions had been further aggravated by poor sugar and cotton crops.

Now, with misfortune breeding upon itself, a yellow-fever epidemic began sweeping through New Orleans. The streets and parks were sprinkled with carbolic acid; lime was poured into the malodorous, eel-infested gutters; and cannon were fired at sunrise and sunset. In the absence of adequate medical knowledge, charlatans preyed upon the terrified populace, and hope clung to such pitiful irrelevancies as tar-soaked clothing. Black-bordered death-notices fluttered from doors and fences, and each day the newspapers carried longer lists of the dead. By the time hot weather arrived, the silence of the city was broken only by its mourning, and even the mourning was hushed and fearful.

Somehow Hearn escaped the 'Yellow Jack,' but he suffered an attack of break-bone fever for which a large dose of castor oil was his only medication. Convalescence was a long torture of aching weakness which left him weighing scarcely ninety pounds, sharp bones covered by a saddle-brown skin. Through congestion of the retina his right eye lost half of its field of vision, and he could see only 'in spots.' Dread of blindness persecuted him.

When he was again strong enough, he went to all the newspapers, asking for work. But everywhere it was the same. Reduced staffs were handling what news there was. There was no room for newcomers. In his debilitated condition he

saw this as a personal affront and wrote Krehbiel a blanket condemnation of the city's press. It had no life, individuality, courage, enterprise, intelligence, or even money, he declared. It did not own its own soul and could boast of hardly one first-class journalist in the whole town. To give a New Orleans paper an essay was to give Château Margaux to a dog, to feed a baboon with human brains!

His whole letter crackled with resentment, but its final thrust could have been best appreciated by George Dupré of the *New Orleans Democrat*. Dupré had recently glanced up from his desk to find a timid wisp of a man holding a manuscript toward him, offering it for sale. A hurried reading so impressed him that Hearn left his office with the unbelievable sum of ten dollars. Unfortunately, though, Dupré had done some minor editing on the copy, and next morning Hearn was back again. Spewing wild accusations about ruining his article, he flung his money on the editor's desk and was gone before Dupré could defend his editing.

Such noble indignation hastened the time when he was sleeping on park benches and fighting off starvation with one five-cent meal every second day. He owned only the clothes he was wearing, and the end of his shirt showed through the seat of his ragged trousers. His hair was long and dishevelled, his face covered with whiskers, and his inflamed eye bulged redly from its bony socket. He looked even more disreputable than the vagrants and petty criminals who were now his chance associates.

One of these, a Northerner, became his 'pard,' and he learned the fraudulent artifices and chicanery by which such men obtained their precarious living. Upon occasion he put this knowledge to use. 'I have been cheated and swindled considerably; and have cheated and swindled others in retaliation,' he confessed to Henry Watkin. During the seven months he had been in New Orleans he had not earned one cent in the city. — *Damn* New Orleans!

Should he, despite his myopia, seek passage on some tropical vessel and sail the main until he knew by sight the various

riggings of all the navies? Should he catch the next boat for St. Louis, or for England? Or should he cease to worry over fate and facts and go straight to hell until he tired even of hell and blew his highly sensitive and exquisitely delicate brains out of their casing?

These questions he asked Watkin in the longest letter he ever wrote him. (General Delivery was now his address, and stamps and writing paper hard to come upon.) His twenty-eighth birthday was nearing, and as he looked back over the file of the years, he saw an alarming similarity of misery in all of them. Each one had brought identical gifts — weakness, thwarted will-power, the denial of almost every special wish, the lesson that everything agreeable was wrong and everything disagreeable was right, and an enormous addendum of novel and wholly unexpected disappointments. When one more step would have meant victory, some obstacle had invariably risen to defeat him. Usually, he admitted, he himself had erected that obstacle through loss of patience, or some extra-sensitiveness betrayed when it should have been concealed.

Without a renovation of individuality he knew that no better years lay ahead of him. Yet such a renovation was hardly possible, since 'small people without great wills and energies' could do but little. His whole nature urged him to continue toward the goal of writing poetic prose; but he could see nothing in prospect save what he now had — starvation, sickness, and despair. And being a migratory bird, he could never keep any position long enough to build it into something worth while. Even if he could, he could never stay anywhere without getting into trouble. Something horribly disagreeable was bound to happen.

As long as he couldn't do what he wanted to do — wander where he pleased until he was old and apeish and grey, keeping to himself and bothering no one — what in the name of the Nine Incarnations of Vishnu *could* he do?

'I'm so tired, — so awfully, fearfully, disgustingly tired of wasting my life without being able to help it. Don't tell me

I could have helped it, — I know better. No man could have helped doing anything already done. I hate the gilded slavery of newspaper work, — the starvation of Bohemianism, — the bore of waiting for a chance to become an insurance agent or a magazine writer, — and, oh, venerable friend, I hate a thousand times worst of all to work for somebody else. I hoped to become independent when I came down here, — to work for myself; and I have made a most damnable failure of it.'

As Hearn wrote his jeremiad that Sunday in June, the truth stood naked before him. In his extremity he saw his defeats and frustrations for what they were, and hopelessly inescapable. With his nerves bearing the full brunt of his privations and mental suffering, he was edging toward that limit of endurance beyond which death or insanity awaits. Drug addicts had offered him opium, but he was too desperate to accept illusory relief. Suicidal moods had sent him down to the river to stare tentatively into the muddy, swirling water. But he still wished to live, to catch something of beauty in words that would endure. If he killed himself, it would be a necessity, not a choice.

His resistance was so nearly gone that when he finished his letter to Watkin he knew the time had come to appeal to his last possible source of help. The next morning he went once more to see Major Robinson. He could not think beyond the mere physical act of getting to the *Republican* offices. What the Major could do for him, if anything, he did not know. He was not sure what he wanted him to do. And when he saw Robinson, he said nothing, waiting helplessly while the shocked editor stared at the human derelict before him. This was his last gesture, and there was no room for words.

When Major Robinson recovered himself, he thanked God that this time there was something he could do. Attempting an impersonal directness, he asked if Hearn was strong enough to do desk-work on a local paper. A few days ago he had heard of an opening on a small newspaper recently established

in the city. If Hearn cared to apply for the position, he would take him over to see the managing editor immediately.

Hearn was incoherent with gratitude and relief; and Robinson led him off by the arm, he himself finding words none too easy.

CHAPTER 7

IN JUNE, 1877, eleven New Orleans optimists, most of them printers and all of them unemployed, had started a small co-operative newspaper. Appropriately named *The Item*, its profits had been correspondingly negligible. Somehow it had survived the summer months, but the adverse business conditions of the following winter had been the final tribulation. The disappointed owners had sold their venture to Colonel John Fairfax, a friend of Major Robinson, who had put Mark Bigney in charge as managing editor. The *Item* was published at 39 Natchez Alley, and it was to Bigney that Robinson took Hearn on that day of deliverance in June, 1878.

Bigney was a resolute but gentle man whose literary bent had earlier produced a thin book of verse. He was also a man of very impressive stature, and Major Robinson was almost as large. Before two such towering and substantial figures the puny 'exquisite in tatters,' scarcely five feet three inches tall, shrank farther into his humiliating rags. At the

slightest mismove he would have fled. Robinson, however, quickly assumed the rôle of spokesman, and soon everything was arranged.

Hearn was to be the *Item's* assistant editor, and his designated duties, all desk-work, were varied but not too heavy. Each day he was to write an editorial and one or two articles on foreign affairs or literature. He was also to edit the out-of-state news and clip a column of crop notes from the quaint parish papers. Now and then, when Bigney was away, he would have entire charge of the little paper. The *Item* was an afternoon publication and he would work only from ten in the morning until one or two in the afternoon. This would allow him sufficient daylight time for independent writing and be partial compensation for his small salary. At the moment the struggling paper could pay him only ten dollars a week; but his salary would be increased as rapidly as possible.

After the anguish of the past few months, all this was a God-send, and with direction restored to his living Hearn began working for the *Item* on the fifteenth of June. The first thing he wrote was an editorial on 'The true functions of a daily journal.' In this he spared Major Robinson's *Republican*, but flayed the *Times*, *Picayune*, and *Democrat*. They had let him starve like a rat, and now he could pay them off!

The next day, bringing his light out from under its bushel, he began instalments of Gautier's 'The Mummy's Foot,' which he had translated in Cincinnati. Later he offered 'Arria Marcella,' another of the translations he had toiled over in the *Commercial's* empty news-room. As a pioneer in bringing the best of current French fiction to American readers, his chief reward was to be a somewhat esoteric acclaim, not unmixed in America with scandalized abuse. But his enthusiasm for the French romanticists needed only a breath to make it flame higher, and, being the most Latin city in the States, New Orleans was quick to give him that encouragement.

Though he would never enjoy the amenities of a normal social existence, the emaciated little man with the odd, rolling

eye now began to reassume his hesitant place among his fellow-men. A week or so after he started writing for the *Item*, he dined at the Fairfax home for the first time, wearing a new pair of linen trousers as successors to the seatless ones he had just discarded. Above them a dark coat was buttoned closely about his throat to conceal his unpresentable shirt. He looked up only when he was spoken to, and if it was necessary to answer, he did so in a barely audible voice. At the table he sat huddled in his chair, crumbling his bread nervously and eating only two or three mouthfuls. Accepting the Colonel's invitation had required heroic courage, and his embarrassment was painful to witness. But the Fairfax family was large and tactful and its talk flowed around him as though he were not there.

Such consideration encouraged him to return, and gradually he proved himself an engaging conversationalist, speaking easily and quietly but never monopolizing attention. His memory was prodigious, and he could relate strange and enchanting stories with a peculiar effectiveness. This particularly endeared him to the younger members of the Fairfax family, for he was gently affectionate toward children and instinctively knew their language.

After the purchase of the new trousers, his second step in rehabilitation was to leave park benches and 'flop-houses' for the decencies of a private room and bed. In fact, he was determined to have more than that; and he knew with relish where he could get it.

In the Vieux Carré a number of magnificent old Creole houses had been reduced to rooming-house status by the Civil War. For months he had peered longingly through their arched carriageways toward enclosed gardens and vineclad inner courts. But their rents had seemed 'maliciously enormous.' Now, armed with a reliable salary, he secured a room in one of these picturesque old mansions on St. Louis Street; and for three dollars a week he lived in an atmosphere haunted by romance.

The house had been built at the height of the South's social

and economic feudalism and had the boxed appearance of a fortress. Slave-quarters, stables, and the imposing living apartments all opened onto an inner garden and paved courtyard. To this central area the tunnelling carriage-drive, nearly one hundred feet long, was the only entrance; and each afternoon he left the present behind him as he turned into the cool stone passage. The moss on its curving damp walls muffled the rolling echoes from the street while ahead of him lay the bright vista of the quiet garden.

Emerging into its golden warmth, he would stop to finger the giant green leaves of the banana trees or step softly by a hoary old greyhound drowsing on the flagstones. Perhaps, Hearn thought, he was still waiting for a Creole master who had gone out with Beauregard or Lee and inexplicably failed to return.

On one side of the courtyard stood the rambling stables, where a gaunt grey wagon was the last survivor of more glorious days. This glory Hearn gave a handsome revival by imagining blooded horses and gleaming carriages, with French coats-of-arms, thundering in and out on gay and adventurous missions.

Sometimes he wandered through the deserted slave-quarters, his thin, nervous hands flicking eagerly over anything he found. As always when he was excited or tense with interest, his sensitive nostrils quivered and twitched. Like a small dark insect he worked his tremulous way through the mouldering dust of the past, intent upon the slightest crumb.

From the courtyard he ascended a wide stone stairway curving up through arched landings to the third floor, where a broad gallery ran along two sides of his room in the rear wing. Like overgenerous doors his ceiling-high windows opened full-length upon it. From here he could catch a tangled view of tropical gardens and the half-ruined beauty of stately old buildings.

The room he had chosen was nearly large enough to accommodate a carnival ball. Faded green draperies hung against the pale yellow walls, and moulded Renaissance figures looked

down from the high ceiling. A large Venetian mirror hung above a white marble mantel 'veined like the bosom of a Naiad.' His massive bed stood in the centre of the room, its curtained canopy supported by carved mahogany columns sixteen feet tall. There were no pictures on the walls, and no carpet on the floor. Flower scents from the garden confirmed a melancholy atmosphere of something lost forever.

During the long, pestilent summer Hearn spent much time in this huge shadowy room, his malnourished body being subject to recurrent attacks of fever. Through the tall windows green-and-gold reflections drifted across his bed, and at night he could see a foam of stars and hear night-birds calling.

'I don't really care a damn whether I make much money or not,' he wrote to Watkin. 'I have done the last hard work I shall ever do. . . . I never felt so funny in my whole life. I have no ambition, no loves, no anxieties. . . . Life here is so lazy, — nights are so liquid with tropic moonlight, — days are so splendid with green and gold, — summer is so languid with perfume and warmth, — that I hardly know whether I am dreaming or awake.'

To Krehbiel he wrote in a similar vein. 'What material I can glean here, from this beautiful and legendary land, — this land of perfume and of dreams, — must be chiselled into shape elsewhere. . . . It must be afterward, in times to come, when I shall find myself in some cold, bleak land where I shall dream regretfully of the graceful palms; the swamp groves, weird in their ragged robes of moss; the golden ripples of the cane-fields under the summer wind, and this divine sky — deep and vast and cloudless as Eternity. . . . I do not wonder the South has produced nothing of literary art. Its beautiful realities fill the imagination to repletion. It is regret and desire and the Spirit of Unrest that provoketh poetry and romance. It is the North, with its mists and fogs, and its gloomy sky haunted by a fantastic and ever-changing panorama of clouds, which is the land of imagination and poetry.'

Each day a pretty French girl straightened his room; but she came and went like a wraith. As he watched her, he wisely confined himself to silent tributes, for his hair had been clipped to his bony skull and his dark one-eyed face presented no reassuring sight. But one day his patient diffidence was rewarded when she ventured to tell him one room of the house was haunted. Phantom hands clapped and phantom feet stamped if anyone dared enter. To have a ghost on the premises with all else he was receiving for his weekly three dollars was lagniappe pure and simple! And if the chambermaid was discouragingly shy, there were the voluble visits of an old black nurse who occasionally came in to supervise his fever. Flattered by his rapt attention, she could even be persuaded to croon him voodoo incantations.

For the first time since he had come to America, he was goaded by neither need nor restlessness, and he relaxed completely. It was lethargy as much as illness that kept him in his bed — a blissful release from tortured, driving nerves. 'It is all a dream here, I suppose, and will seem a dream even after the sharp awakening of another voyage, the immortal gods only know where.'

At last, though, the dream ended. During the first weeks of autumn the yellow-fever epidemic lifted. Boats once more sailed into the stricken port, and the cotton-presses yawned for the new cotton. Hearn's convalescence had likewise run its course, and as life quickened about him his ambition returned. Having to be at the office only three or four hours a day, he had managed to fulfil most of his obligations; but now he plunged into his work with renewed vigour.

Settling into his editorial stride, he inaugurated *Item* campaigns against police inefficiency, child labour, gang rule, and white slavery. Against 'those politicians masquerading as a Board of Health' he started unrelenting warfare. 'Zizi Bidonier,' with his creaking covered wagons and bucket-lines of broken old men, did not give way to more healthful sanitation methods, it is true. Lepers were not segregated, as he indignantly urged; nor even banned from walking the streets.

But he consulted physicians, read medical books, studied the solution of health problems in other cities, and continued his spirited attacks.

On the daring question 'Shall Women Smoke,' he pointed out that decay and ruin were creeping over the Turkish, Oriental, and Spanish countries where both sexes used tobacco. But women the world over, he sadly predicted, would eventually be smoking. He also foresaw the success of woman suffrage, which he likewise opposed, stating that the power of sex — the faculty of fascination — would allow one beautiful but wicked woman to 'effect more mischief in one week than a dozen beautiful but virtuous women could undo in a lifetime.'

To give the *Item* an international flavour, he read all important French and English publications. One day he might write on 'The Asiatic Horizon,' while the next would find him dealing with 'Russia and Germany — a Possible Coalition,' or 'Were There Communists in Antiquity?'

Another phase of his diversified writings was his scientific articles, the best of which leaned toward the unusual and speculative. Founded on his imaginative powers and wide reading rather than on systematic study, they touched upon all branches of anthropology, zoology, and astronomy. In the burgeoning scientific age he romanced along any path where truth might conceivably be hiding.

When he heard of the de Lesseps plan for converting the Sahara into an inland sea, he viewed the proposition excitedly. The Arctic Circle might spread its ice down over the temperate zone, grind mountain chains to powder, and change the length of night and day and the established seasons! He was also intrigued by the results of artificial botanical cultivation, and he dreamed of man as the possible creator of a beautiful sentient being whose life he dared not touch lest the broken bough utter a cry and 'the bitten fruit shrink like wounded flesh and fill the mouth with lukewarm blood.' But when he was in a realistic mood, he would ruthlessly decry 'the fuss about a medical student who dug up a Cincinnati belle

from her last resting place and made a good comfortable pair of slippers out of her opaline skin.' Although the locale of the incident afforded him sarcastic satisfaction, he expressed the sternly pragmatic hope that the twentieth century would put an end to such 'squeamishness' and utilize human skin rather than condemn it to rot uselessly.

During his free hours he prowled diligently about the city, and mined for hidden lore in libraries and second-hand bookstores. But the notes he took were not for independent writing. He had been so long out of print that he was eager to share every thought and impression with his *Item* readers, and he presented his glittering magpie booty for daily inspection. Spectral vignettes of local tragedy, tantalizing tag-ends of street drama, penetrating observations on customs at home and abroad, oblique human-interest touches in history — such things were the daily fare in 'Odds and Ends,' or 'Varieties.' He even — and earnestly — conducted a column of advice for young people.

But it was through his column, 'Our Book Table,' that he made his best contributions. These often outgrew their proper department and became the day's leading editorial. Though Emerson, Holmes, Lowell, and Emily Dickinson were still alive, the influence of New England's 'golden age' was rapidly fading. American fiction was forsaking its indigenous subject matter, and the *Item* editor pleaded for novels more uniquely native. It was not the hothouse growth of fashionable intellectuality that was needed, he argued. Upper-class thought and manners were largely the same the world over. It was the wild plants and natural blossoms of American life. The mining districts and the frontier towns, the suburbs of great industrial centres, 'the villages fringing the sea line or hidden among the wrinkles of the hills' — these were the locales for the truly American novel! And such men as Irving, Hawthorne, Holmes, and Bret Harte were the truly American writers!

A great deal of his attention went automatically to the French writers, and one of his outstanding editorials was 'The

Sexual Idea in French Literature.' In the magic atmosphere of Paris, he declared, the idea of love, not spiritual or vague but warmly materialistic, permeated literature. The modern French writer lifted up fibre after fibre of the heart and laid bare the physical, electric mechanism of passion 'with a certain terrible precision which suggests the steely nerve of a surgeon gained by long familiarity with what others fear to touch.'

Another significant article was based on Baudelaire's translation of Poe. Hearn worshipped Poe as a supreme artist and spiritual kinsman, while Baudelaire's 'wonderful insanities' shocked and delighted him. Baudelaire had studied English expressly that he might bring to French readers the works of his twin spirit, Poe; and Hearn commenting on his efforts completed the *simpatico* circle. He regretted Baudelaire's imperfect comprehension of the material he had undertaken to translate; but he doubted if any other French writer could have translated the sometimes untranslatable Poe with one-half Baudelaire's success.

He gave no such tempered criticism, however, to the work a certain John Stirling was doing on some of the novels of Flaubert and Zola. Evidently Stirling's artistic appreciation and integrity were of the lowest order, and his knowledge of French no more than rudimental. To these negative qualifications he added inexcusable carelessness and ruthless expurgations, his translations being little more than insensitive paraphrases woven loosely around the plots. It seems possible that in one instance the plot itself escaped him, for Zola's 'Une Page d'Amour' emerged from his treatment as 'The Amours of a Page.'

T. B. Peterson and Brothers of Philadelphia was publishing these mutilations, and since there were no international copyright laws French authors could not protect themselves from such misrepresentation. Beyond this, Hearn felt great harm was being done to American appreciation of French literature. Taking up arms against such unscrupulous commercialism, he

wrote scorching editorials against both Stirling and his publishers.

But while he was thus defending Zola's right to be accurately presented to foreign readers, he was torn two ways by that particular French luminary. Readily acknowledging him 'one of the greatest novelists who ever lived,' he nonetheless dealt sharply with his realism. Already it was beginning to overshadow the French romantic school, all of whose sins were atoned for 'by creations of unspeakable beauty and purity.' In reviewing 'Le Ventre de Paris' he could not resist saying: 'Probably Zola could write a very clever book about the sewers of Paris. He writes with an ink which smells of such subjects.'

This was a surprising attitude to be taken by one who had so recently written of slaughter-houses and fertilizer plants. But Hearn's tastes, with his style, were undergoing a marked refinement. The missionary touch of his love for beauty was turning him away from the loathsome; and hereafter, to attract him, the dreadful had to be eerie ghostliness or macabre high horror, and morbidity at least fantastic.

The indulgent *Item* editors soon found that in his routine work their new colleague had to be continually reminded of deadlines. 'But when he would write one of his own little fanciful things, out of his own head — dreams — he was always dreaming — why, then he would work like mad. And people always noticed those little things of his, somehow, for they were truly lovely, wonderful. "Fantastics" he called them.'

This comment was made by Colonel Fairfax on Hearn's most individualistic *Item* writings — his impressions of the tropical, dreamlike life of New Orleans. From a literary viewpoint the starved little esthete considered his 'Fantastics' insignificant. Yet he felt their underlying theme, the twin idea of love and death, of beauty and decay, was irrefutably artistic. 'There are tropical lilies which are venomous,' he conceded, 'but they are more beautiful than the frail and icy-white lilies of the North.'

The sun-paint, the ghostliness, the other-world romance of the Creole South were delicately outlined in these partially cut cameos of prose-poetry. They celebrated an era which was already becoming a nostalgic sachet in the secret places of the city, and in them Hearn put his joy and satisfaction.

Much of his writing he did in the quiet of his room, but even at the office he had an air of being cloistered in his work. This kept him somewhat apart from the rest of the staff, although two or three of the *Item* reporters became his personal friends. One of them was James Augustin, who became an intimate through his knowledge of New Orleans Creole history. Finding Hearn addicted to prowling about the French Quarter at night, he frequently accompanied him as a genial guide. While he recounted stories of the places they passed in the dark little balconied streets, Hearn would peer out sharply from under his broad-brimmed black hat, mentally jotting down his notes.

This hat, incidentally, was an astonishing new addition to his wardrobe, and in time it became a sartorial trademark and inspired good-natured bantering among his associates. When he was feeling exceptionally self-confident, he himself sometimes poked fun at it. But he clung to it stubbornly, thinking it concealed his blinded eye and possibly gave him a bit of romantic distinction. Augustin, of course, this early in the hat's history, was tactfully deferential.

It was Augustin, also, who introduced him to the famous Quadroon Balls, his offer to take him to one of the celebrated fêtes being instantly accepted. Because of Hearn's excessive shyness, he had planned to find a quiet corner from which they might watch the proceedings unnoticed. But no such corner was needed. Upon entering the building, Hearn immediately became animated; and soon he disappeared among the guests, as blithe and debonair as any. By three o'clock in the morning, Augustin was tired and ready to leave, and he was forced to leave without his guest.

Hearn now knew that his response to the darker skin-tones could bring tragic results in the case of Negroes, and he was

trying to guard his emotions. Yet at least once during his early years in New Orleans he relaxed his caution.

'I have suffered the tortures of a thousand damned souls,' he wrote to a friend. 'I was foolish enough to say "I am too strong by experience to be entrapped"; and I got caught in a terrible net. If you knew all, I am sure you would pity me. I became passionately in love before I knew it; and then! — It required all the reason and all the strength I could summon to save myself; but it took me months to do it — she came to me in dreams and made me feel her shadowy caresses. Don't think I am exaggerating. You have no idea of the strange fascination possessed by some of these *serpent women*. And at last the dreams became vaguer and have finally vanished. Yet as I write I do not dare to state that I am cured. I know that another kiss, even another look, would plunge me into a depth of ruin which no earthly power could save me from. And the temptation is always before me. You do not understand me, perhaps! You think I am writing folly and madness! But you could never understand me further unless you lived in this accursed city. Still I love it so much. I love New Orleans!'

CHAPTER 8

WITHIN a few months the echoing citadel of Creole romanticism on St. Louis Street became 'this awful house,' and Hearn abandoned it. With money enough for clean linen and a roof under which to change it, he liked frequent baths; and his landladies grumbled. Wooden tanks which caught the rain from the roofs held all the water fit for human use, and at times bathing was reduced to a minimum. (For drinking purposes it was safest to mix strong claret or the juice of a lemon or lime with the water.) Also, tubs and heavy buckets of water were not easy to carry up and down stairs for eccentric gentlemen who asked timidly but persistently for such services. So Hearn, desiring his morning tub, moved about the Vieux Carré in search of it.

One of the houses he lived in was a quiet old place opposite the French Opera House on Bourbon Street. At night from his window he could see fashionable audiences arrive and depart in a froth of light and colour. He attended the New Or-

leans première of 'Aïda' and wrote a glowing account of its plot for the next day's *Item*. And occasionally he went backstage to pick up human-interest stories, when a passing ballet dancer's swirl of pink net could incite a miniature study in aesthetic philosophy. But music in itself rarely interested him, and since the lights hurt his eye he never became an habitué of the famous opera house.

Other rooming-houses he came to know in New Orleans were less happily located and with no such claims to gentility. In one of them, its crazed brick walls green with age, a fortune-teller pursued her questionable divinations in a darkened room directly beneath his own. Each time he passed her open street door, he could see the wavering flames of two candles placed hopefully before a pair of human skulls. Among the inevitable palms and cacti in the ragged courtyard 'a quixotic horse, four cats, two rabbits, three dogs, five geese, and a seraglio of hens all lived together in harmony.'

But where he lived was no longer vitally important. He was much too busy to pay attention to the atmosphere of his room; and if he could bathe when he wished (which he seldom could), he asked for little more.

He now resumed his study of Spanish, and for a small sum engaged a Spaniard to come to his room and coach him for an hour each day. After his lesson he often accompanied his tutor to an obscure little alley restaurant off Dumaine Street, a gathering place for Spaniards from the waterfront. From his table he could see his food being prepared in the clean little kitchen, and for a quarter he could get a meal of four dishes with dessert and coffee. A tremendous appetite had overtaken him, and he revelled in the 'perfect' cooking he found in the Dumaine Street alley.

Eating, however, was not the only enjoyment he found in the little café. After their orders had been brought by the Manilan proprietor's yellow-skinned wife, slant-eyed and piquantly sinister, he listened to stories told him by and about his Spanish tutor. In 1865, he was informed *sotto voce*, Don —— had knifed a man in a drunken brawl and speedily

stowed away on a Spanish schooner sailing for Cuba. Some four years later he had returned; but not before all witnesses to the murder had conveniently disappeared from New Orleans. The furtive admiration of his friends implied that he was not yet tamed, or even as quiescent as he seemed.

But ostensibly, at least, the Spaniard was contenting himself with tutoring and free-lance journalism, and he regaled his pupil with reminiscences of Cuba and the Spanish Main. Adventure, romance, mystery, age-old beauty — was there anything at all one wanted that couldn't be found there? Hearn kept all these things in mind as he applied himself to his exercises.

'*Tiene U. una muchachona? No, pero tengo un hombrecillo.*'

'Have you a big strapping girl?' he translated. 'No, but I have a miserable little man.'

Before long he was taking more than a passing interest in the restaurant-keeper's methods of operation. His 'pard' of the previous spring — ever talking of easy, quick money — still hovered in the background of his life. Recently, knowing Hearn still longed to free himself from 'the whims of employers,' he had suggested a fraudulent real-estate scheme: selling land in pound boxes. Now he was talking of opening a cheap eating-place; and Hearn listened more willingly. This would be a respectable business, and through it he might be able to taste for himself the delights of the Spanish Main!

To Krehbiel he wrote of leaving American civilization for other horrors not yet revealed, of going to some tropical remoteness where the population was so mixed that no one's nationality could be accurately determined. — With a knowledge of three languages he could prosecute his wanderings over the face of the earth without fear of starving after each migration.

'I see antiquated vessels from outlandish tropical ports come in, and I creep on board; and when they spread their white wings for flight to the far, far South, my soul — (such a soul as I have) floats after them in a sigh. . . . Some day I

shall creep under the shadow of a sail and lie down on a coil of rope, and sail away.'

Early in 1879 he began working toward the realization of such dreams. His salary was now twenty dollars a week; and by shifting back from cigars to a pipe, discontinuing his occasional purchases of rare books, and cooking his meals over a small gas-burner in his room, he managed to reduce his living expenses to five dollars a week. When he had hoarded almost a hundred dollars, he and his 'Yankee pard' rented a little one-story building at 160 Dryades Street. Making a down-payment on the cheapest equipment that would do, they hired a woman cook, stocked the larder, and opened for trade during the last days of February. A swinging door led invitingly from the street, and a back room catered to colored customers.

The Northerner, claiming unlimited knowledge of the restaurant business, was manager *in persona* as his contribution to the partnership. Hearn was manager *in absentia*, anonymous lest he lose his editorial position. Until the enterprise was well on its feet, he would have to finance it with his *Item* salary; but as soon as its profits warranted, he would quit newspaper work and do independent writing. He might also start a second café before he began travelling.

The restaurant's opening was announced by yellow handbills advertising 'The 5-Cent Restaurant, 160 Dryades Street.' They told of 'the cheapest eating place in the South,' as neat and respectable as any in the city and with everything half the price of the markets. But within a few days Hearn decided upon wider and more spectacular publicity. The café was renamed 'The Hard Times,' and on the second of March the *Item* carried this brief advertisement: 'The Hard Times, 160 Dryades Street, satisfies hunger for one nickel.'

For nearly three weeks similar little ads appeared regularly in the *Item*, growing always more arresting.

'We can whip all creation for 5-cent grub.'

'Solomon was a wise man. He would have boarded at 160 Dryades Street.'

'The Queen of Sheba would have been more pleased with 160 Dryades than with Solomon.'

'"The Lord my pasture shall prepare." That refers to the next life. In this one go to 160 Dryades.'

Business was good from the beginning. But Hearn soon suffered a change of heart about his partner. He realized that the man could bear watching; and during his free hours he stayed at the restaurant — checking the ledger, waiting on the tables, and making himself useful in any way he could. He wrote Krehbiel that the profits of the Hard Times were about three hundred per cent. — But the tax collector hadn't been around yet, he added cautiously.

Perhaps he was estimating the profits by the gratifying weight of the money bag each night. And, justifying his suspicions, the money bag was also influencing his partner's line of thought. The gross profits were to remain untouched until the monthly bills were due, and the money was steadily accumulating.

As the day for settling the accounts drew near, his uneasiness mounted. But he could think of no way to protect himself from some possible Yankee defection. By the twenty-third of March he was too worried for ad-writing, and he turned back to the first advertisement he had used. 'The Hard Times satisfies hunger for one nickel,' the *Item* doggedly reiterated.

Undoubtedly there was poor service at 160 Dryades that evening, and no fresh pie on the menu. Neither manager could keep his mind on the customers; and the kitchen seemed likewise distraught. Hearn watched his partner from the corner of his eye, sure that misfortune was about to strike. The Northerner, on the other hand, was too deeply engrossed in private calculations to notice empty coffee cups. Each thing to its season.

That night he absconded with the total receipts of the business. For good measure he took the cook with him.

Despite his forebodings, this was a body-blow for the gullible little *Item* editor. Wrecked hopes and shattered

dreams were only part of it. Since all equipment and supplies had been bought in his name, he now had to pour more money into a rat-hole aggregate of debts. And where were the clothes he had planned to buy? — *Had* to buy if he was to continue appearing in public! He sold a few French translations to the *Democrat*, but the money they brought did comparatively little to relieve his indebtedness. For a number of months every dollar he could save from his *Item* salary went to his creditors; and Spanish America faded back bitterly over the horizon.

With the coming of summer, however, distant places again called; but his restless yearning pointed in a different direction. During the twenty-five years since Japan had been opened to the Occident, interest in its civilization had become an intellectual cult. Buddhism was being studied and discussed, and individual pilgrimages were being made to the Far East. For some time Hearn had been reading everything he could find on Japanese folklore, art, and philosophy. Now he reminded himself that many Europeans lived in Japan; and American, English, and French newspapers were being published there. The island offered a splendid field of opportunities, he wrote Watkin, and its climate was even milder than England's. It couldn't possibly be as bad as New Orleans. No honest man should consider going into business in New Orleans! It was infested with Parisian roués, Sicilian murderers, Irish ruffians, political quacks, medical quacks, literary quacks, adventurers, robbers, and villains. (Whatever the demands upon it, his invective was nobly categorical.)

But his Hard Times indebtedness was a restraining leash on dreams of Japan, and soon Colonel Fairfax made an announcement which wiped them out of his mind. The *Item* was in financial straits of its own; and unless something was done quickly, it would have to cease publication.

Weighed down by his private debts, Hearn frantically cast about for some way to build up the little paper's circulation. Unable to sleep, he would leave his bed in the middle of the night, light his pipe, and sit staring out through the vines screening his window, trying to devise some workable scheme.

— Debts, debts, debts! All his miserly economies, and nothing to show for them but debts! — And now the threat of no job!

Under the pressure of the emergency, he soon had an idea. — Why not try illustrations on the front page of the *Item*? No paper in that part of the country was carrying cartoons, and they ought surely to catch the public's eye. He himself could draw the pictures and write doggerel or editorials to accompany them. — He could even carve out the woodcuts if necessary!

This he did; and the lively little sketches, displaying exceptionally good cartoonist skill, were as varied as his *Item* writings. No city could have offered more picturesque material, and whether his drawings were comic or serious, they were so strikingly conceived that they caught the public fancy at once.

Soon the *Item* began edging back from 'the verge of dissolution,' but until its financial soundness was re-established some five months later, the arresting, provocative little sketches were part of his daily work. Now, when he wandered about the city, roamed along the wharves, or stopped in the dusty, tumbled bookshops of the French Quarter, he was filling his notebook with sketches as well as notes.

He was also writing 'stacks of manuscript' on Creole topics of every kind; for Creole folklore lay everywhere about him, and most of it was still unrecorded. Collecting proverbs, herb remedies, and cooking recipes were among his minor projects; and in this work the *bonnes vieilles* Negresses who sold sweetmeats under the shadowy street awnings were a friendly source of information. In free moments he stopped to munch a pecan or coconut praline and talk with the billowy, starched old women.

He talked, too, with the mixed-blood girls in the French Market as he sipped their strong black coffee with an epicure's appreciation. And landladies, knowingly or not, were always contributing to his knowledge. Also washerwomen. But non-academically he regretted much of his knowledge of

the landladies and washerwomen of the Vieux Carré, for they formed an exasperating *obbligato* to his domestic existence.

By this time he had become known in the intellectual circles of New Orleans, and scholarly old Creole gentlemen as well as the American literati were appreciating his vast fund of esoteric information and conversational charm. But though he was more than welcome among such people, he could seldom force himself to attend their gatherings. Now and then he would spend a quiet evening in the home of some courtly old scholar who still felt a fine Creole scorn for anything outside the boundaries of the French Quarter. And occasionally he joined a distinguished coterie of writers and art patrons who assembled in the back room of Armand Hawkins's book and antique shop for a night session of informal talk. But while most of these men were authorities on Louisiana lore, he gathered most of his Creole material from humble, mixed-blood sources.

As one of his more serious undertakings in this field, he was collecting Creole songs and recording their melodies; and in this he was co-operating with another New Orleans writer who was a recognized authority. Before leaving Cincinnati he had read George W. Cable's 'Jean-ah Poquelin' in *Scribner's Magazine*. His enthusiasm over it had led him to call on the rising author of Creole stories soon after arriving in New Orleans; and now the two men were seeing each other frequently, comparing notes and discussing plans and projects.

Cable was a frail, quiet little man of puritanical New England stock, and his beliefs and viewpoints were so diametrically opposed to Hearn's that their mutual literary interests were their only bond. Privately Hearn thought Cable's style lacked polish, but he found 'a puissant charm' in his Louisiana stories, and considered his literary power singular enough to merit frequent praise in the *Item* columns.

The two writers often worked together in collecting folksongs, and Cable helped write out the music for some of the Creole songs Hearn gathered. But here, too, Hearn was inclined to be critical, questioning his friend's accuracy. This

was rather absurd, since he himself could scarcely identify one note from another, while Cable could transcribe the melodies to paper while they were being sung. But that may have been why Hearn suspected his work. It was done so easily. Music was outside a writer's province, he felt, and required special training. Probably, too, he was unconsciously jealous. For he sent many of the scores to Krehbiel and would have liked it better had the simple melodies been his own contribution. At least he would have considered them worthier of Krehbiel's attention had more meticulous care been expended upon them.

Cable also found flaws in Hearn, the puritan condemning the pagan. But neither man was openly critical, and their differences did not outweigh their mutual interests.

Although he devoted much of his time to Creole material during this period, Hearn was also studying other branches of folklore. With his Hard Times debts behind him, he could again buy rare old books to gloat over in bibliomaniac delight; and more fields of folklore opened before him. He was now collecting English and French translations of ancient Hindu, Hebraic, and Arabian classics; and he practised writing the Arabic script.

Numerous *Item* writings were reflecting his growing interest in the gypsy lore of both hemispheres; and with the coming of another spring his gypsy studies reawakened his interest in Spanish America. He yearned to hear the sandalled sentries call '*Sereño alerto*' through the nighttime streets of little Conquistadores cities; and he would have been glad to live among Spanish-speaking people for a while and get away from even his own language. He had no real hope of leaving New Orleans this year, but he began reading books and newspapers from Mexico, Central and South America, and Spain. Soon he was culling notes and writing out careful translations of choice passages to share with his readers of Spanish descent. This led to an idea for a new feature, a weekly column of news and literary extracts from French and Spanish publications. It would be a journalistic innovation, but not one he was

willing to conduct without extra pay, for he now respected the protection a savings account could give him. 'Thou knowest full well that Woe is the normal condition of the Raven's existence,' he wrote Watkin.

Colonel Fairfax was paying him as large a salary as he could afford, but he had no objection to his selling the feature to another paper. Since the *Democrat* had been willing to buy his translations the previous spring, he presented his idea to that paper, and it was quickly accepted. In May, 1880, the 'Foreign Press' began filling one or two columns of the *Democrat's* Sunday editions and was soon a popular success. It contained a generous supply of news items and editorial comment from Spanish and Mexican papers, and tales from Spanish-American literature. But the stellar rôle was played by translations from French writings, and these included squibs and brief critiques from leading periodicals along with wisely and tantalizingly chosen passages from Baudelaire, Daudet, Flaubert, Huysmans, Loti, Maupassant, Sardou, Zola, and many others. The 'Foreign Press' became a stimulating potpourri of news and literature, rich with the flavour and spirit of the original words.

Since coming to Louisiana, Hearn had tried to confine his reading and writing to daylight hours; but he was still having trouble with his eye. Part of the retina had been destroyed by the illness and malnutrition of his first spring in New Orleans, and the great amount of reading he was doing made his eye feel 'eternally played out.' Yet his antlike industry continued, and he often accused himself of laziness. Watkin and Krehbiel were as yet the only friends with whom he regularly corresponded, but the hours he spent over his letters consumed an appreciable amount of his time.

Along with business worries, Henry Watkin was being troubled by poor health, and he was writing no more than three or four letters a year to Louisiana. In answer Hearn sent him long letters of affectionate concern and repeatedly urged him to come South. — And if he wasn't in a mood to write, couldn't he at least send a line from time to time so his anxious

little friend would know how he was? When the printer tentatively planned a trip to Tampa, Florida, he sent him all available information about that city, his fine handwriting covering five large sheets of paper and reporting on everything from the flea situation to the size of the Florida moon. In writing to his 'dear old dad' he needed no protective mask, for he was writing to the one friend who never criticized. As a result he never exposed the older man to the stinging irascibility that punctuated his other friendships.

With Krehbiel it was quite different. But the young music critic was a more conscientious correspondent, and as a devoted friend and fellow-littérateur Hearn wrote him frequently and at great length. His letters were at once an eager self-indulgence and a generous sacrifice of time and eye-strength.

Sometimes for a week or so he was forced to discontinue all reading and writing, and after one such painful interlude he wrote to him: 'I am interested in your study of Assyrian archaeology. It is a pity there are so few good works on the subject. Layard's *unabridged* works are very extensive; but I do not remember seeing them in the Cincinnati Library. Rawlinson, I think, is more interesting in style and more thorough in research. The French are making fine explorations in this direction. . . . In the Cincinnati Library is a splendid copy of the work on Egyptian antiquities prepared under Napoleon I, wherein you will find coloured prints — from photographs — of the musical instruments found in the catacombs and hypogaea. . . .

'You will master these things much more thoroughly than ever I shall — although I love them. I have only attempted, however, to photograph the *rapports* of the antiquities in my mind, like memories of a panoramic procession; while to you, the procession will not be one of shadows, but of splendid facts, with the sound of strangely ancient music and the harmonious tread of sacrificial bands, — all preserved for you through the night of ages. And the life of vanished cities and the pageantry of dead faiths will have far more charming

reality for you, — the Musician, — than ever for me, — the Dreamer.

'I can't see well enough yet to do much work. I have written an essay upon luxury and art in the time of Elagabalus; but now that I read it over again I am not satisfied with it and fear it will not be published. And by the way — I request, and beg, and entreat, and supplicate, and petition, and pray that you will not forget about Mephistopheles. Here, in the sweet perfume-laden air, and summer of undying flowers, I feel myself moved to write the musical romance whereof I spake unto you in the days that were.

'I can't say that things look very bright here otherwise. The prospect is dark as that of stormy summer night, with feverish pulses of lightning in the far sky-border, — the lightning signifying hopes and fantasies. But I shall stick to my pedestal of faith in literary possibilities like an Egyptian colossus with a broken nose, seated solemnly in the gloom of its own originality.

'Times are not good here. The city is crumbling into ashes. It has been buried under a lava-flood of taxes and frauds and maladministrations so that it has become only a study for archaeologists. Its condition is so bad that when I write about it, as I intend to do soon, nobody will believe I am telling the truth. But it is better to live here in sackcloth and ashes than to own the whole State of Ohio.'

When Krehbiel found praise for his 'Fantastics,' but felt their author could do something more worthy of his talents, Hearn answered that he feared his friend was greatly overestimating his talents. The 'Fantastics' were trivial, he knew; but he was doomed to move in trivial circles to the end. However, on one subject he would tolerate no criticism or disparagement — as one of his finest and most famous letters makes abundantly clear.

'My Dear Krehbiel, — Pray remember that your ancestors were the very Goths and Vandals who destroyed the marvels of Greek art which even Roman ignorance and ferocity had spared; and I perceive by your last letter that you possess still

traces of that Gothic spirit which detests all beauty that is not beautiful with the fantastic and unearthly beauty that is Gothic.

'You cannot make a Goth out of a Greek, nor can you change the blood in my veins by speaking to me of a something vague and gnostic and mystic which you deem superior to all that any Latin mind could conceive.

'I grant the existence and the weird charm of the beauty that Gothic minds conceived; but I do not see less beauty in what was conceived by the passion and poetry of other races of mankind. This is a cosmopolitan art era: and you must not judge everything which claims art-merit by a Gothic standard.

'Let me also tell you that you do not as yet know anything of the spirit of Greek Art, — or the sources which inspired its miraculous compositions; and that to do so you would have to study the climate, the history, the ethnological record, the religion, the society of the country which produced it. My own knowledge is, I regret to say, very imperfect, — but it is sufficient to give me the right to tell you that you were wrong to accuse me of abandoning Greek ideals, or to lecture me upon what is and what is not art in matters of form and colour and literature. I might say the same thing in regard to your judgment of French writers: you confound Naturalism with Romanticism, and *vice versa.*

'Again, do not suppose that I am insensible to other forms of beauty. You judge all art, I fear, by inductions from that in which you are a master; but the process in your case is false; — nor will you be able to judge the artistic soul of a people adequately by its musical productions, until you have passed another quarter of a century in the study of the music of different races and ages and civilizations. Then it is possible that you may find that secret key; but you cannot possibly do it now, learned as you are, nor do I believe there are a dozen men in the world who could do it.

'Now I am with the Latin; I live in a Latin city; — I seldom hear the English tongue except when I enter the office for a few brief hours. I eat and drink and converse with members

of the races you detest like the son of Odin that you are. I see beauty here all around me, — a strange, tropical, intoxicating beauty. I consider it my artistic duty to let myself be absorbed into this new life, and study its form and colour and passion. And my impressions I occasionally put into the form of the little fantastics which disgust you so much, because they are not of the Aesir and Jötunheim. Were I able to live in Norway, I should try also to intoxicate myself with the Spirit of the Land. . . .

'The law of true art, even according to the Greek idea, is to seek beauty wherever it is to be found, and separate it from the dross of life as gold from ore. You do not see beauty in animal passion; — yet passion was the inspiring breath of Greek art and the mother of language; and its gratification is the act of a creator, and the divinest rite of Nature's temple. . . .'

CHAPTER 9

THE WINTER of 1880–81 in New Orleans was one of incessant rain, the 'sickening weight of foul air, and a sky grey as the face of Melancholy.' Surrounding lakes and bayous overflowed their banks, and much of the town was flooded. Boats were rowed over the sidewalks, and poisonous snakes wriggled in the stonework of the gutters.

There was little Hearn could do at night but sit by his fire, and when he was drawn to his dormer window by screams or shouting, he could see nothing but wet roofs and dripping gables. By this time he was admitting a growing distaste for the French Quarter, saying he was swindled there all the time, and knew it. He was weary, too, of all New Orleans. The first delightful impressions had vanished, and the city of his dreams, bathed in the gold of eternal summer, was gone. In its place he now found a 'material and moral rottenness' to which no pen could do justice. He felt like an amorous youth waking to find the beautiful witch he had embraced through

the night falling into a heap of calcined bones and ashes. Or like the only living creature in a city cursed with desolation. A city whose heart was a cemetery two centuries old, its tombs crumbling horribly on top of the swampy delta earth.

The dark, wet weather was only partially responsible for this sad indictment of a faded dream. The crushing load of work he had been carrying for two and one-half years was at last taking its toll. Much of the time he was half-ill; and attacks of severe pain in his eye brought on spells of partial blindness. — Where would all this end? In the daytime he could laugh the thought away, but at night it invariably returned to haunt him.

To what could he devote himself? To nothing! Any really artistic effort required heartbreakingly long study and a financial outlay far beyond his means. Even then one had to wait years for recognition. — And how learned one had to be to write on a truly noble subject! All that was left open to him was the lesser realm of the imagination, where vagueness of expression could hide the absence of real knowledge and technical precision. Yet how could his imagination rise on dampened wings through weather as gloomy as Tartarus?

The following spring and summer he dared do little reading or writing not directly essential to his newspaper work. This enforced rest improved both his health and his sight, and soon he was being called 'the fat boy' at the office. But the inner springs had not rewound so tightly, and his dynamic enthusiasm for New Orleans was gone.

'What you want,' he wrote Krehbiel, 'and what we all want who possess devotion to any noble idea, who hide any artistic idol in a niche of the heart, is that independence which gives us at least the time to worship the holiness of beauty.' But there seemed to be no immediate way to ameliorate his circumstances or free himself from 'that intensely vulgar and detestably commonplace thing called American journalism.'

Until his death the lash of artistic aspiration was to keep Hearn's one straining eye held close over books, notes, and manuscript. Thus far he had had but little time for purely lit-

erary effort, but his years on the *Item* staff had not been wasted. He had been gathering his material about him and familiarizing himself with the tools he would use. But now, at the age of thirty-one, journalistic accomplishment was no longer enough. He needed higher recognition and more opportunity to develop his skill. While still feeding the daily press he must somehow reserve a portion of his time and eye-strength for independent writing. Although as yet he could think of no way to do this, he was working on a compromise plan which might possibly be realized.

His translations of French fiction were receiving extensive attention in the *Democrat*, 'King Candaule' running in installments 'with delightful results of shocking people.' This encouraged him to continue a year-long search for a publishing house willing to bring out a volume of his Gautier translations. If he could do this, he would be contributing to the appreciation of fine literature and at the same time making his professional début under the glorious banner of French romanticism.

He fully realized that he would never be a great genius, but he could still hope to serve literature by adding a small grain of beauty to its vast store. As he alternated between impatience and despairing resignation, that hope was brought nearer by an unforeseen turn of events.

By 1881, poverty-stricken, disease-ridden New Orleans was showing the first signs of economic recovery; and late that year Louisiana journalism took a step forward. The *New Orleans Democrat* purchased the *Times*, to become, as the *Times-Democrat*, one of the South's leading newspapers. Page Baker was made editor-in-chief, his brother Marion became Sunday editor, and George Dupré was appointed managing editor.

Tall, thin, eagle-faced and goatee-ed, Page Baker so closely resembled an incarnate Mephistopheles that he rarely consented to be photographed. The resemblance was highly amusing, since he was actually a very likeable man and unfailingly considerate. Yet his sharp, dark features were not entirely out of character. When some obstacle was to be overcome, or some plot checked and its instigator exposed,

he was diabolically keen and resourceful. He was a Southern gentleman who had been tempered in the fires of the Reconstruction.

In selecting for his staff the most brilliant and accomplished journalists available, Baker chose John Augustin, a brother-in-law of Dupré, as his city editor and dramatic and music critic. Coming from a cultured old Creole family, Augustin had been an officer in the Confederate Army, and his 'War Flowers' had won him a local reputation as a poet. He was also an authority on the punctilious code of the duel and was much in demand as a second. He had 'a caressing, abysmal voice,' and his manners were at all times impeccable, every tone and gesture automatically, minutely exact.

The '*beau sabreur*' of the staff was handsome, captivating Honoré Burthe, whose ancestors had likewise come to Louisiana as aristocratic French colonists. He was a lineal descendant of one of Napoleon's marshals and after graduating from Saint-Cyr he had served as an officer in Maximilian's Mexican campaign. He wore distinction like a coat flung carelessly over the shoulder, and his courage equalled his courtesy.

The presence of such men on the *Times-Democrat* staff was not as incongruous as it might seem. Louisiana journalism, like Louisiana politics, bore many of the aspects of a spirited campaign, and both callings drew recruits from the finest families.

There was no question about the literary editorship, and that position was offered to Hearn with a salary of thirty dollars a week, and capable assistants to relieve him of much of the work. The 'Foreign Press' had gradually narrowed down to French translations, and that popular feature was by all means to be continued. An occasional editorial would complete his duties. He would be the *Times-Democrat's* literary editor and translator. No other New Orleans paper had a translator.

Hearn accepted the position with alacrity; and when the *Times-Democrat* went to press on December 4, 1881, he did not

again overload himself with volunteer work. Had he been tempted, Page Baker would have discouraged it. As the brightest literary light on a staff of superior writers, his talent was to be protected and nourished.

On Sunday and two or three times through the week he wrote special articles or editorials. To celebrate the initial meeting of the Creole Association he wrote 'Some Notes on Creole Literature,' and 'The Scientific Value of Creole.' During the Arab revolt in the Sudan he wrote 'The Rise of the Mahdi,' while 'Moslem Observances' marked the annual Moslem period of fasting. And occasionally he wrote editorials of purely local interest. But the majority of his feature articles were excellent essays on artistic, philosophic, and literary topics — written with an eye to later, more formal publication and used in the interim 'after the fashion of the *feuilletonistes*.'

His translations grew in volume, but otherwise remained as they had been from the beginning — masterly. His skill in such work seems to have needed no apprenticeship. Or perhaps his high standards had forced him on each word to scale up from apprentice to master craftsman.

But the work that lay closest to his heart — his poetic prose — had not been born of a mature skill, and the constant threat of deadlines had prevented any notable progress. The mood which had originated his 'Fantastics' was almost gone, but Baudelaire's observation, '*Quel est celui de nous qui n'a pas, dans ses jours d'ambition, rêvé le miracle d'une prose poétique, musicale sans rhythme et sans rime,*' burned ever brighter in his mind. Now, with more time at his disposal, he pruned his words and burnished his phrases until the music of his style came out more clearly.

Words in themselves were highly important to his style, and certain ones had long since become his signature. But he had been overeager in building up his vocabulary, and at times he had reached too far in avoiding the hackneyed and commonplace. Also, guilty of an aesthetic myopia, he had frequently been entranced by the loveliness of a word but blind

to the cloying effect of its meaning. He was now working to correct these weaknesses, and small affectations and emotional extravagances were disappearing from his writing. His prose-poetry was often too fragile and scented for robust tastes, but at its best it had the shimmering beauty of exquisitely cut jewels.

He had now entered his golden years as a journalist. Locally he had no peer, and at the office he was accorded intelligent appreciation and every courtesy. Courtesy, in truth, was extended him so automatically that it placed him on the defensive; for the polished *savoir-faire* of such men as Augustin and Burthe augmented his sense of social awkwardness. But though his temperament denied him much pleasant companionship with his *Times-Democrat* colleagues, his new associations were an agreeable background for his work.

Page Baker, who immediately became his friend and protector, had not hired him without knowledge of his difficult disposition. He knew that he was filled with suspicions and tender to the most trivial, even fancied, slight. He knew, too, or soon discovered, that some minor occurrence could throw him into a violent rage.

Alterations in his copy were the most common cause of these paroxysms. Often it was his method of punctuation that created the disturbance; and since coming to New Orleans he used dashes as generously as semicolons. A semicolon changed to a comma, or a dash omitted, could plunge him into a black dudgeon. His punctuation was part of his style, he contended, and no other markings could produce the effect or clearness of meaning he wanted.

This was frequently debatable; but Page Baker was willing to concede him his most minute marking. The lowly typesetters, however, were inclined to be less amiable. Who was this fellow to be lathering his copy with useless dots and dashes? Sometimes they took it upon themselves to remedy the situation. Or, in the profusion of his markings, an unnecessary hyphen or eccentric comma might quite honestly be overlooked.

Eventually Page Baker issued an ultimatum. Mr. Hearn's punctuation was to appear in print exactly as in his handwritten copy, with no alterations or omissions countenanced — whatever their cause or reason. New Orleans' supply of typesetters could easily fill any vacancy the *Times-Democrat* might suddenly find in its ranks.

Unfortunately, no such measure could be taken to avoid trouble over occasional editing of his copy. Baker himself performed this delicate operation, and it often meant a break in friendly relations. Generally Hearn maintained that the very paragraph which had been 'tampered with' or 'suppressed' was the finest part of his entire article. Claiming a cowardly fear of advertisers had brought about this outrage, he would tear the heavens apart and cast Baker into outer darkness.

But no one was especially surprised by these distressing scenes; and presently Hearn would again be claiming that no man was Baker's superior in grace and consideration. He was in reality very fond of him and admitted that he could never get quite enough of his company.

To be sure that all went well, Baker himself frequently read proof on Hearn's copy. Often he called Hearn into his office and read aloud one of his poetic vagaries that had just come in from the pressroom, and these were happy moments for the literary editor. With his words coming back to him through Baker's quiet voice, and the smell of their damp ink in his nostrils, he basked in deep contentment.

Marion Baker likewise assumed the duties of guardian angel; and not confining their kindness to office hours the Bakers introduced Hearn to many of their personal friends. Most of these people saw him once and no more; but he found a Mrs. A. C. Durno so 'charming and kindhearted' that he often went to her hospitable little house without special urging. Mrs. Durno wrote verse and short pieces of fiction, but it was her nephew, Lieutenant O. T. Crosby, of the United States Army Engineer Corps, whom he most enjoyed.

He and the young army officer became close friends and

Crosby's technical knowledge inspired him to a *Times-Democrat* April Fool's Day hoax which was so successful that it assumed the proportions of a major scoop. But Lieutenant Crosby also performed a far greater service — one which won Hearn's lifelong gratitude. The young West Point graduate was interested in philosophy and persuaded Hearn to read Herbert Spencer's 'First Principles,' which marked an intellectual turning-point in his life. After spending many months studying the book, feeling like a man mounting a long series of ladders in darkness, he gained a new conception of life, 'and from that time the world never again appeared to me quite the same.' After further study of Spencer's philosophy, he declared himself converted away from all isms and 'filled with the vague but omnipotent consolation of the Great Doubt.'

Page Baker was not married, but Marion's wife was another of the few New Orleans hostesses who could claim Lafcadio Hearn as a personal friend. If strangers were present when he called at the Durno or Baker house, he would find a secluded corner and sit listening quietly, his hand instinctively shielding his blinded eye. At such times his face was stripped of all expression, and sadness seemed to be a structural part of his features. If efforts were made to draw him into the conversation, he would leave as quickly and unobtrusively as possible.

When he was alone with intimate friends, however, he moved restlessly about the room while he talked — running sensitive fingers down the fold of a curtain, along the carved back of a chair, or across the top of a table. Should a small object attract his attention, he would pick it up and examine it through a magnifying glass he carried in his pocket. In a garden he touched the petals of a flower in passing, or tried the strength of a leaf. But there was no groping for words in the smooth flow of his thoughts, and his low, diffident voice engrossed rather than monopolized attention.

Not many weeks after he started working for the *Times-Democrat*, Hearn had gone to Page Baker with the triumphant

announcement that he had found a publisher for his Gautier translations. R. Worthington, of New York, was willing to bring them out if Hearn would advance one hundred and fifty dollars as half the expense of publication. This sum would be repaid him along with additional royalties if the sales warranted. He had enough money to meet Worthington's demand, and though he had few illusions about the royalties which would accrue from his book, he was willing to risk the hundred and fifty dollars to get it published. It was an artistic venture which in mid-Victorian America might well have to be its own reward. For Hearn it was also a personal labour of love, since to him Gautier was far more than a French romanticist. He was above all else a poet who worshipped exotic beauty and chiselled his poems to graceful perfection. As a high priest of classic beauty and a disciple of the voluptuous warmth of living, he symbolized everything Hearn held precious.

Baker had agreed it would be wise to risk a small financial loss to get his first book printed; and now in April, 1882, the little volume appeared. He had chosen what he considered the six finest stories — 'One of Cleopatra's Nights,' 'Clarimonde,' 'Arria Marcella,' 'The Mummy's Foot,' 'Omphale,' and 'King Candaule' — and as 'One of Cleopatra's Nights' the book was accepted by discerning authorities as the work of a master. French critics declared it presented not merely translations but English equivalents of the original stories.

The book also brought a small shower of enthusiastic letters from literary editors, Eastern readers, and a few scholarly authors. But, as Hearn had expected, the time and the place limited its audience. Nor would he have regretted a further limitation in certain quarters, for many of the critical notices were viciously unkind. 'The holy Observer,' he wrote a new-found friend, 'declared that the "Cleopatra" was a collection of "stories of unbridled lust without the apology of natural passion"; that "the translation reeked with the miasma of the brothel," etc., etc., — and Worthington was much exercised thereat.'

Worthington, it turned out, was an old-fashioned Methodist whose courage in publishing the book had risen from his ignorance. After reading reviews which termed it lewd and licentious, he observed 'a peculiar and sinister silence' for a number of months. Hearn guessed that he might be sitting on the stool of orthodox repentance; and he also surmised that if he broke his silence it would not be with money. But neither this nor the adverse criticism could cancel certain satisfactions. At last a book bore his name, and at last a few examples of Gautier's work could be enjoyed in English.

Also, the favourable comment he received encouraged a long-cherished dream: an English realization of the Latin style. This, he thought, could be modelled on the foreign masters, but made more forceful by the element of strength inherent in Northern tongues. Although no one man could hope to accomplish the task, even a translator might carry his stone to the master masons of such a new language-architecture.

Admirers urged him to publish more French translations, and toward the end of the year he resurrected the Flaubert translation he had done in Cincinnati. Though he would again be willing to pay part of the publishing costs if necessary, he submitted the manuscript to Worthington with little hope. — 'Le Tentation de Saint Antoine' was admittedly audacious, but to emasculate it would be a literary crime.

Worthington was in Europe at the time, but apparently the voyage did not broaden his viewpoint. When he returned to New York, he hastily sent the manuscript back to New Orleans, and Hearn filed it away in his 'Cemetery of the Rejected.' It was eventually published, but not until six years after his death.

Oddly enough, a Congregational divinity student named Wayland Ball was one of those who wrote Hearn most enthusiastically about the 'Cleopatra.' He was eager for him to translate 'Mlle. de Maupin,' but Hearn saw no hope whatever for its publication. If a publisher would print it exactly as he translated it, he wrote Ball, he would be willing to do the

work even without pay. But he was convinced that no such publisher existed in America. His own plans were now to do collected translations from four or five other French writers — if his health and newspaper duties would permit.

To assuage Ball's disappointment, he hurriedly translated and sent him a few excerpts from 'Mlle. de Maupin.' Some of them William Hurrell Mallock had cried down in 'Is Life Worth Living?' and Hearn wrote: 'I suppose you know that Mallock's aim is to prove that everybody not a Catholic is a fool.' No one but Catholics, he pointed out, considered the consummation of love intrinsically impure, or attempted to identify purity with virginity.

Among the extracts he sent Ball was the following: 'Virginity, thou bitter plant, born upon a soil blood-moistened, whose wan and sickly flower opes painfully within the damp shadows of the cloister. . . . The antique world knew thee not, O fruitless flower! In that vigorous and healthy life thou wouldst have been disdainfully trampled under foot! Virginity, mysticism, melancholy, — three unknown words, three new maladies brought among us by the Christ.'

Mallock had also pictured Gautier as an Antichrist, and Hearn included a superb translation of 'Secret Affinities' from Gautier's 'Emaux et Camées,' calling it only a rough prose translation with all unison gone. The original poem, he declared, was a microcosm of artistic pantheism bearing the germ of a faith sweeter and nobler and purer than anything Mallock could comprehend.

Later on, Ball suggested that through correspondence he and Hearn undertake a comparative study of Buddhism and Christianity. But Hearn discouraged this, saying he could see little good that would come of it. His own humble studies had revealed to him the sincerity of man's universal aspiration toward the Infinite and Supreme. This aspiration he found so mighty and touching that he no longer saw absurdity in any general idea of worship — whether it centred around the crucified deity or the Hindoo god of light wearing a necklace of skulls and holding Phallus in one of his many hands.

Personally he was inclined to think Christ a myth, just as Buddha was now known to have developed from an ancient Aryan sun-myth. — But what mattered creeds, myths, and traditions except for their relation to the development of ethical ideas in general? Why trouble oneself with detailed comparisons when all thinkers, however different their approach, were striving to reach the same Infinite? Worlds were but dreams of God. The civilization of a planet was but an incident of its growth. The galaxies of suns burned out, and the heavens withered. Even time and space were only relative.

CHAPTER 10

Although Hearn disliked leaving its antiquated streets for the dull practicalities of the American section, the highly seasoned food of the cheap eating-places he patronized finally drove him from the French Quarter. Afraid of tainted meat during the hot months, and sickened by the quantities of olive oil used in Creole cooking, he feared another summer there would kill him. 'I think I shall fly to the Garden District,' he wrote a friend — 'where the orange trees are.' But that was only romancing. He moved to a dilapidated part of the American section, where he rented a back room in a tumbledown house occupied by a French family of questionable reliability.

For a time his board was no better than his room. But when he found his way to the Courtney boarding-house on Gasquet Street, his food problems were solved; and he moved to 278 Canal Street to be nearer. The Courtneys were a simple Irish family nominally headed by gentle, ineffective Mr. Courtney, but supported by his wife's more practical energies.

They had one daughter, Ella, about ten years old. Casting about for a way to make a living, Mrs. Courtney had opened a grocery store at 68 Gasquet Street, a few blocks from the Louisiana Medical University which later became the Tulane University Medical School. Medical students had persuaded the warm-hearted woman to operate a boarding-house in connection with her grocery, and her cooking attracted as many boarders as she could accommodate.

From the moment she saw Hearn bent far down over his plate, enjoying his food with a relish his timidity could not hide, Mrs. Courtney's affectionate concern centred on her half-blind little boarder. Before long he was consulting her about neighbourhood laundresses, and he asked if she knew of a room where there would be less noise. The Canal Street traffic and mule-drawn streetcars left him no peace for either writing or sleeping.

Writing for a newspaper, was he. And in all that hubbub! Of course she could find him a room! And she found him two. A gentleman who wrote what everyone was reading should live in comfort and a bit of style! The rooms she chose were at Robertson and Gasquet Streets, in the home of her friend, Kate Higgins, and were second-story corner rooms opening onto an iron lacework balcony. Mrs. Higgins's Negro cleaning-woman, Louise, would keep them irreproachably clean.

It was no great task for Hearn to move his possessions to his new quarters; for he had only a few clothes, a large box containing the books he had bought since coming to Louisiana, and one painting. The painting had been given him by a friend in the North and depicted a beautiful woman reclining on silken cushions.

This painting he hung in the smaller of his two rooms, his library. Otherwise its walls were bare. The only furnishings in the room were two wooden chests which he filled with his beloved books. By now he had three hundred recondite volumes, the nucleus of what was to be one of the most exotic private libraries in America.

In the larger room there were two chairs and a narrow bed, the latter shrouded in mosquito netting. For his linens, manuscripts, and most valuable notes he purchased a large trunk which also stood in his bedroom. His writing-table was his suitcase placed on top of his trunk.

There was no other furniture in the bare little apartment; and there he dripped perspiration through the summer months and shivered in the winter. But Louise kept his rooms immaculately clean, and each morning without grumbling she came clanging up the stairs with his bathing facilities. With the Courtney boarding-house only a block away, he had at last found satisfactory living arrangements; and he did not move again until he left New Orleans.

In a way, too, he had found a family. His gentleness toward children soon had young Ella Courtney dogging his steps, hoping for stories. Besides relating strange and exciting tales, he sometimes wrote stories for her, illustrating them with entertaining pencil sketches. These, along with the gifts and books she received from him, became her crown jewels. One marvellous volume cost the staggering sum of five dollars and was revered by all the neighbourhood children. When little tabs were pulled, animals moved about on its pages and fish swam gracefully beneath isinglass waves.

Presently he began tutoring the adoring Ella, endeavouring especially to teach her French. But long hours of patient effort accomplished very little. Finally he abandoned any attempts toward formal instruction, although there was always an element of education in his talks with her. To open the way before her, he at times held forth on matters whose importance escaped her. But she would listen dutifully, even hopefully, for at any moment he might branch off into a story and enchantment would then reward her.

From Mrs. Courtney Hearn received the most motherly care he had ever known. She darned his socks and sewed on his buttons; and when his eye ached, she bathed it with egg-white. If he was not feeling well, she cooked special food for him, and when an attack of fever or nervous indi-

gestion kept him in bed, she conferred with Mrs. Higgins and Louise about his care. When he overworked, she scolded him; and her sound common-sense was a tonic when he grew despondent. But she did not forget that he was a gentleman of very great learning; and she respected his idiosyncrasies.

Because he had to thrust his nose almost into his plate to see his food, she worked out an arrangement whereby he would not be embarrassed while he ate. A small slant-roofed structure extended across the rear of the Courtney back yard, containing a summer kitchen which she used most of the year, an adjoining storeroom, and two upper rooms originally used as slave-quarters. Mrs. Courtney put a deal table and three cane-bottomed chairs in the little storeroom and pinned some French magazine illustrations on its whitewashed walls. This transformed it into 'Mr. Hearn's dining-room,' and here Mrs. Courtney herself served his meals, cutting his meat and keeping his glass filled with wine. If possible she sat with him while he ate, and when she was needed in the house, either Mr. Courtney or Ella kept him company.

Since screening was unknown and much of the time doors and windows had to be left open, flies also kept him company. And ants crawled up the legs of his table. But Hearn accepted these pests with philosophical patience, maintaining that even flies and ants should have their chance to live. In Louisiana's warm, moist climate he had every opportunity to demonstrate his kindness to the insect kingdom, and only mosquitoes were denied his mercy.

He was also friendly to an old tortoise that lived under the doorstep of his dining-room. With a little patient training it learned to recognize his voice and expect a crumb of food when he called. Turtles, he told Ella, were very wise. Down through the ages their wisdom had been respected and celebrated. Because he was kind to his turtle and treated it fairly, the turtle was his friend and trusted him. Ella must never tease animals or play tricks on them. That was almost as bad as hurting them with sticks and stones!

His favourite pet, however, was a young cat named Nanny;

and one of his three chairs was hers. It was drawn up to the table beside his own, and she took her food from his fingers, bite by bite. He was especially fond of Nanny because he had rescued her from drowning in earliest kittenhood, hurrying to Mrs. Courtney with the sop of wet fur cupped up against his chest. When Mrs. Courtney revived the small creature and it wobbled about the floor on uncertain legs, both he and Ella had been elated.

From a bouncing, whirling kitten Nanny soon grew into a well-bred grey cat who at mealtime waited in the doorway for her master. After she was carefully stroked, she curved along against his legs as they went to their chairs at the table. When Hearn sat down on the doorstep to smoke his pipe after supper, Nanny curled up to purr beside him. Frequently he sat there till darkness had fallen, one hand on his pipe and the other resting lightly on his faithful cat.

He now had new friends with whom he enjoyed nocturnal sessions, and sometimes when he left his dining-room he went off to meet Doctor Rudolph Matas. Doctor Matas was a brilliant young New Orleans Spaniard who had graduated from the Louisiana Medical University in 1880. Previously he had studied in Barcelona, Paris, and Matamoros, Mexico. When the *Times-Democrat* started publication, his admiration had been aroused by Hearn's editorials and translations, and a few months later he had arranged through a *Times-Democrat* staff member to meet him.

The meeting had truly to be arranged. It had even to be managed. But Hearn entertained great respect for the medical profession, probably as an unconscious tribute to his father, contending that physicians were mentally the most nearly perfect men. Their knowledge, he said, mellowed them with wisdom, understanding, and sympathy. While they eased and corrected both mental and physical suffering, they were at the same time the most generous to man's weaknesses. In addition, Rudolph Matas was a confirmed booklover and spoke French as fluently as Spanish and English.

Hearn was soon going to the young physician's apartment

quite regularly, and Doctor Matas was one of the few friends always welcome in his own rooms. Usually he could find something of interest to show him when he called — a curious little Spanish book of gypsy poems, some favourite old volume he had had rebound in fine morocco, or at least a handful of foreign book catalogues just received.

In certain respects Rudolph Matas, although ten years younger than Hearn, duplicated Henry Watkin's earlier companionship. Being aware of the pathology of Hearn's nature, he made intelligent allowances for his faults and peculiarities. He also advised him about his eye and attended him when he was ill.

Matas was writing medical treatises and monographs when Hearn first became acquainted with him, and in 1883 he became editor of the *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal*. In a sense this made him a fellow-craftsman, and Hearn discussed many of his literary projects with him. He also told him his troubles, and in the most frightful language he would call down upon his real or fancied enemies every commonly known torture and several uniquely gruesome ones brewed in his own vengeful imagination. Often, too, he prodded his medical friend with questions which might lead to an essay or editorial.

Did consciousness remain in the body after death stopped the heart?

Was there a scientific basis for the claim that in classic times intensive training emasculated Grecian athletes?

Were a Negro's vocal chords formed differently from those of a white man?

His work with Louisiana folk-songs had given him the idea that only some difference in physical structure could explain the peculiar timbre of the Negro's voice and the characteristic 'splintering' of notes in his singing. Medical science was not yet prepared to answer that question; but Doctor Matas let Hearn work with him in simple laboratory experiments dealing with other comparative anatomy and ethnological studies.

Hearn possessed remarkably sensitive olfactory nerves, and he told Matas that by the sense of smell alone he could identify a blonde, a brunette, or an octoroon, quadroon, or pure-blooded African. He discussed the significance and influence of odours, and he wrote a number of articles on the subject during his years in New Orleans. He quoted Baudelaire's poems in dealing with the subject, and he speculated upon the possibility that 'each branch of the human family, each nation of the earth,' had its identifiable odour which only man's undeveloped sense of smell kept from recognition. In one of his *Item* 'Fantastics' he had written: 'There are blonde and brunette odours: — the white rose is sweet, but the ruddy is sweeter; the perfume of pallid flowers may be potent, as that of the tuberose whose intensity sickens with surfeit of pleasures, but the odours of deeply tinted flowers are passionate and satiate not, quenching desire, only to rekindle it.'

After Hearn's death a rumour was started that he had written a little book titled 'The Perfume of Women' which had been privately printed and limited to no more than thirty copies. But none of the friends to whom he would have given such a piece of esoterica had ever heard of it or could help in clearing up the mystery.

Since coming to Louisiana, he had grown increasingly introspective as his myopia veiled away more of the external world. Now he was drawing most of his literary inspirations from reading and the exchange of ideas, and he and young Matas would talk far into the night about anything occupying his thoughts. But not all of their conversations took place in their rooms. Often they strolled through the cool, dark streets around the doctor's apartment or the university, or crossed over into the French Quarter.

Hearn was still afire with his first great enthusiasm for Herbert Spencer, part of his adulation rising from the humility of an undisciplined intellect in the presence of a highly organized mentality. Also, finding no religion he could accept as his own, he derived satisfaction from finding, with Spencer, some good in all faiths. This allowed him to retain a tenta-

tive, partial acceptance of Buddhist doctrine, especially since he found corroborating similarities between the two philosophical systems. Metempsychosis, Nirvana, and Shintoism were to him virtually the same as Spencer's time-process, equilibration, and ancestor-worship. Whether or not they were, the man who disagreed with him or belittled the name of Herbert Spencer was a man for whom he had little respect. Fortunately, Rudolph Matas was friendly to the Spencerian theories, and 'First Principles' frequently set the step for their nocturnal rambles.

Spencer's mind was the greatest the world had ever produced, Hearn would declaim with magnificent conviction as he clung tightly to the doctor's arm. Any man who could expound with equal lucidity and by the same universal formula the history of a gnat or a sun had systematized all human knowledge, revolutionized modern science, and dissipated materialism forever! Matas would nod in agreement as he steered the orator around a pool of rain on the broken sidewalk or held him back from a sudden traffic threat.

In discussing Herbert Spencer, Hearn was the enthusiastic authority and Matas took the secondary rôle. But the young Spaniard had an intellectual excitement of his own — Darwin's theory of evolution — and there Hearn was the applauding listener. Great thoughts were bandied back and forth in the white heat of their conversations.

From the first, Matas recognized the literary promise of the *Times-Democrat* editor, and Hearn often laughed at the bright future he predicted for him. But he likewise prophesied a glowing future for his medical friend, and time did not rebuke his predictions. By 1895, Doctor Matas was professor of surgery at his alma mater, a position he held with distinction for thirty-two years. During that time he won all manner of national recognition; and medical honours were conferred on him by countries in all parts of the world.

Another after-dark companion of Hearn's in antipodean contrast with Doctor Matas, was Mrs. Courtney's nephew, Denny Corcoran. Denny weighed over three hundred pounds,

with gorilla-like proportions. In each hip pocket he carried a long pistol, and no man was quicker on the draw than he. He had to be quick, he complained. People were always picking a quarrel with him and since he couldn't run he had to shoot! His aim, moreover, was as good as his draw. Thus far he had killed five men, successfully claiming self-defence in each case. His reputation was thoroughly respected by the marked enemies of any district 'boss' he chanced to be serving as errand boy. And if respectable citizens went to the polls on election day and found the huge Irishman peacefully sitting on the ballot-box, they knew that their votes were 'wrong.' Few stayed to argue the point.

Mrs. Courtney mourned over Denny in helpless resignation. Though he was her brother's own son, and she no one to be saying it, he was a wild, bad boy and he'd come to no good end — mark her words! Denny shrugged his massive shoulders and went his placid, dangerous way.

On the nights when he and Hearn went out together, Mrs. Courtney invariably admonished him not to get Mr. Hearn into trouble. 'Awright, Aunt Maggie,' he would rumble good-naturedly. 'They'll have to finish me off 'fore they touch a hair of his head!' These were not empty words, for in his rough way Denny was devoted to the peculiar little friend hanging on his arm. But there was no reason for him to expect trouble in most of the places where they went, trouble having the habit of subsiding at his approach.

Among his other activities Denny collected tribute for his 'bosses' in the segregated district, and the ill-matched friends were a frequent sight along its ribald streets. No longer able to detect the finer gradations of visual reality, Hearn sometimes pictured beauty and character where they were not; and one night his disillusionment left spiritual bruises. In one of the houses he met a woman whose features were 'pure Grecian' while the 'look of perfect innocence on her face' moved him to reverence. He left immediately; and that same night he wrote her a letter, saying how much he suffered to think of her in such surroundings, assuring her

that he knew she was there against her will, and offering to give her money and all possible assistance in escaping to the kind of life she deserved. A few nights later he learned that the woman had laughed when she read his letter, and that it was being handed around through all the houses so everyone might enjoy it.

Had he confided his mortification to Denny Corcoran, that Celtic extrovert would have driven the offender out of the district, bag and baggage. But though Hearn did not expect Denny to appreciate the more subtle implications of words and emotions, he sometimes relaxed into forgetfulness and wasted both upon him.

When they walked through a small park near the segregated district, the two men occasionally sat down to smoke and enjoy the moonlit night. From their bench in the silver-dappled shadows Hearn could glimpse a marble statue through the gleaming magnolia leaves. 'Denny,' he would begin, 'there's a story about a statue of the ancient Greeks ——'. And Denny would settle himself for a long rest. For an hour or more Hearn's quiet voice would trail out on the heavy, soft air, paying homage to the classic marvels of Grecian art. Myths, legends, metaphysics — his mind stirred his tongue to eloquence while the bulky, uncouth Irishman sat complacently beside him.

One night he may have said, as he wrote in the *Times-Democrat* the next day: 'There is a holiness about the marble nakedness of an antique goddess. There is a holiness in the passion loveliness creates.' In any event, Denny's footnote to literary history consisted of this one observation: 'Mr. Hearn loved statues. And beggin' your pardon, the nooder the better.'

True to his promise, Mrs. Courtney's amoral nephew kept Hearn out of 'trouble' during their nocturnal prowlings. The *Times-Democrat* editor was caught in no shooting fray. No one leaped on his back as the two friends went down a dark alley. He was not robbed; nor did raiding policemen force the next morning's sun to disclose him in a bat-infested prison.

Within a year or so, however, there were midnight hours which could have disclosed him in one or another of the opium dens of the city, Denny close beside him. This may or may not have been a deliberate experiment, a purposeful investigation of a new kind of dream world. Some readers sensed an unusually weird quality in his newspaper writings at times, although he never openly discussed any drug-induced sensations he may have experienced. But experiment or addiction, it was short-lived, and it made no noticeable impression on his mind. Denny Corcoran's friendship gave him nothing worse than an escort down treacherous paths, and it was Hearn who chose the direction of their wanderings.

In his folklore researches Hearn was now concentrating on West Indian, Arabian, Congo, and Oriental studies, and soon he was to subscribe for 'a library of folklore and folklore music of all nations, of which only 17 volumes are published so far.' But he was also working many of his Creole notes into more permanent form, and he was still seeing George Cable frequently. One night when he went to Cable's rooms he found J. O. Davidson, a *Harper's* illustrator, there. Cable was expecting Hearn; and Davidson was there expressly to meet him, hoping he would agree to write some Louisiana articles for *Harper's Weekly*. The illustrator had come to persuade Cable to do the articles, but Cable had refused to leave the *Scribner* and *Century* magazines and had recommended Hearn as an alternative.

Having tried to enter the more lucrative field of magazine-writing for the past five years, Hearn was at first alertly responsive. But his interest soon waned. He was unimpressed by the topics Davidson suggested, and everything he himself mentioned Davidson thought too scholarly or *recherché*. *Harper's Weekly* wanted something more appealing to the average reader. With that, as far as Hearn was concerned, the conversation was ended. But Cable was not willing to let him sidestep opportunity so quickly; and finally Hearn and Davidson came to terms, each yielding something. The result was three

articles which *Harper's Weekly* published in February and March of 1883. These articles began a seven-year association with Harper and Brothers which produced a series of essays, travel sketches, stories, and books. One of them, 'Saint Malo,' necessitated a voyage with Davidson through the swamplands of lower Louisiana.

Saint Malo was a little-known village of Manilan fishermen and alligator-hunters in the reedy wastelands of the Gulf of Mexico southeast of New Orleans. The Italian lugger chartered by the *Times-Democrat* left Spanish Fort on Lake Pontchartrain and sailed across Lake Borgne — 'a shallow and treacherous sea, from which all fishing-vessels scurry in wild terror when a storm begins to darken.' The little party of explorers spent a moonless night sailing and poling their way across miles of watery desolation reverberating with the muffled thunder of frogs. Next day they entered the mouth of a winding bayou, and at last they came to their destination.

The little settlement was a huddle of shacks with Manilan balconies and wide hat-shaped eaves, stilted high above the marshy ground. The water of the bayou was green; the bayou banks were green; and green fungi covered every beam and board and shingle of the mouldering houses. In the daytime buzzards and bald eagles sailed before the sun; and at night swarms of insects boiled up around the village, while fish leaped in the darkness and predatory animals slithered through the reeds.

The brown, sinister-eyed Manilans, who crushed the skulls of alligators with spiked clubs, spoke Spanish and a Malay dialect in soft, watchful voices — attuned to Nature's silences. According to their private penal code, trouble-makers were liable to imprisonment in a fish-car, where hunger and the rising tide eventually forced obedience. If capital punishment was required, the criminal was staked out in the marshes for insects to execute overnight.

For a number of years, Hearn was told, a hundred or more men had lived in this bleak and forsaken village in comparative peace. Then they had managed to import a slant-eyed

beauty from beyond the Yellow Sea, and dissension had arisen and much shedding of blood. The older members of the settlement had thereupon assembled to consider the situation, and pass judgment. The next day, to restore harmony, the debated woman had been hacked into pieces and flung to the alligators in the bayou.

When Hearn had his notes and Davidson his sketches, the explorers took leave of Saint Malo as long fish-shaped clouds, green-backed and iridescent-bellied, floated above a rising vermillion sun. The Manilans came out on their balconies to wave good-bye, and when their visitors were a little farther downstream someone fired a farewell shot. In the wake of the lugger an alligator slid into the water and glided toward a line of shivering reeds on the opposite bank.

Back in New Orleans, Hearn laid aside the telescope he had taken with him (and, according to the *Times-Democrat*, a long white-handled razor he had 'worn in his stocking' for protection) and wrote two accounts of his voyage, the first one for the *Times-Democrat*. In 'Saint Malo' his artistry in handling colour played a subtle counterpoint to the macabre weirdness of his story.

Later in 1883, Cable helped him place another magazine article. The November issue of the *Century Magazine* carried 'The Scenes of Cable's Romances,' written by Hearn and illustrated by Joseph Pennell, who had come to New Orleans to do the sketches. In locating the various scenes of 'Old Creole Days' the essay was a travelogue of the French Quarter, packed with local colour and a sound appreciation of Cable's literary ability.

Here again Hearn was publicizing Cable's work; but the personal forbearance between the two men was waning. Since in many instances they were drawing material from the same sources, each was inclined to suspect the other of poaching, and professional misunderstandings were mitigated by no natural sympathies or community of spirit.

Cable had earlier asked Hearn to translate some Creole songs anonymously, and Hearn used this as a peg on which to

hang other grievances. Nevertheless, late that year, when Cable went to New York for a short visit, Hearn urged him to call on Henry Krehbiel, who was now living there. He also wrote Krehbiel asking him to show Cable any courtesies he could. But when he heard the two men were collaborating on a minor piece of work, he regretted having brought them together. Fearing Krehbiel would be imposed upon, he cautioned him to guard his interests, and when Krehbiel minimized his fears, he replied:

'I hope you may prove right and I wrong in my judgment of ——. As you say, I have a peculiar and unfortunate disposition; nevertheless, I had better reasons for my suggestions to you than it is now necessary to specify.'

Cable's 'awful faith,' he said, seemed to indicate an undeveloped mentality, and it gave his whole life in New Orleans a neutral tint. Of course, no religious belief was actually ridiculous, but at a certain point it could prevent the mind from expanding. He admitted, though, that Cable was more liberal-minded than his creed and had extraordinary will-power. Once, when he paralyzed his right hand by overwork, he promptly trained himself to write with his left hand. 'I could not under any circumstances feel a personal sympathy with so *eccentrically conservative* a man, although I would really feel sorry to hear of his utterly breaking down.'

When Cable returned to New Orleans, Hearn duly called on him; but they talked from a distance. The pagan and the puritan were no longer able to reconcile their differences, and within a few months they ceased trying. Open hostility was finally acknowledged when Cable antagonized Southerners with a magazine article on 'The Freedman's Case in Equity' and Hearn retaliated with a stinging *Times-Democrat* editorial titled 'Mr. Violet Cable.'

CHAPTER 11

'I OUGHT never to have been born in this century, I think sometimes, because I live forever in dreams of other centuries and other faiths and other ethics — dreams rudely broken by sound of cursing in the street below, cursing in seven different languages. . . . I live in my books, and the smoke of my pipe, and ideas that nobody has any right expecting a good time in this world unless he be gifted with great physical strength and force of will. These give success. Little phantoms of men are blown about like down in the storms of the human struggle: they have not enough weight to keep them in place. And the Talmud says: "There are three whose life is no life: the Sympathetic man, the Irascible, and the Melancholy." '

As Hearn's writings began reaching a larger public, his letters indicated a general stock-taking and statement of position. After many months of silence, Henry Watkin wrote inquiring about his health and circumstances, and as always his most personal disclosures were made to his 'Dad.' His

eyes, he said, were not well. Never would be, of course. But they were better. He supposed, too, that he had changed a little during the past five or six years. He was less despondent, but less hopeful; a little wiser, and more silent; less nervous, but also less merry; more systematic and perhaps a great deal more selfish. While he was not strictly economical, he was steadily approaching that goal. In leisure hours he was studying the poetry of antique India and the teachings of Oriental wisdom concerning the illusions of existence and happiness as the equivalent of annihilation.

Sometimes he fancied that the older he grew, the more distasteful companionship became; but that might be the result of the local situation. If a man tried to preserve independence of thought and action and refused to connect himself with some church, clique, or humbug society, he lived alone like a hermit in the Thebaids. And if such a man obtained a woman's society, he was buried in the mediocrity to which she belonged. (He was beginning to think, anyway, that to live forever in one woman's company would kill a man with ennui.) At present he had only about half a dozen friends with whom he spent any time to speak of, and occasionally he sickened of such a life.

He would be glad, too, to try a new climate; for a new climate was a new life, a new youth. In the heavy, rancid atmosphere of midsummer the clouds over New Orleans were like those of some pre-geologic period — uncreated lead and iron. There was never a breath of pure air. Only dust that was powdered dung, quaking ground that shook with the passage of a wagon, the heat of a perpetual vapour bath, and at night subtle damps that poisoned the blood and filled the bones with rheumatism. It was something like the outlying region through which Milton's Lucifer half-crawled and half-flew on his way to the Garden of Eden.

His idea of perfect bliss would be ease and absolute silence — silence, dreams, tepidness — great quaint rooms overlooking a street full of shadows and emptiness — friends in the evening, a pipe, a little philosophy, and wandering under the

moon. Still, he found there was much sweetness and pleasure in the accomplishment of a fixed purpose. He was working hard, and with more hope. If his dear old man would come down to visit him, he could show him many delightful and interesting things. He could put him up quite comfortably, and naturally he would suffer no expense while with him.

When Krehbiel suggested a New York visit, he likewise tried to lure his younger friend to New Orleans, using his library as bait. Although now Joseph Tunison too was in Manhattan, Hearn shuddered at the thought of that Eastern city. In his imagination New York had become something appalling — something cyclopean and pandemoniac. He visioned it all pre-adamite bridges and iron roads higher than the aqueducts of the Romans. — Gloom, vapour, roarings, and lightnings. When he thought of New York, he was more contented with the frogs and gnats and sunlit marshes of Louisiana; with its ancientness and vast languor. Thoughts came slowly and sluggishly in its oppressive climate, but at the same time a great horror of noise and bustle and activity rooted itself in the soul.

Louisiana languor, nonetheless, did not prevent him from doing a tremendous amount of reading and studying. If he could ever create something he felt was sublime, he confessed, he would know the pride of the prophet who had seen God face to face.

In developing his skill he was pursuing a definite plan, and he read anything he could find that stirred his imagination with novel, curious, or potent imagery. 'When the soil of fancy is really well enriched with innumerable fallen leaves,' he said, 'the flowers of language grow spontaneously. . . . If one can store up in his brain the most extraordinary facts of astronomy, geology, ethnology, etc., they furnish him with a wonderful and startling variety of images, symbols, and illustrations. . . . I give myself five years' more study; then I think I may be able to do something.'

In the meantime, as he fed his imagination he chose its diet with specific care. 'I think a man must devote himself

to one thing in order to succeed: so I have pledged me to the worship of the Odd, the Queer, the Strange, the Exotic, the Monstrous. It quite suits my temperament.'

These theories he confided to other literary friends; but to Krehbiel he belittled his efforts. 'Comparing yourself to me won't do! — dear old fellow. I am in most things a botch! — If you only knew the pain and labour I have to create a little good work. And there are months when I cannot write. It is not hard to write when the thought is there; but the thought will not always come — there are weeks when I cannot even think.

'The only application I have is that of persistence in a small way. I write a rough sketch and labour it over and over again for half a year, at intervals of ten minutes' leisure — sometimes I get a day or two. The work done each time is small. But with the passing of the seasons the mass becomes noticeable — perhaps creditable. This is merely the result of system.'

Krehbiel's style, he went on, had crystallized admirably and would probably always be slightly Gothic, subordinating ornament to the general plan. He himself had not yet been able to form a permanent style, but he would always be more or less arabesque, 'covering my whole edifice with intricate designs, serrating my arches, and engraving mysticisms above the portals. You will be grand and lofty: I shall try to be at once voluptuous and elegant, like a colonnade in the mosque of Cordova.'

He felt, though, that his years of study in New Orleans had radically changed his romanticism. A romantic fact which formerly would have driven him wild with joy did not now impress him unless he could associate it with some more important general principle. He was no longer inclined to attempt a story or sketch merely to gratify fancy. 'The old enthusiasm has completely died out of me.' This seemed to sadden him a little, for he did not realize that he was now indoctrinating and justifying his romanticism. No longer content to accept it as a superficial decoration of life, he was

hunting out deeper roots to give it more substance, adjusting it to his maturity.

In the same letter, however, he said that he would give anything to be a literary Columbus, discovering a new world of romance which only geographic and ethnological exploration had previously touched. 'If I could only become a Consul at Bagdad, Algiers, Ispahan, Benares, Samarkand, Nippo, Bangkok, Ninh-Binh, — or any part of the world where ordinary Christians do not like to go! Here is the nook in which my romanticism still hides. . . . O that I were a travelling shoemaker, or a player upon the sambuke!'

Being neither the one nor the other, he buried himself deeper in his books and concentrated on his extra-journalistic projects. Though he was never a prolific magazine contributor, for the next fourteen years his writings would frequently appear in such periodicals as *Harper's Weekly*, *Harper's Monthly*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Lippincott's*, the *Cosmopolitan*, or *Atlantic Monthly*.

His bookshelves now held over five hundred volumes — numerous Egyptian, Assyrian, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and African titles having been added. He also had books embracing the Creole dialects of both hemispheres, and lately he had obtained some Senegal books which threw 'a torrent of light on the whole history of the songs and superstitions of American slaves.' There was also a Hebrew section, containing Hershon's 'Talmudic Miscellany,' Stauben's 'Scènes de la Vie Juive,' Kompert's 'Studies of Jewish Life,' and five volumes of Schwab's French translations of the beginning of the Jerusalem Talmud, together with the Babylonian Beracloth.

When Krehbiel dreamed of writing an opera and sent a list of proposed themes, Hearn recommended the 'Kalewala' as by far the best. It contained all the elements of magnificent opera, he said, and would afford any amount of inspiration for startling and totally novel musical themes. But — 'to get a correct idea of what you might do with the "Kalewala" *you must get it and read it.* Try to get it in the German! I can give

you some idea of its beauties; but to give you its movement, and plot, or to show you precisely how much operatic value it possesses would be a task beyond my power. It would be like attempting to make one familiar with Homer in a week.' He gave Krehbiel a comprehensive bibliography of the various collections and translations of the Finnish epic and said he himself had the Le Duc translation (1845), but it contained only twelve thousand one hundred verses. Loennrot's gave twenty-two thousand eight hundred verses. After Krehbiel had digested the 'Kalewala' and Castrén's work on Finnish mythology, dealing with the ranking, power, etc., of gods and demons and their relation to natural forces, perhaps he could be of some real service to him. He was forced to admit, however, that he had only a confused idea about the poem, having read it through simply as a romance without time to study out all its mythological bearings and meanings.

Possibly the New York music critic found all this overpowering, for he ceased talking of a Krehbiel opera.

For over a year Hearn had been working on a collection of stories drawn from Sanskrit, Buddhist, Persian, Talmudic, Polynesian, and Finnish literature. Each upon completion had been published in the *Times-Democrat*, and early in 1884 he submitted twenty-seven of these tales to James R. Osgood and Company, of Boston. While the exotic little stories were frankly derivative, they were yet implicitly his own. Exhaustive research had checked and corrected every detail, and his artistry had given each legend a grace of form and elegance of expression far surpassing that of the original version. The exotism of the strange little adaptations had sanctioned the full use of his poetic prose, and they were greatly superior to his earlier 'Fantastics.' Having drawn them from more remote sources, he had been less tempted by emotionalism, and their more objective plots had permitted a swift and graphic telling. He had titled the compilation 'Stray Leaves from Strange Literature.'

While Osgood was 'seriously examining' his manuscript, the first stirrings of his annual wanderlust fingered through his

thoughts. With the coming of warm weather, a vague nostalgia always tugged at him, as if he had friends in some nameless far-off country. The previous summer had severely tried his health, and this year Page Baker wanted him to take a vacation during the hottest part of the summer, also suggesting a short spring holiday if he wished.

For some months he had been writing Krehbiel about a plan 'for the days when we shall be "well-known and highly esteemed authors."' It was to be a collaboration, a volume of musical legends with each legend followed by a specimen melody and critical comment by Krehbiel. Now he thought of going to New York for a week or so to discuss the plan at greater length. But before the Northern weather moderated, he heard from Osgood.

'In the Name of the Most Merciful God!' he ecstatically wrote Krehbiel, '"Stray Leaves," etc., have been accepted by Jas. R. Osgood and Co. Congratulate your little Dreamer of Monstrous Dreams.'

Staying in New Orleans to correct the proof as it was sent to him, he was dismayed by the flaws he found in his work. 'My poor little book will show some journalistic weaknesses — will contain some hasty phrases or redundancies or something else which will mar it. I try my best to get it straight; but the consequences of hasty labour are perpetually before me, notwithstanding the fact that the collocation of the material occupied nearly two years.'

'Stray Leaves from Strange Literature' was published on his birthday, the twenty-seventh of June; and it was dedicated to Page Baker, in specific gratitude. The manuscript had already been rejected when a laudatory letter from Baker caused a second reading and a reversed decision. This second book received more general praise from the critics, and although its royalties were inconsequential, it did much to strengthen its author's reputation.

Aside from a twenty-dollar monthly deposit in a building loan association, Hearn was saving very little money, and when it was time to take his vacation he decided on Grande

Isle. This was the most beautiful of the Gulf islands off the Louisiana coast — rustic and inexpensive, but a favourite vacationing spot of other members of the *Times-Democrat* staff. Marion Baker was planning to go down that season and offered to accompany him.

In making his choice Hearn was also influenced by his enthusiasm for the writings of Pierre Loti, who had sent him a photograph and letter of thanks upon reading his translations from *Lakmé*. Though he considered the young marine officer the most original of living French novelists and the greatest of the impressionists, his chief joy lay in the polished beauty of his style. Loti at this time was writing Oriental travel sketches which especially appealed to Hearn, as did his incidental reminiscences of tropical amours. A trip to Grande Isle could provide material for similar impressionistic sketches as well as introduce him to a more exotic phase of Creolism.

This was the first vacation he had ever taken, and though it was at best a modest one, he was sufficiently pleased. Mrs. Courtney put his clothes in order and lectured him about his health. — He was to come home brown and strong, and no foolishness about bending his poor head over writing-paper all day! To this he readily agreed, for he had come to realize that health was a stern prerequisite to any success he might attain. His livelihood itself depended on the faulty, faltering vision of his one eye, and since glasses seemed too much of a strain, the only help he could give it was through acquiring more physical and nervous stability. On Grande Isle he could expect a quiet but interesting holiday, with all the swimming he desired.

Grande Isle had originally been a wilderness of palmetto which Spanish sugar-planters had drained, dyked, and cultivated. Since the Civil War the cane-fields had disappeared, a plantation house had been converted into a rustic hotel, and its whitewashed slave-quarters had been remodelled into guest cottages which stood in neat rows under wide shade trees. There was an admirable beach and excellent fishing, and each year wild flowers carpeted the meadows more thickly. Na-

ture and the ocean were beginning to reclaim their own, and during this interregnum mankind was informal and relaxed.

The native population was small, but surprisingly hybrid. There were a few descendants of the pioneering Creole families and their slaves, and a polyglot array of mixed-bloods: French, Spanish, Italian, Basque, Andalusian, Portuguese, Malay, and Chinese. Most of the dialects derived from Spanish or French, although a knowledge of neither language could unravel some of the mellifluous cadences.

Despite this low-caste cosmopolitanism, there was a provincial charm about the island that reminded Hearn of the fishing villages of his childhood. Each day at sunrise the pastoral calm was broken by the ringing of a bell. Soon a dog could be heard barking excitedly; then the creaking approach of a mule-drawn tram. The tram came by the little white cottages to take the bathers down to the beach, and the dog's self-appointed duty was to announce the mule's leisurely progress along the grass-grown trail.

It was only a short distance to the water, and Hearn and Marion Baker walked. The men's bathing-houses were sufficiently distant from those used by the women and children to permit the masculine contingent the full benefit of nude sun-bathing and swimming. Hearn had done no salt-water swimming since leaving Europe, but his prowess quickly won the admiration of the natives. He preferred the deeper water beyond two close-lying sandbars; but sharks were sometimes seen there, and after a large fish brushed against his body, he kept within closer range of the other swimmers.

He wrote Mrs. Courtney that the sea air was like wine and the water was making a new man of him. Also, he told her, his little room was very comfortable — both for him and for a family of mud-daubers who admired themselves in his mirror and left their young in his care. And if business was dull during these last weeks of summer, Mrs. Courtney was not to hesitate about drawing out what money he had in the build-

ing loan association. 'Show Mr. Thos. McIntyre this letter if you wish, and take the money from him.'

A large old sugar-house had been converted into a dining-hall for the island guests, and the food was plentiful and wholesome. But determination was usually needed in winning the services of the native waiters, and since Hearn ate as much as two men, Marion Baker sat next to him to see that his shyness did not leave him hungry. Frequently Marion also accompanied him on jaunts about the island or down to the beach to enjoy the dancing, phosphorescent waters at night.

During part of his vacation, Elizabeth Bisland, another member of the *Times-Democrat* staff, was also on the island. Miss Bisland was an attractive, talented young woman who had started working for the paper a year and a half earlier. Before that time Hearn had accepted some poems she submitted, but though he saw real promise in her verses she was not interested in devoting her efforts to poetry. She came from a Mississippi family whose ancestral acres had been devastated by the Civil War, and the hard realities of genteel poverty had given her more practical ambitions. She was now reporting women's activities, conducting a column called 'Literary Bric-à-Brac,' and continuing to write poems for the Sunday literary page over the signature 'B. L. R. Dane'; but she was already laying plans to storm the magazine citadels of New York. Later events in Hearn's life, along with a biographical furor after his death, were to make her his 'official' biographer and most loyal defender. During their years in New Orleans, however, their friendship was edged by formality. Though they admired and respected each other's literary ability, 'Miss Bisland' was too determined and self-confident, and 'Mr. Hearn' too shy and sensitive. Here on Grande Isle she was surrounded by admirers and obviously in no need of his timid attentions; and in any case he was happily engaged in other directions.

With his telescope and magnifying glass he spent long hours in secluded spots along the shore, among the pitted

dunes or out where the tides pressed the sand to a smooth slope of brown. The red sails of the fishing luggers emphasized the changing moods of the seascape, and the rising and setting sun filled sky and water with brilliant, rioting colours.

One windy day he witnessed the result of some mysterious marine panic. Tumbling porpoises and sinister shark-fins appeared beyond the farthest sandbar, drawn landward by a multitude of terror-driven fish rushing toward the shore. Above them seagulls shrieked, and eagles and fish-hawks wheeled watchfully through the air. Now and then a gull would shoot down to snatch a flopping bit of silver from the crowded, churning waves. When the fish leaped out of the water and covered the beach in frenzied suicide, the pursuing cloud of wings swooped down to a screaming, tearing feast. Sickened a little, Hearn noticed that some of the birds fed only on the eyes of their iridescent victims, tearing out whichever eye lay exposed and going on to the next gasping, quivering body.

That's how it was among men, he philosophized. Myriad shining ambitions stranded in the terrific race for survival. Countless lives lost on the sands of illusion. Unnumbered precious things and incalculable beauty wrested away by superior strength, cunning, and ferocity in the eternal battle for success — which was also a tearing-out of hearts!

On most days the shoreline was more peacefully inhabited for his patient watching. Huge crabs would crawl out from beneath the creamy ribbon of spume, and opalescent fins would wrinkle the surface of the water a few feet from land. 'And when Night opens all her violet immensities, the foam takes flame, — the ripples have luminous bursts, — a shell flung into the sea kindles circles of fire, — and the crabs toddling out of the warm flood shine like infernal spiders.'

As the shabby little vacationist wandered along the water's edge, he collected still other dividends. Soon he was on familiar terms with the natives loitering on the sunny shores, and some of them introduced him to their homes and families.

Chance tides had brought one swarthy old man to Grande Isle after an adventurous life as an Algerian soldier and colonial trader at Blidah. As a young French citizen he had prepared for a religious career, and he spoke French through the soft blur of an Arabian accent. His tall, lithe daughter also spoke French, but her strange exotic beauty impeded Hearn's efforts at conversation. Her skin was golden ivory, her black hair hung in curls, and her large eyes were a deep, clear grey. The silvery tones of her voice seemed to vibrate through his veins until he could think only with effort — 'vapidly and vaguely.' She spoke to her father in a queer agglutinative language he could not identify; and he learned that his new friends were not French but Basque.

This was splendid, for the unknown origin of the Basques gave him many inviting theories to contemplate. Was this graceful young goddess a descendant of the tribes the ancient Greeks and Latins had called 'Iberi'? Or did her surprising eyes denote some fairer Berber tribe? Her speech might even be the language of a prehistoric race belonging to a vanished Atlantic continent!

Here was the very thing he had hoped to find — material Loti himself would have prized; and 'Torn Letters' was the result, an essay of romantic confession containing paragraphs of the finest descriptive writing he had ever published. But the love motif was forced and sophomoric, for the romantic thread of his narrative was fiction, and purely creative writing would never be his forte.

'Something that Nature wishes to say swells at my heart, — flames in my veins, — struggles at my lips, — tugs fiercely at the slender, straining tether of Will that holds it back.' That much of his 'confession' may be taken as true. But if the barefoot Marie suspected that her father's friend was falling in love with her, she had no words from him to prove it. In fact, he himself was not quite sure; and he was willing to remain undeclared. If he yielded to his emotions, he might find himself permanently moored to the long green island and the warm waters of the blue Caribbean. This was a

prospect too dangerously inviting to be dwelt upon; for books gave him what life itself could not, and only through his writings could he stand to his full height. But as he pushed it aside, he recalled Tennyson's rebel dream.

'I will wed some savage woman; she shall rear my dusky race:
Iron-jointed, supple-sinewed, they shall dive and they shall run —
Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl their lances in the sun,
Whistle back the parrot's call — leap the rainbows of the brooks —
Not with blinded eyesight poring over miserable books.'

When his vacation was ended and he left Grande Isle, he thought wistfully of the dark, bewitching Marie. But there was a sense of satisfaction in his half-hunger, for he had been wise and had escaped.

In October he wrote Krehbiel of planning a book of philosophical, pantheistic sketches with the Gulf islands as their locale. 'Torn Letters' (published in the *Times-Democrat*) would be Number 1 in the collection. He also mentioned Marie and confessed he was not yet sure that he wasn't still a little in love with her. 'It is so strange to find one's self face to face with a beauty that existed in the Tertiary epoch, — 300,000 years ago!'

CHAPTER 12

A World Industrial Exposition was to open in New Orleans December 16, 1884, and this inspired Hearn to search his voluminous notes and rejected manuscripts for something the exposition crowds might buy. He decided upon a manuscript Harpers had recently rejected, 'a little Dictionary of Creole Proverbs — a mere compilation, of course, from many unfamiliar sources.' It contained some three hundred and fifty of the best (and most printable) proverbs he had collected from six dialects, each in its original Creole, in French, and in English.

Will H. Coleman, a former New Orleans friend now operating a second-hand bookshop in New York, occasionally added zest to life by publishing a book or set of pamphlets; and Hearn wrote him about the proverbs. Coleman was not interested; but he succumbed when Hearn added an outright gift of material for a Creole cookbook — recipes for parsnip fritters, goose with chestnuts *à la Chipolita*, melon mangoes, nougat fruitcake, *pain perdu*, homemade yeast, wine cakes,

candied pumpkin, 'A Nice Way to Cook Okra,' and 'Pickles, hints on their management.' Hearn also wrote a pontifical introduction for the cookbook, stipulating only that his name not be used.

As a third exposition publication (or possibly the original of the trio), Coleman was planning a guidebook. It was to be 'edited and compiled by several leading writers of the New Orleans Press,' and for this book Hearn sent along still more material. His contribution to the sketch book consisted of 'Père Antoine's Date Palm,' previously printed in the *Item;* 'Scenes of Cable's Romances' from the *Century Magazine;* and 'Some Creole Songs,' all but the last four taken from an Ozias Midwinter letter and an *Item* article.

The exposition was to extend through May, but Coleman encountered so many troubles that winter and spring brought large quotas of sightseers with no little books to sell them. As Hearn's impatience darkened into anxiety and then hopelessness, he wrote a series of exposition articles for the Harper magazines, and most of his attention was given to the fascinating exhibits from Japan. Week after week he studied the elaborately detailed displays under the instruction of Ichizo Hattori, the Japanese educational representative. Eventually the New York publications arrived — 'La Cuisine Créole,' 'The Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans,' and 'Gombo Zhèbes,' his Creole proverbs. But the exposition was drawing to its close, and the unique little books had a very poor sale. To console himself, Hearn took a brief vacation trip in search of more notes for impressionistic sketches.

This ambitious jaunt was engineered by Charles Johnson, a Cincinnati newspaper friend who had stopped off to visit Hearn during a Southern trip the previous spring, and had now returned and persuaded him to go to Florida. But smoke and dust and scraggly pine forests made the railroad trip to Jacksonville so disagreeable that Johnson wrote Mrs. Courtney Hearn 'felt as unhappy as a little tarantula enclosed in a paper bag.' He had been forced, he said, 'to nail his

little grey cap to the seat to keep him from jumping out of the window' to tramp back to New Orleans.

Hearn's spirits rose, however, when they embarked for Silver Springs to visit Ponce de Leon's Fountain of Youth; and the rest of his Florida vacation was replete with happiness. When he was not swimming in the Atlantic surf, he was 'talking to the palms,' and though he could not quite capture a mystic relation he sensed between old Spanish legend and the blue light glowing over green-and-gold landscapes, he enjoyed his reveries 'unspeakably.'

Though he had been very reluctant to undertake this journey, when he returned to New Orleans he regretted neither the expense nor the time it had cost him. But before many days, unfortunately, he had to reverse himself and regret the entire holiday. He had overdone the pursuit of impressions, and fatigue from too much swimming had lowered his resistance. A plunge in the Fountain of Youth had been especially ill-advised. It had been an extremely hot day when he and Johnson arrived in Silver Springs, and he had found the youth-giving waters 'as cold as death.' As a result of all this, he had come home with a notebook of delightful impressions and 'a whole colony of malignant swamp-fever germs.'

When his fever mounted, Doctor Matas was summoned, and he was put to bed. Quinine was useless in treating his illness, and for two weeks his condition was critical. Three times a day Mrs. Courtney carried special food to his rooms, but even so he lost twenty-five pounds. It was a number of months before he fully regained his strength, and that summer he took no vacation.

The Chinese exhibit at the World Exposition had increased his interest in Chinese folklore, and in October *Harper's Bazaar* carried 'The Legend of Tchi-Niu,' a story of filial piety. During the following winter he completed five more Chinese tales, and in March, 1886, he sent all of the stories to the Ticknor Publishing Company. 'There are only six little stories,' he wrote Krehbiel, 'but each of them cost months

of hard work and study, and represents a much higher attempt than anything in the "Stray Leaves." ' He called them 'Some Chinese Ghosts,' and they were accompanied by an elaborate dedication to Henry Krehbiel.

Since the publication of his first book, Hearn's literary plans had been shifting from one tantalizing project to another, even while his pen kept faithfully busy with whatever material was at hand. Most of these projects he would never find time to complete; but his Florida trip had revived his interest in a volume of impressionistic sketches, and now he wrote three fragments intended for such a book, and published them in the *Times-Democrat* on April 11, 1886. They were titled 'Three Dreams — Edited from the Note-Book of an Impressionist,' and if he had gained any literary inspiration from opium these unearthly bits of writing could be suspected of reflecting it. Their greatest value, however, was psychological.

I

'. . . I was an Insect — some timid, many-limbed, articulated creature with antennae, — shrinking from the light, — dwelling in the crevice of a wall. . . . The thoughts, the memories of a man were mine; yet was I conscious of strange impulses within me, — irresistible, unreasoning, incomprehensible, — which ruled my life. I knew a sense of fear, — inexplicable, perpetual; — fear of shadows and of shapes, — fear of lights and darkness unexplored, — fear of sounds, — fear of vibrations. And forever prevailed within me an overpowering impulse to creep, to wriggle, to run, not away from something feared, but as in search of something, — something I desired without knowing the nature of, something to be found in darkness alone, something to be reached only after silent wanderings among perils unutterable. . . . And I thought to myself with the thought of a man: "*These are Instincts, — these are the dim sensations, the blind volitions, developed by the experiences of many myriad million years, — the inherited terrors and desires of larval generations unreckonable!*"

'I squeezed my way at night between the joints of doors and chestlids; — I slipped between the leaves of books; — I wriggled through noisome and colourless substance of dust clotting beneath carpets. . . . Dust, dust, dust! — grey, nauseous, corrupt, — foul with spores invisible to the eye of man, but visible to mine. . . . And always the Unknown Impulse prevailed, drawing me on . . . with mingled mesmerism of desire and loathing — more and more swiftly toward the Something that I seemed to seek. Then my human consciousness said: "*This is the blind night-mare Power of Instinct! — this is the hideous mastery of insect-will!*" . . . Into blackness I fell.

'I fell and continued to fall, — sometimes rolling, sometimes rebounding, — but softly, lightly, — as a pellet rustling with dry elasticity. For hours, for days, did I seem to fall. Then a sudden shock of stoppage in dust, — a dust more clammy and more ancient than all other dust, — old dust of dead men! — and I stifled in it, and I gasped in phosphor-light, while a Voice seemed to command me: "*Eat!*"

II

'I was a dead man; — I saw my corpse in the hands of the Washers of the Dead. . . .

'Grey with bloodlessness it was, and gaunt, and seemed to me singularly long. . . . there was no death-rigour; — the flaccid limbs yielded unresistingly to the touch of the hands that sponged. . . .

'They laid me in an immense pillared bed — black as a catafalque; — they drew a vast sheet up to my chin; — they placed lighted candles about the sombre couch. Then they departed; — and the Watchers came.

'My duality did not impress me as a strange phenomenon. . . . I wondered at my disfigurement only. Had I still owned a voice I would have spoken. . . . I would have asked what had made that huge wound in my face. . . . I resolved to listen carefully to whatever the Watchers might say. . . .

'But they did not speak of me at all. They conversed wearily of matters about which I knew nothing; — their words were all riddles. . . . Finally they ceased even to whisper. A silence, oppressive as the silence of a burial-vault, gathered about the dead and the living; — the flame-tongues of the tapers pointed motionlessly in the heavy stillness. . . .

'Then, as vapour mingles invisibly with air, something invisible seemed to mingle with that silence, and to thicken it. I knew its presence of old, in time of sick dreams; — I said to myself: "*This is Fear!*"

'The Watchers watched each other with the fixed stare of terror — none presumed to speak. One by one they arose . . . and stole away on tiptoe. I was left alone with the solemnity and the vague fear of my dead self. And the Fear increased its power against me. . . .

'. . . Some power unknown benumbed my will, — and drew me irresistibly, — attracted me nearer and nearer to that wan wreck of Myself. . . . And as I surveyed my dead face, it seemed to stretch slowly in distortion. . . . With a start I perceived that the thin eyelids were not wholly closed; — I saw their edges tremble; — I discerned, or thought that I discerned, two smouldering gleams between, — two sparks of malevolent flame. . . . I approached more closely, — I peered more sharply, — I bent down, down, over the sinister eyelids. Then the eyelids opened widely, horribly; and the dead Shape quickly leaped; and Myself, — my cadaveric Self, — snatched at me, clutched me, — tearing, rending, shrieking — striving to bite, to gnaw, to devour! And I, with the rage of fear, with the fury of hatred, with the frenzy of loathing, — I also wrestled to destroy, — to break the eye-balls from their brain-threads, — to burst the arteries and the vertebrae; but I strove in vain. . . . Then, — suddenly, I know not how, — I found in my desperate grasp something heavy and sharp and deadly; and with it I struck, I smashed, I crushed, — I battered and brayed into red ruin the skull and the face, the bones and the brains of . . . *MYSELF!*

III

'I dreamed of a lofty and opulent dwelling in a strange city, — of a great ebon door bearing a Hebrew name in letters of intertwisted gold . . . and of a Man that waited there for the coming of a Physician, most learned of all Jews. . . . Also I was aware of two sounds, — the ticking of a clock, the beating of a heart. Then the Physician, uplifting a purple curtain, came from its shadow and stood grey, and austere, and tall before the Man, saying "*Shalom!*" And the Man tried to speak; but could not, — because something at his heart would not suffer him to speak.

'And in the solemn stillness of the high dim room, the beating of the heart could be heard. . . . The Physician heard it, and stood still marvelling, listening. . . . Then he approached closely to the patient, and uncovered his breast, and laid his finger upon it, and muttered to himself:

'"*Can this also be Her work? — Is this one also of Her victims? Why had I deemed Her power on the wane?* . . . What fearful sounds are these! — What spastic writhings! — The netted sepia struggles not so wildly. . . ."

'And he palped, — and he auscultated, whispering to himself:

'"*Older than the world is Her name, — old as Night; yet even the Rabbonin have forgotten Her secret. . . . But I have not forgotten! . . . He cannot know; but I know, — even by diagnosis alone, — how tightens the fine noose, made of the living gold that never breaks, strong as Death — aye, stronger far against this science of mine!*" . . . And he cried out with a loud voice: — "*Utter if thou canst, the Shema, or at least strive to repeat in thy mind the words I shall tell thee!*"

'But even as the Physician cried out thus, there came a sudden, dull, snapping sound, as of a wine-skin bursting; and with never a groan the Man sank heavily down, — and his ghost went out of him.

'Then the Physician summoned his servitors; and they lifted the dead Man, and laid him all unclad upon a table of marble.

'And without a word they severed the integuments of the dead Man's breast, and opened it, and took out his heart that they might examine it.

'And still it quivered feebly in their hands, and the darkening blood dripped warm from its ruptured cavities to thicken upon the stone. And lo! all around it, and intertwined about the stems of its severed pipework, about the crimson stumps of its arteries and of its veins, there clung fast something lucid and fine, something yellow and thin as a fibre of silk, — one thread of light, — one line of gold, — one long bright strand of woman's hair.'

As May advanced with no word from Ticknor, Hearn began making his summer plans. He had managed to save six hundred dollars and could visit Spain with Doctor Matas, who was going there by way of the Antilles. Or he could accompany Krehbiel on his first trip to Europe. But he regretfully declined both invitations, feeling it 'a duty to myself to stick at literary work this summer.' He did need a brief holiday, however, and while he was debating where to spend it, he enjoyed a resounding triumph in the local press.

During his first year with the *Times-Democrat*, he had written concerning translations from foreign literature: 'It is by no means sufficient to reproduce the general meaning of a sentence: — it is equally necessary to obtain a just equivalent for each word, in regard to force, colour, and form, — and to preserve, so far as possible, the original construction of the phrase, the peculiarity of the rhetoric, the music of the style. And there is a music in every master style, — a measured flow of words in every sentence; — there are alliterations and rhythms; there are onomatopeias; there are tints, sonorities, luminosities, resonances. Each word in a phrase is a study in itself, and a study in its relation to other words in the phrase. . . . A most laborious, cautious, ingenious, delicate, supple work. . . . A work requiring intense application, wearisome research, and varied linguistic powers.'

During the next two years his superb French translations

had made rival papers in Latin New Orleans feel like uncultured bumpkins; and in December, 1884, he crowned his accomplishments with a shining victory. Pierre Loti sent him some unpublished pages from an Oriental notebook, and on the twenty-eighth of the month the *Times-Democrat* proudly presented four columns under the headline 'Pierre Loti — Translated from the Original Manuscript — Fragments from My Diary.'

The *Times-Democrat* was the largest newspaper in Louisiana, and not all the New Orleans papers could afford even the flattery of imitation. But now the *States* and the *Picayune* hired translators of their own, and again and again Hearn riddled their efforts with criticism. Constantly losing ground, they nevertheless stayed on the field of battle; and now, in June, 1886, they dared mount an offensive by challenging the *Times-Democrat* to a duel of linguistic skill.

Hearn did not stoop to recognize the affront, but Page Baker came to the fore in towering dignity. His measured reply was glazed in prestige and animated by a militant, unbounded pride.

'The *Times-Democrat*,' he said, 'must be excused from accepting the challenge thrown down by the *States* to enter into a competition for the purpose of testing the ability of its translator as compared with that of the translators of the *States* and the *Picayune*.

'While the proposition may be attractive to the *States*, we could scarcely consent to ask our translator, whose ability as a French and English scholar is known and appreciated in literary circles throughout this country, and who has won, from competent critics both in Europe and America, the highest encomiums, to enter into a purely local contest with rivals who have yet their spurs to win.

'If the challenge could be made broader, so as to be national in its scope, the *Times-Democrat* would gladly accept it and back its translator, Mr. Lafcadio Hearn, against the most accomplished in the country.

'There are not many journals or magazines in the United

States that have translators of purely literary articles on their staffs, else the *Times-Democrat* would issue a challenge to the press of the country in the matter of French translations.'

After this haughty rebuff, the supremacy of the dean of translators was not again questioned.

Hearn had decided to visit Henry Krehbiel before the music critic went to Europe; but this time it was not dread of that demoniac city which kept him away. After Ticknor's long meditation over his manuscript (and flattering recommendations that he write a novel), 'Some Chinese Ghosts' was returned to him with a polite letter of rejection. The nervous shock was so severe that his whole life seemed thrown out of gear, and all plans and projects — including a novelette based on evolutional philosophy which he had already started — fell into ashes.

He decided not to go to New York and thence to some Northern ocean resort. He would go to Florida, with the *Times-Democrat* paying part of his expenses. And he would gather more notes for impressionistic sketches. A novelette was too much of an undertaking at the present.

But his confidence in his Chinese tales was not seriously shaken, and he laid the manuscript aside for a few months. If it bore up under a re-reading, he might bring it out at his own expense the following winter. — Very likely he would have to publish many of his writings at his own expense. If he was working toward the literary goal best suited to his ability, and he sincerely believed he was, even his best work would represent a heterodox novelty in American style, and no publisher was eager to touch literary heterodoxies.

Within two or three weeks, however, he had assimilated his Ticknor disappointment; and when it was time for his vacation, he was ready with a different set of plans. He was going to write a novelette after all, but it would have a Gulf island setting; and Grande Isle would be the logical place in which to begin work.

When Joseph Pennell came to New Orleans to make sketches for Hearn's *Century* article on Cable, he had been Cable's hon-

our guest at a dinner at Spanish Fort. During the evening Cable had related the catastrophe of L'Ile Dernière, which had occured in 1856; and Hearn now intended to incorporate that tragic episode into his story. He had three different plots in mind and would decide which to use after he got under way. Descriptive impressionism would set the mood for his story, and it would first be necessary to get his atmosphere created and on paper.

Warmed by the prospect of work mapped out and waiting, he embarked a second time for Grande Isle and chafed at the steamer's leisurely progress southward. But however eager he was to begin work, his first days on the island were anything but pleasant. He was ill with a fever when he arrived, and the weather was windy and rainy. Without Marion Baker's adroit companionship, everything was disagreeable, and since the majority of vacationists happened to be Jews, he developed a violent anti-Semitic mood. Always a champion of the oppressed and pursued, he had been writing pro-Jewish articles since his earliest days on the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. He had lauded their virtues, decried their persecutions, studied their folklore, and drawn considerable material for his writings from the Talmud. And he would continue to do so. But no matter. He was in a cantankerous mood. There was no one on the island who pleased him but one 'nice old gentleman' and 'a refined young Creole.'

He wrote to Marion Baker and Mrs. Courtney grumbling about the Jews. He also wrote to Mrs. Durno, saying he was living in Jerusalem — 'not, unfortunately, as a Crusader.' He longed for some Gentile presence. Couldn't she effect a rescue? Couldn't Lieutenant Crosby be persuaded to share his pilgrimage? The situation might brighten, but he had his doubts.

The situation did brighten when he saw Marion Baker's handwriting on a *Times-Democrat* envelope; and when he read that Marion was planning to come down within a week or two, his spirits rose still further. Although he still found fault with the food, his health began to improve, and he invented two new swimming strokes for rough weather.

For a little while his work went along much better, and when he could not write, he aped Walt Whitman by 'loafing and contemplating a blade of grass.' Sometimes he loafed among the porpoises, sometimes among the red-bugs, and sometimes he fled 'to the great sun and the burning sands.'

Soon, though, he wrote Marion that he doubted if he could remain on the island until he arrived. He was occupying the room where 'That Woman' had stayed on their last visit (Marion had extracted him from a disagreeable situation involving That Woman) and next to his room was the chamberman's room. The chamberman was making his life a torment.

When he wanted towels, there were no towels. When he had no need for towels, twenty-nine were at his disposal. When he wanted to smoke, lo! — there were no matches. When he had matches, handfuls of them were poked at him. When he was dying of thirst, he could hear the chamberman clinking ice in his own pitcher. After angrily going into the hall to drink until he could drink no more, he would go back to bed only to be roused in the middle of the night by a hand thrust under his mosquito netting. 'Drink ice water!' the chamberman would command.

He had similar difficulties with the waiters. If he wanted to sit *here*, he was shunted over *there*. If he did not like Abraham Levi, Abraham Levi was placed beside him. Once he had paid a dollar to get rid of Abraham Levi; but the next day the waiter expected another dollar. Consequently his eye was still being jabbed by the elbow of Abraham Levi.

'Finally, That Woman is shortly expected. I expect to flee. Very truly and desperately, L. Hearn.'

But his recital of woe was not yet ended. A frantic P. S. followed:

— Horror of horrors! He had just heard that next week a *fire company* was coming to Grande Isle! — *Damn* the island and the Jews and the Gentiles and the sea and the infinite face of the earth! Howling red devils! Hell let loose! Transmutation of night into day! Desolation, damnation, and perpetual blasphemy!

Being able to see the humour of his dilemmas, Hearn used it as an apology for his difficulties. But his troubles did not therewith vanish; and considering the excellent writing he was doing this summer, his discomfort was regrettable. With Marion Baker's arrival, however, much of his irritation was smoothed away, and he settled down more happily to work.

The weather grew more pleasant, and the disagreeable crowds had thinned away by the time Marion went back to New Orleans. But an insuperable laziness came over Hearn during the last few days of his vacation, and he overstayed the time set for his departure. He seemed to be floating in a mental and physical vacuum, bereft of volition. Wrenching himself out of his lethargy, he wrote to Page Baker apologizing for his general uselessness.

He ought to be home, he confessed. He ought to be writing. At the very least he ought to send some copy in. Yet none of these things was he able to do. The curse of unthinkable laziness had come upon him, and his bones ached with it. There was a lotos-weakness in the lukewarm air, a sense of perpetual afternoon; and ideas shaped with horrible difficulty were expressed only in a disgustingly cloudish manner.

He was so narcotized that if he saw his grave with his name on the tombstone he would not have enough strength to doubt that he was dead. For long days he had loafed, disturbed only by the advent of the boat; and the boat vexed him. The great noise assured him that he was still alive, and he was so lazy that he really wished he were dead so that he could be even more lazy. — But not lazy in the ordinary way. He wanted to melt into the water and move with it, tumbling sleepily on warm sands under a big lazy moon. Better still, so enormously lazy had he grown, he would like to become a cloud floating in the Eternal Blue Ghost, drawing his breath only at long, long intervals. Probably it was the sun that made him so lazy, and in the shade of New Orleans he would recover his energy. Therefore, he would have to find strength enough to flee.

He dawdled over this letter for seven days, and he finished it by candlelight only a few hours before he sailed. Salve for a guilty conscience. But in spite of his periods of irritation and unproductive lassitude, he left Grande Isle with a large part of his manuscript worked into shape. It was going to be longer than he had originally planned, and he knew that it was good.

CHAPTER 13

When Hearn got back to New Orleans, he found Doctor Matas returned from Spain; and the young physician played Spanish, Cuban, and Mexican music while the *Times-Democrat* editor carefully listened for their differing characteristics. Hearn then produced his novelette, which he had titled 'The Legend of L'Ile Dernière,' and Matas checked his Spanish dialogue. There was also a smattering of Italian in the script, but French and Creole predominated and these lines had taken less time than the English ones. During the next few weeks, while Hearn was finishing the manuscript, Doctor Matas supplied him with notes on the physiological and psychological progress of yellow fever. By October 'The Legend of L'Ile Dernière' was on its way to Harpers.

A re-reading of his 'Chinese Ghosts' so strongly revived his confidence in the six little stories that he now sent them eastward again, this time to Roberts Brothers in Boston. Despite his *Times-Democrat* work, his thoughts were primarily on his

extra-journalistic writing, and the two manuscripts now in the hands of publishers warmed his heart.

By this time Henry Krehbiel was likewise back in the States, and to him Hearn confided: 'My own purpose now lieth naked before me, without shame. I suppose we all have a purpose, an involuntary goal, to which the Supreme Ghost, unknowingly to us, directs our way. . . . Well, you remember my ancient dream of a poetical prose, — compositions to satisfy an old Greek ear, — like chants wrought in a huge measure, wider than the widest line of a Sanskrit composition, and just a little irregular, like Ocean-rhythm. I really think I will be able to realize it at last. And then, what? I really don't know. I fancy that I shall have produced a pleasant effect on the reader's mind, simply with pictures; and that the secret work, the word-work, will not be noticed for its own sake. It will be simply an eccentricity for critics; an originality for those pleased by it — but I'm sure it will be grateful unto the *musical* ear of H. E. K.!'

— About coming to New York? Br-r-r-r-r! Winter was approaching, and New York in winter signified the transformation of the physical and vital forces of L. H. into the forces of innumerable myriads of worms! But there were symptoms of his coming — perhaps in March, April, or May. Little spider threads of literary weaving were thickening between him and New York, and eventually the rope would be strong enough to form a bridge.

Toward the end of the year, he heard from Roberts Brothers. They were willing to publish 'Some Chinese Ghosts' if he would delete a number of the Chinese, Japanese, Buddhist, and Sanskrit terms; and in 'Promethean agony' he again wrote to Krehbiel. He had despatched to Boston, he told him, a colossal document of supplication and prayer, pleading the rights of poetic prose and the supremacy of form, and citing Moore, Southey, Flaubert, Arnold, Gautier, 'Hiawatha,' and multitudinous other singers and songs. As yet he had received no reply, but with Apocalyptic John he held that anyone who took away from the words of his book would

also take away his part of the things that were written in the book. 'Thy brother in the Holy Ghost of Art wisheth thee many benisons and victories, and the Grace that cometh as luminous rain and the wind of Inspiration perfumed with musk and the flowers of Paradise.'

Despite his anxiety his letter was almost light-hearted, as though he saw the sky brightening ahead of him. And so it was. In connection with 'The New Southern Literary Movement,' *Harper's Weekly* was preparing to run a short sketch of his life and works in a forthcoming issue. Henry M. Alden, the editor of *Harper's Monthly*, was showing signs of accepting his 'Legend of L'Ile Dernière'; and he sold stories and articles to *Harper's Weekly* and *Harper's Bazaar* during December and January. In January, also, he came to an agreement with Roberts Brothers and signed a contract for the publication of his 'Chinese Ghosts.'

These increasing successes, together with the reassuring amount of money he had been able to save, persuaded him the time had come to leave newspaper work for independent writing. His decision was hastened by the fact that the *Times-Democrat* had secretly changed hands and he heard that most of the stock was now held by the Louisiana Lottery Company. The staff was as yet intact, but within six months the whole paper might be revolutionized.

Since there was now a good market for books on Florida, he planned to revisit that state as 'a small literary bee in search of inspiring honey.' He wanted to gather enough material to bring out his volume of impressionistic sketches. Or he might decide on travel sketches, and go on down to Cuba from lower Florida.

Within a week or two he had definitely decided that Florida would be only a stop-over on his way to the West Indies; and then Florida dropped out of his plans when he discovered it was easier to go to the Antilles from New York. In Trinidad he could see South American flora in all its glory, and in Jamaica he could study various types of Creoles similar to those in Louisiana. Innumerable captivating prospects

came into view as he turned the kaleidoscope of the nearing future.

When he asked for Henry Alden's reaction to his plans, the Harper editor suggested that he stay awhile longer in New Orleans, where he had already made himself secure. But spring was coming, and his wanderlust was suffering its customary renascence. This time he was determined not to appease it by merely floating down to Grande Isle!

When the galley proof of 'Some Chinese Ghosts' began arriving from Boston, he found himself face to face with 'one of the most awful situations in life' — the scholarly criticisms of the man who supervised proof for Roberts Brothers. No mere proofreader, *this* man! He knew all the rules of grammar, all the laws of form, all the weaknesses of writers. And like unto the angels of heaven he was without wrath and wholly without mercy. A passage which had required weeks to be worked into a beauty-blossom of style could fall into dust at one touch of his dreadful pencil.

When Hearn had mailed off a bundle of corrected proofs, an afterthought would send him to the nearest telegraph office to have them returned or further corrected in Boston. Sometimes he would waken in the night and writhe in mortification over some witless error he had committed. Cursing himself back to sleep, he would send an humble letter eastward next morning, apologizing for all the trouble he was causing and asking that a certain word or phrase in such-and-such a passage be changed. But at length the travail was ended, and he dropped back into the blissful relief of his *Times-Democrat* routine and the contemplation of maturing plans for escape therefrom.

On the fourteenth of March he opened a crisp copy of 'Some Chinese Ghosts' and looked anxiously at the dedication. Yes, there it was, just as it should be — for Krehbiel an amusing reminder of their adventure with the Cincinnati Char Lee, and for the rest of the world a small, patterned mystery of word-rhythm.

The plots of the six little stories were drawn from abstruse

Chinese sources, checked and rechecked for authenticity and accuracy of detail. Delicately written and overlain with ornamentation, they presented their weirdly beautiful pictures in lyric, chromatic grace. The perfume and the music were Oriental; yet the plots moved swiftly, with a tempo that seemed Occidental to some of the critics. They scarcely knew what to make of the curious, lovely little tales. Some said they were literal translations, while others declared them fabrications without any Chinese basis whatsoever. They were termed both 'obscene' and 'exquisitely spiritual,' although in Boston and New York the notices were highly favourable.

To a certain extent Hearn enjoyed the befuddlement of the literary mentors, for the book pleased him more than either of his others. But his pleasure was short-lived.

Although he would have shared the publishing costs had they asked it, Roberts Brothers had signed a straight five-year ten-per-cent contract for his book. He had received practically no royalties from his other books, and 'Some Chinese Ghosts' was hardly calculated to meet with popular response; but all too soon he was wondering if the 'Ghosts' had walked. He was unreasonably optimistic, and when he received his first royalty statement his unreasonable expectations exploded into unreasonable rage. He was convinced that he had been robbed — and his conviction arrived in Boston as quickly as the United States mail could take it there.

Mr. Roberts, dour, dignified New Englander, read the shocking accusation in silence. It was a moment or two before he could believe the evidence of his eyes. Then in level tones he ordered the plates and all unsold copies of 'Some Chinese Ghosts' destroyed. Thus neatly, and without bending, Roberts Brothers took note of the letter from New Orleans.

Hearn seems to have accepted this jolting catastrophe, surprisingly enough, in complete silence. Undoubtedly he felt, as once in his childhood, that he 'deserved what he got.' He

never referred to it in his letters, and if he discussed it with friends there is no record of it. As time went on, his hypercritical eye found fewer defects in his 'Ghosts' than in any of his other books, yet apparently he accepted the Roberts action as the ultimate in finality. He never tried to find another publisher, and what was to become his most widely known book was not republished until after his death.

The brief appearance of his 'Ghosts,' however, introduced a new correspondent who was to play a minor but curious rôle in his history. Among the letters that came from admirers of the book was one from a George M. Gould, a New Englander two years older than he. Gould was working toward a degree in ophthalmology at the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia and had already written a number of treatises on medical and scientific subjects. But he was imbued with greater literary ambitions, and while he sent Hearn some of his studies on retinal insensibility, the colour-sense, etc., he further roused his interest by asking questions about Gautier, Sainte-Beuve, and other French writers. It was his medical work, however, that made Hearn respond to his friendly advances. 'I feel very small when I compare the work of my fancy with the work of such knowledge as yours,' he wrote to Philadelphia. 'Still I have the power to give you pleasure, which is quite a consolation.'

Gould then suggested that he stop off in Philadelphia for a visit if he was planning to go to New York, asked for specific information about his eye, and recommended rules for its care which duplicated those he was following under Doctor Matas's instruction.

'Wish I had the opportunity to study medicine, or rather, the ability to be a good physician,' Hearn replied. To have a profession was to have an international currency, a cosmopolitan gold. If he were a doctor, an engineer, or architect, he would never settle down anywhere. Being able to answer a universal need would allow him to wander where he pleased. 'There is such a delightful pleasantness about the *first* relations with people in strange places — before you have made

any rival, excited any ill will, incurred anybody's displeasure. Stay long enough in any one place and the illusion is over: you have to sift this society through the meshes of your nerves, and find perhaps one good friendship too large to pass through.'

As for Gould's statement that the sexual sense was such an infernal liar, he had reasons for doubting that it was *all* liar. It told only ethical lies. The physical memory of the most worthless woman who ever ensnared a man could vibrate ever afterward with a thrill of pleasure. Such a phenomenon was especially noticeable in warm climates, where differences of race and race-mixture produced astounding sexual variations. Never was there a greater stupidity than to say that all women were in one respect alike. 'On the contrary, in that one respect they differ infinitely, inexplicably, diabolically, fantastically.'

Though Gould had opened this correspondence during Hearn's last weeks in Louisiana, enough letters were exchanged to lay the groundwork for their later brief but eventful friendship. This, after Hearn's death, would result in Gould's book 'Concerning Lafcadio Hearn,' one of the most amazing personal attacks in American literary history. But in the spring months of 1887, all this lay in the future.

In May, Hearn wrote Krehbiel that he had sent his novelette back to Harpers after making some suggested revisions, and that he would leave for New York as soon as he heard from Henry Alden. 'Of course New York is a horrible nightmare to me. I have been a demophobe for years, — dread crowds and hate unsympathetic characters most unspeakably. I have only been once to a theatre in New Orleans; — to hear Patti sing, and I got out after she had sung one song. I can't be much of a pleasure to anyone. Here I visit a few friends steadily for a couple of months; — then disappear for six. Can't help it; — just a nervous condition that renders effort unpleasant. So I shall want to be very well hidden away in New York, — to see no one except you and Joe. There are

one or two I shall have to visit; but I shall take care to make those visits just before leaving town.'

Joseph Tunison had joined Krehbiel on the *New York Tribune* in 1884; and Elizabeth Bisland was now in New York doing magazine work. Whenever possible she was publishing complimentary remarks on Hearn's writings, and to her friends she spoke of him in glowing terms. Thus a large number of New York writers were hearing about him personally, for Elizabeth was now a strikingly attractive and popular member of Manhattan literary circles. In a recent letter to Hearn she had recalled his tendency to avoid her company, and he had apologized becomingly. 'I can only say in explanation that I suspected a slightly sarcastic tendency where I was no doubt mistaken, and simply beat retreat from an imaginary fire.'

Now he also wrote Elizabeth that he would soon be in New York, although he didn't know how long he would stay there. Probably only a very short time, but it would be long enough to see her once — for a little while. Then, again, he might take a notion to stay in the North longer, or permanently. He really didn't know what he would do.

(Although the West Indies were still his goal, the thought of going to strange places where he knew no one was at times alarming.)

Within a few days Alden wrote that he had accepted the 'L'Ile Dernière' manuscript and would run it serially in *Harper's Monthly*. If it proved popular enough, Harpers would then bring it out as a book. The title was changed to 'Chita.'

In preparing to leave New Orleans, Hearn's first thought was for his library. He had sometime earlier forced himself to burn a mountainous stack of notes, and he now put what were left in his large trunk along with a few of his most valuable books. This trunk he left with Mrs. Courtney, who promised to forward it when he again had a permanent address The rest of his books he carefully packed in wooden boxes, to be stored until he wrote Doctor Matas to send them to him.

Nanny would continue to have a good home at the boarding-house; but Ella and Mrs. Courtney were inclined to be tearful as the time for Hearn's departure drew near. Mrs. Courtney gave him her photograph as a farewell gift, and Ella asked him to write in her autograph album. It was a richly bound little book decorated with a coloured silk rosebud and was probably one of his earlier gifts to her.

After thinking for a few moments he wrote: 'Dear Ella: — I will not try to write any of my own thoughts in your book; they would be worth very little. I shall write for you a translation from Victor Hugo which I have made. The original poem entitled "*A Elle*" (To Her) was not found until after his death; — and was never translated before.' The four-versed translation was not the most suitable inscription he might have written, but as a farewell gift it was an appropriate last mark on Ella's prosaic young life.

Three days later, the same translation appeared in the *Times-Democrat* as one of his last contributions to the paper which had sponsored his literary coming-of-age. 'Infidel sheet,' local ministers had branded it for publishing so many of his Buddhist essays. But during the five and one-half years of its existence, Page Baker had been well repaid for his tolerance and sympathetic patience; and now, with the end of May, there would be no more exotisms and strange bits of fragile beauty starring its pages.

On the first or second of June, 1887, Hearn told his closest friends good-bye (it was not easy, but — who knew? He might come back before long!), and almost a decade after he had arrived with the *Thompson Dean's* towering brown cargo of cotton, he left New Orleans. The picturesque old city had given him the longest tarrying his life would know; but now he was on his way again. *Harper's Monthly* would later publish 'A Ghost,' and some of its passages were already written out in his mind. They covered the whole psychological range of his years in the Crescent City and epitomized the relentless power of his wanderlust.

'Oh! the first vague charm, the first sunny illusion of some

fair city, — when vistas of unknown streets all seem leading to the realization of a hope you dare not even whisper; — when even the shadows look beautiful, and strange façades appear to smile good omen through light of gold! And those first winning relations with men, while you are still a stranger, and only the better and the brighter side of their nature is turned to you! . . . All is yet a delightful, luminous indefiniteness, — sensation of streets and men, — like some beautifully tinted photograph slightly out of focus. . . .

'Then the slow solid sharpening of details all about you, — thrusting through the illusion and dispelling it, — growing keener and harder day by day, through long dull seasons, while your feet learn to remember all asperities of pavements, and your eyes all physiognomy of buildings and of persons, — failures of masonry, — furrowed lines of pain. Thereafter only the aching monotony intolerable, — and the hatred of sameness grown dismal, — and dread of the merciless, inevitable, daily and hourly repetition of things; — while those impulses of unrest, which are Nature's urgings through that ancestral experience which lives in each of us, — outcries of sea and peak and sky to man, — ever make wilder appeal. . . . Strong friendships may have been formed; but there finally comes a day when even these can give no consolation for the pain of monotony, — and you feel that in order to live you must decide — regardless of result — to shake forever from your feet the familiar dust of that place.'

CHAPTER 14

ALTHOUGH Hearn was going through Ohio on his way to New York, he had not planned to stop off in Cincinnati. It had been three or four years since he had heard from Henry Watkin, and all his thoughts were on the momentous step he was taking. But Fate intervened to effect a brief reunion. A wreck on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad allowed him half a day in Cincinnati, and he went straight to the printing shop. When Watkin recognized the little man coming in from the street, he threw his arms around him and 'cried as if his heart would break.' Hearn's eyes were also wet, and for a moment only Watkin's sobbing and the ticking of an old grandfather clock broke the silence. Hearn refused to see anyone else in Cincinnati, and he stayed in the printing shop with Watkin until train time.

At Jersey City there was another joyous reunion, and brushing aside Hearn's mention of a hotel Krehbiel took him to his Fifty-Seventh Street apartment near Central Park.

There Mrs. Krehbiel endorsed her husband's hospitality while their small daughter promptly won Hearn's heart. It was well toward morning before the two men were willing to think of sleep.

After the first excitement wore off, Hearn wrote a long letter to Mrs. Courtney, and an even longer one to Henry Watkin. In the old days, he told Watkin, he had been too young and selfish to appreciate his old Dad; but now he saw him as he really was — noble, true, and generous. He realized how many allowances he had made for all his foolish, horrid ways when he had been with him, and how much he owed him and always would.

He was having a delightful holiday, he went on, and if it were not for the terrible winters he would like to live in New York. 'The houses eleven stories high, that seem trying to climb into the moon, — the tremendous streets and roads, — the cascading thunder of the awful torrent of life, — the sense of wealth-force and mind-power that oppresses the stranger here, — all these form so colossal a contrast with the inert and warmly coloured Southern life that I know not how to express my impression.'

But he wanted to get back to the little printing shop again before long. He had dreamed about it the other night, and had heard the tall old clock ticking like a man's feet treading on pavements far away.

'And I saw the Sphinx, with the mother and child in her arms, move her monstrous head and observe: "The sky in New York is grey!"

'When I woke up it *was* grey, and it remained grey until today. Even now it is not like our summer blue. It looks higher and paler and colder. We are nearer to God in the South, just as we are nearer to Death in that terrible and splendid heat of the Gulf Coast.'

He signed himself, 'Affectionately, your son,' and a familiar little raven stared out from under the signature.

After seeing Joseph Tunison, Hearn decided not to postpone his call on Elizabeth Bisland. It was nicer seeing old

friends than he had imagined! But when he had braved Manhattan's traffic and reached 136 Madison Avenue, 'a large and determined concierge' answered the bell, said Miss Bisland had moved to an unknown address, and closed the door.

'Then I wandered away down a double row of magnificent things that seemed less buildings than petrifactions, — astonishments of loftiness and silent power, — and wondered how Miss Elizabeth Bisland must have felt when she first trod these enormous pavements and beheld these colossal dreams of stone trying to touch the moon. And reaching my friend Krehbiel's house, I made this brief record of my vain effort to meet the grey eyes of E. B.'

Elizabeth answered this note with her new address; and Hearn found her not half so forbidding as she had seemed in New Orleans. Much of their talk centred on 'Chita' and on reminiscences of Grande Isle and the morning charm of its strange beaches.

New York, at first, was fine. But after another week or so the tense, crowded atmosphere was making Hearn feel restless and cramped. If he stepped out on Krehbiel's balcony and looked down into the street, he grew dizzy. If he went for a walk, the traffic assaulted his nerves, while hurrying throngs seemed maliciously intent on buffeting him about. At Coney Island he could find no pleasure in the 'icy' Atlantic waters, and the commercialized beaches made him long for the warm, empty sands of Grande Isle. By this time he and Krehbiel had caught up the slack in reminiscences and literary shop-talk, and since he was now convinced that New York could never satisfy him, there was no point in discussing his former plans for literary collaboration. Anyway, he had none of his inspiring books with him, and Krehbiel had never been enthusiastic about the idea.

Now, too, the Krehbiels were beginning to tire of their guest. Mrs. Krehbiel was perturbed by the invective which mention of his enemies called forth, and he smoked in bed and burned holes in her guest linen. While he was deciding where next to go, he re-polished his 'Chita' manuscript;

and though Krehbiel insisted on moving out of the library so his guest might have the most comfortable workroom, he was inconvenienced by this arrangement and irked by Hearn's constant interruptions. — How did this phrase sound to his musical ear? — Would he like it better if the rhythm was prolonged by two or three syllables?

By the end of June, Hearn had again made up his mind to go to the Antilles, and Krehbiel took him to the Harper offices to meet Henry Alden. He would feel more secure in undertaking the voyage if he had a definite commission for West Indian writings.

Mr. Alden had previously advised him to remain in New Orleans, but now that he was determined to go to the tropics, he approved his plan to write travel sketches. No definite financial agreement was made; but the editor felt certain he would write something one of the Harper publications could use, and Hearn returned the compliment by readily trusting Alden's judgment and good will.

He booked passage on the *S.S. Barracouta*, to sail down through the islands to British Guiana before deciding where to settle for a month or so of writing. After buying some tropic-weight clothing, he assembled and packed his few bothersome belongings, and one morning in the forepart of July, the Krehbiels accompanied him to Pier 49 on the East River. They were not sorry to say good-bye, but he left behind him a staunch little friend in the person of the small Krehbiel daughter. In the flurry of packing he also left a pair of shoes behind, and these were later to precipitate a lamentable incident.

Wishing to spend every waking hour on deck, he hurried to his chair under the white awnings as soon as he had disposed of his luggage. Presently a cannon-shot reverberated in the heavy morning air, and the *Barracouta* slowly drew away from the pier. The Statue of Liberty approached through the haze, towered momentarily over the ship, and then turned slowly and receded into the New York skyline. — At last he was under way!

By noon the sun had changed the world from grey to pale blue, and the waters of the Atlantic began to sound. Strong fannings of cool wind whistled through the rigging, flapped the canvas, and roared through swaying nets. The white-seamed ocean spit spray in a ceaseless drizzle, and now and then it reached up and slapped the ship like a great naked hand.

The next morning Hearn wakened to a new perception of the divinity of blue; but an old French gentleman from Guadeloupe shook his head. '*Attendez vous un peu!*' he murmured gently. By afternoon Hearn himself seemed turning blue, but when he eagerly asked if this at last was the true tropical blue, the Frenchman exclaimed: '*Mon Dieu! Non! Attendez vous un peu!*'

On the third day both sky and water were a luminous blue that seemed ready to burst into flame. The air was now warm and soporific, and after reading an hour Hearn fell asleep in his chair. When he wakened, the ocean made him cry out in amazement. It was an impossible, nonsensical blue — an immeasurable dyeing vat of indigo and blazing azure! But the old gentleman from Guadeloupe continued to shake his head.

On the fourth day the sky blazed blue fire and the swaying circle of the ocean was flaming lazulite. Although Hearn grew drowsy, the burning blue light kept him awake; and the violet gloom of night came as a welcome respite from the azure splendour. In the cooler darkness the fire imprisoned in the depths by day flashed up through the black phosphorous water. The ship ground sparks with her keel, and struck flames with her propeller.

When the old man from Guadeloupe finally pronounced the water a true tropic blue, it appeared blue-black to Hearn near the ship and an opulent pansy hue in the distance. The tumbling waves were mountain-purple. For ten years the golden-green glow on the southern horizon had been beckoning to him; and now the gleaming had deepened into a steady, burning blue and hung directly overhead. Beneath it during

the next few weeks he was to be introduced to paradise.

His West Indian writings, inevitably, would abound in colour. It was everywhere about him, saturating his emotions and paralyzing his imagination. One of his last *Times-Democrat* articles had been 'Colours and Emotions,' and a few months earlier he had written 'The Artistic Value of Myopia.' Yet while his descriptive writings were often chromatic symphonies, at no time during his life did he seem to realize that he was hypersensitive to colour.

On the seventh morning out of New York, a number of small islands towered up around the *Barracouta*, jagged and coned into strange shapes. The distant ones were misty green and smoky blue, and those extremely far off appeared to be made of golden vapour. They rose up sharply from the sea, and the tallest peak of each island was crowned with a shining cloud.

The first stop was to be Santa Cruz, and, as the great mass of peaks and ravines slowly emerged from veils of purple-grey mist, its lustrous blues and greens shifted and shimmered like the colours on hummingbird feathers. White butterflies fluttered about the ship as Hearn peered through his telescope at the approaching city of Frederiksted. But upon going ashore the city itself disappointed him. It had been burned and sacked during a Negro revolt ten years earlier. Most of its natives were stolid and black. Basse-Terre, on Saint Kitts, was also a sombre tropical town; but here and there he passed 'a fine half-breed type — some tall brown girl walking with a swaying grace like that of a sloop at sea.'

Guadeloupe went by in the night, and next morning a golden sunrise blazed over an indigo sea. Dominica, the highest of the Lesser Antilles, was 'a beautifully wrinkled mass of green and blue and grey; — a strangely abrupt peaking and heaping of the land.' But the *Barracouta* stopped only long enough to land the mail. Within an hour or so she was approaching Martinique — *Le Pays des Revenants*.

Dominated by the eternally veiled Mont Pelée, and with long green spurs reaching out into the ocean and up into the

sky, Martinique was the most imposing West Indian island Hearn had yet seen. And the city of Saint Pierre, tumbling down to the bay, was an enchanted dream. Old mossy steps ascended steeply from the harbour, and mountain streams rushed along the gutters of the narrow stone-flagged streets which twisted and curved continuously. The little stone houses were balconied and shuttered, and most of them were painted bright yellow. Save for this more brilliant colouring, the architectural effect reminded Hearn of the French Quarter in New Orleans.

The Creole-speaking natives he passed on Rue Victor Hugo belonged to the finest half-breed race in the West Indies. Tall, straight, and supple, they walked with easy dignity on the balls of bare feet that whispered along the warm stone pavements. Though they presented a many-coloured assortment of Arabian Nights characters, the predominant tint was yellow, like the town itself. The better-class native women were dressed in crimson, blue, green, yellow, lilac, or rose; and their elaborately draped turbans were full of brilliant yellow. Gold cylinder earrings and necklaces of hollow gold beads frequently completed their costumes. The poorest native women could display their love for splendour only in the colour of their simple cotton dresses, girdled close to the body and caught up in front to permit freedom in walking.

Of all the intriguing objects offered for sale in the quaint, shadowy shops, the most beautiful and exotic were the Martinique dolls. They were made of reddish-brown or black leather, and each dress was an exact replica of a Martinique costume — embroidered chemise, silk foulard, earrings, yellow turban, and all. They were almost too artistic to be toys, Hearn thought, and he debated whether one should be sent to the Krehbiel daughter or Elizabeth Bisland.

But there was no need to decide at the moment! There was too much in this wonderful city, on this divine island, to be digested during one brief visit! After he had completed his tour he would come back to Saint Pierre to rest and write up his notes.

In Bridgetown, Barbados, he viewed modern streetcars and hotels with a sardonic eye. The black, brutal-looking natives spoke surprisingly good English. Negro regiments marched through the streets to the blare of English music. And he was glad to leave the efficient British port behind.

Coming at last to Georgetown, British Guiana, he was blinded by the South American sunlight. The horizon seemed to be a motionless sheet of lightning, and he dared not look directly overhead. Georgetown was a modern but charming city, with wide white streets and beautifully planted gardens. Everywhere palms were clustered about fountains, stood sentinel at gateways, and towered over the highest roofs. The natives were preponderantly black, although there were many bearded, serpent-eyed Hindus among them.

Leaving the city, he rode for miles along avenues of palms through cane-fields and queer coolie villages. As he watched the endless lines of tall, lithe trees, they appeared to stretch and undulate as though their ringed trunks were articulated. He could nearly persuade himself that they were living creatures, watching with supernatural calm as he stared from his carriage.

That night the *Barracouta* passengers were allowed to stay ashore, and after he recorded his notes he wrote to Mrs. Courtney, Elizabeth Bisland, and Doctor Matas. His letters were filled with praise for the West Indies, and especially for Saint Pierre. Hereafter, he said, the North would always seem torpid, benumbed, and livid. He had come to the conclusion, he told Matas, that civilization was a cold and vapid humbug. The tropics were the only living part of the dying planet. When he first saw them, it seemed that he had seen them before; and he was sure he would see them again.

Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, was filled with drowsy warmth, vast light, and exotic vegetation. But the natives were black; and when he did see a white face it was usually bearded and austere — the strong English features of a man trained

to command. Standing out in startling relief against the background of darker faces, it surprised him into a new awareness of the dignity of a white skin. The colourful costumes and natural grace of the French islands were lacking, as in all the English colonies; and the turbaned Hindus appeared hostile and taciturn.

His next stop was at Grenada, where Charles Hearn had known service some thirty years earlier. The island had suffered a long period of commercial ruin following the destruction of her sugar industry, and the dilapidated city of Saint George climbed one of the great green hills surrounding the silent harbour. The yellow buildings facing the wharf were crumbling and streaked with green; and the entire city, populated largely by sluggish Negroes, was invaded by mouldy ruin. Paint was peeling, stucco falling, roofs caving in, and stones slipping out of place. Microscopic green plants nestled in every chink and crevice.

High above the town, overlooking streets too steep for any carriage, sloped the red walls of the mouldering old fort. As Hearn studied it through his telescope, he wondered if his father had ever been stationed there. He thought he had once served in Grenada, but he was not certain.

Finding the city too depressing to be enjoyed, he engaged a carriage and rode up the mountainside. The gloomy road wound up through a grove of machineel trees, where the air was heavy with vegetable decay. Over the deadly poisonous apples lying on the black earth, hundreds of crabs were swarming with a sound like the rustling of water. The largest species had stalked eyes, red markings, and claws white as ivory. Others were apple-green queerly mottled with black and white, and some were raspberry-coloured and very small and quick.

Emerging from the machineel trees, the road continued upward under jutting rock cliffs, black and naked at the base, but draped in heavy growths of green lianas toward the top. All around Hearn could hear creeping, crawling sounds and soft thuds, and he was glad when the carriage turned around

and took him back down to melancholy Saint George rotting in the sun.

As he walked down to the harbour through knots of stolid, burly Negroes, he remembered the sinister faces of the Hindus on Trinidad. And here, as there, the few white faces stood out stern and commanding. — Outposts of civilization, they were. But could they stem the rising tide of barbarism he thought he could detect? The more prolific blacks were gradually becoming predominant, and between the blacks and the mixed-bloods there were intense and deathless hatreds. It appeared to him that the whole white race and its charming fruit-coloured offshoots were doomed to disappear from the West Indies. He felt tired and lonely, and he was impatient to get back to Saint Pierre to rest and consider these disturbing impressions at greater length.

When the beautifully fantastic shape of Saint Lucia floated out of the morning mists, it helped restore his artistic alertness. And the Creole-speaking town of Castries, with its low cottages and little tropic gardens drowsing under palm trees, dissipated his melancholia. Then at last came Martinique, the verdant, violet-shadowed mass of Mont Pelée looming up over the horizon and slowly drawing close. Collecting his luggage, he left the *Barracouta* with a happy heart.

The sky was blossom-tender. The light was pure radiance. And mountain streams were sparkling over the stone streets of lemon-coloured Saint Pierre. — Here again were the brilliantly coloured costumes that draped yellow, round limbs and swaying hips. Here were the lithe, broad-shouldered men whose nude torsos were animated statuary. — Here were shining, inherited memories and dreams come true!

Much of all this, he firmly cautioned himself, lay in his own fancy. Part of this enchanted paradise was hallucination. But he climbed the mossy old steps with a sense of fulfilment and happy release. Now for a few weeks life would be wholly acceptable!

CHAPTER 15

HEARN had bought a round-trip ticket for his West Indian voyage and he could, therefore, stay in Martinique as long as the money in his wallet lasted. He hoped it would last two months, for living expenses in Saint Pierre were absurdly low. It would have been even cheaper to live up in the mountains, but in the summertime poisonous snakes, including the deadly fer-de-lance, were a constant menace. A seeming branch, a liana knot, or a pink or grey root might suddenly come to life and strike out in quick venom. To walk along the mountain paths or even on the more open roads would have been suicidal for a man with poor sight.

There were enough hazards to face in negotiating the steep, twisting little streets of Saint Pierre, with their unexpected flights of steps and gutters of rushing water. But these risks he gladly accepted. There was so much to see and hear and dream about that he donned his wide hat and went out for

a walk whenever his writing went badly. And often it did, for all the poetry had been 'knocked out' of him; his imagination was stunned by the realization of its wildest dreams; and his philosophical sense seemed deadened by novel impressions and unfamiliar sensory experiences.

He hoped to work some of his notes into fiction, but this would have to wait till he returned North. His travel sketches required all the concentration of which he was capable. He wanted to put the whole feeling of his voyage into them — the colour and radiance, all his impressions and sensations. Yet that in itself was practically impossible, for Northern people didn't know what light and colour were, and how could he tell them without a new language? Even an artist with palette and brush couldn't depict the luminous glories of the tropics!

Such problems were not too disturbing, however, for where literature faltered, hedonism took over and industry willingly relaxed. 'It pleases me to find my affection for Saint Pierre is not merely inspiration,' he wrote to Elizabeth Bisland. 'The place has fascinated more than one practical American, — persuaded them to abandon ambitions, contests, popular esteem, friends, society, — and to settle here for the rest of their days, in delightful indolence and dreamy content.'

Occasionally he made excursions into the neighbouring countryside, plying his driver with questions. One day he was caught in a rainstorm and came home with a burning headache that made work impossible for five days. Another time he went to Fort-de-France and visited a white statue of Josephine which reminded him of Elizabeth. Everywhere he talked with the friendly, soft-voiced natives. But it was Nature who gave him his finest notes.

One day, following a road up the slope of Morne Parnasse, he came to the Jardin des Plantes, an old botanical garden less than a mile from Saint Pierre. After passing through the gates, he found himself in a quiet green gloaming through which the trunks of immense palms towered to an unbelievable height. As he looked up at the solemn tree-life straining

toward the sun, he experienced a feeling of awe which was different from anything he had ever known. There was an element of fear in his awe, a fear that went far back into his childhood, and was impossible to place. But as he contemplated the lofty archings of the palms reaching up to the blinding blue sky, as if yearning toward divinity, the source of his fear was revealed to him in a flash of reminiscence. — Once more he sat beside his grandaunt in the Gothic cathedral in Ireland, seeing goblins in the arched shadows of the high vaulted ceiling! He realized then that the supernatural implications of Gothic architecture had been working their magic on his frightened young imagination.

Another time an even shorter walk took him to a strange, wondrously neat little cemetery at the foot of the forest-clad Morne d'Orange. Most of the low tombs were covered with squares of black-and-white tile, and at the foot of each grave a black cross bore a white engraved plaque. Over some of the graves miniature marble chapels had been built, and flowering vines were twining about the small pillars. When he bent down and peered through the little entrances, he saw careful groupings of white madonnas and Christs and angels. The cemetery was everywhere bright with colour, and the air was heavy with the scent of jasmine and white lilies. But here, too, he sensed the great power of tropical Nature. The mute green life of the morne seemed trying to invade this quiet resting-place of the dead, thrusting green hands over the walls, pushing strong roots under it.

When he got back to his room, he wrote: 'Some day there may be a great change in the little city of Saint Pierre; — there may be less money and less zeal and less remembrance of the lost. Then from the morne, over the bulwark, the green host will move down unopposed; — creepers will prepare the way, dislocating the pretty tombs, pulling away the chequered tiling; — then will come the giants, rooting deeper, — feeling for the dust of hearts, groping among the bones; — and all that love has hidden away shall be restored to Nature, — absorbed into the rich juices of her

verdure, — revitalized in her bursts of colour, — resurrected in her upliftings of emerald and gold to the great sun.'

By the end of August, his travel sketches were all but finished, and his money, unhappily, was nearly gone. Although living costs had been insignificant, he had spent over fifty dollars on photographs as possible illustrations for his writings. He was convinced that the West Indies offered an unparalleled field of research for romantic material, and he planned to return as soon as possible. The ground was 'absolutely untilled,' and it was not at all likely that a Creole would till it.

Earlier he had sent the little Krehbiel daughter a Martinique doll, and now he wrote a belated letter to Henry Krehbiel. If the letter arrived before the Krehbiels left for their vacation, would Henry arrange some safe place, with Joe Tunison or somebody, where he could leave his things for a few days until he decided what he was going to do next? His future plans would be influenced by what arrangements he could make with Harpers. But in any event he would have to stay in the city until he sold his West Indian articles and corrected the magazine proofs of 'Chita.'

Already he was dreading the crowds and confusion of New York, and he wanted to feel that someone would be expecting him.

During the first week of September, the northbound *Barracouta* again stopped at Saint Pierre, and he was taken aboard. For two or three days he rejoiced again in the blue world of tropical waters; but when the *Barracouta* reached the cooler northern regions, he began to worry. There had not been enough time to receive an answer from Krehbiel, and the prospect of being alone in New York chilled him as much as did the cold Atlantic winds. He fervently wished he had written to Krehbiel sooner. Or why hadn't he thought to write directly to Joe?

When he landed in New York, no one was waiting to welcome him, and he registered at the United States Hotel on Fulton and Water Streets. After his luggage and manuscript

were safely behind a locked door, he set out to find his friends.

A nerve-racking trip through a bedlam of traffic took him to the Krehbiel apartment; but the Krehbiels had left town, just as he had feared. There was nothing to do but try to find Tunison. And in this he had even worse luck. Either he had the wrong address, no such address existed, or he was not the man to find it. Even policemen could not help him; and he gave up in weary exasperation.

Elizabeth Bisland, he already knew, was out of town.

Was no one at all in New York but millions of hustling, jostling, hard-faced strangers put there expressly to thwart and irritate him? Why in God's name hadn't he stayed in sunny, sleepy Saint Pierre? Why, indeed, save that he had no more money with which to stay there! And how long did he propose to stay in Manhattan with only a few dollars left in his pocket?

It was now late afternoon and, though there was nothing he wished less to do, he hurried over to the Harper offices. — What if Mr. Alden was out of town too?

Fortunately, the editor was at his desk, and when he saw how things were he invited Hearn to go home with him. It would be a week or two, he said, before a decision could be reached on the West Indian manuscript, and in the interim the Aldens would be delighted to have him as their guest. They lived in the country near Metuchen, New Jersey, where he could do his 'Chita' proof-reading in peace and quietness. And with his friends out of town, there was no reason why he should stay in New York.

In unbounded gratitude the returned traveller ended his day of torment by departing for the country; and for the next two weeks friendly, tactful Henry Alden spent most of his evenings talking with his little one-eyed guest. He also listened to his problems. — Should he go back to newspaper work in New Orleans, or perhaps in the East? Should he try to get along by turning more of his notes into magazine articles? Or should he return to the tropics? Frankly, he wanted to go

back to the West Indies and was hesitating only because of the financial problems involved. He'd like to live in Saint Pierre for a number of years, if not permanently. The North now seemed colourless, grey, and fearfully cold. He felt like an outcast from heaven!

Alden believed his interest in mixed-blood peoples and his artistry in handling colour pre-eminently qualified him to do West Indian writings. But such exotic material might prove too rich a diet for magazine readers. If these first articles were accepted, he pointed out, they would have to be used as a test. Undoubtedly the Harper publications could use more, but how many he couldn't say. A definite contract was consequently inadvisable.

'Too exotic' was becoming a familiar cry to Hearn. And what he needed was a commission, a dependable income. But with Alden interested in his work, perhaps he ought to take a chance. Maybe what Harpers couldn't use in their magazines, they would bring out in book form! In the daytime he worked on his 'Chita' proofs and at night he went to sleep weighing these pros and cons. In the end his empty wallet prevailed over his adventurous spirit, and he decided to go back to New Orleans journalism. He wrote this crestfallen news to Henry Watkin and promised to see him on his way South.

But two or three days later, his depression turned to joy. Alden handed him a check for his West Indian sketches, and he could scarcely believe what he read. *Seven hundred dollars!* That changed everything! The *Barracouta* was returning to the tropics the second of October, and, by the eternal gods, he would be aboard her! *Le Pays des Revenants* had won another convert.

Although Alden sympathized with Hearn's decision to go back to Martinique, he reminded him that Harpers would not be commissioning him to do more work. Nor, as much as he'd like to, could he himself be of personal assistance should he run short of funds. He would accept all his writings he could, and he thought he was reasonably certain to do well.

But he wanted him to recognize the financial uncertainties involved before he undertook this second voyage.

Hearn was willing to assume the risks, and with his brain whirling he went in to New York to make preparations for leaving. He wired Mrs. Courtney to send his trunk of books and papers to the United States Hotel by C.O.D. express. He also wrote Doctor Matas to have his boxes of books sent to Henry Alden. The editor had promised to take care of them while he was away.

To Elizabeth Bisland he wrote: '. . . I return to the tropics, dear Miss Bisland, — probably forever. I imagine that civilization will behold me no more, except as a visitor at very long intervals. . . . I have not seen Krehbiel at all, — was out of town when I returned, and seems to have found no time afterwards.'

Within a day or so his wire to Mrs. Courtney was followed by a letter. He was returning to the tropics, he explained, and would be gone at least for the winter. He was in a crazy rush trying to get away, and in New York it took about two days to find anything or anyone he wanted. For twenty minutes he had walked through the post-office building as hard as he could go — trying to find the place to mail a letter! He would write again in eighteen or twenty days, and he sent his love to everyone, but especially to her.

He also took time to write another letter to Watkin. 'Dear Old Dad,' he began, 'I am going right back to the Tropics again, this time to stay. I have quit newspapering forever.' He might not be in Saint Pierre all the time, he said, but that would be his headquarters. When he again came back to New York, he could easily run out to Cincinnati for a visit; but before long he would be writing from Martinique or Guadeloupe to coax Dad to join him. 'Good-bye for a little while, with my best love to you.'

Two and one-half years were to pass before Watkin heard from him again.

This time he purchased only a one-way ticket; and as he scurried about getting necessary supplies and clothing, he

allowed himself but one luxury. He purchased a camera that cost one hundred and six dollars. In the long run, he estimated, he could save far more than that amount by being his own photographer.

After all his purchases were made, he was elated to find that he still had something over three hundred dollars left. But when only the odds and ends of packing remained to be done, he was seized by an inner desolation. — Everything that was solid seemed to be breaking up. He was deliberately placing himself at the mercy of the unknown and unpredictable; and there was nothing sure to hold to.

In the midst of his sudden fear and loneliness, a reproving note came from Elizabeth Bisland, in answer to his letter triumphantly announcing his departure. Hearn wept over the note; and the last thing he did before leaving the hotel was to write an answer.

'. . . Your rebuke for the trivial phrase in my letter was very beautiful as well as very richly deserved. But I don't think it is a question of volition. It is necessary to obey the impulses of the Unknown for Art's sake — or rather, you *must* obey them. . . . I think I am right in going: perhaps I am wrong in thinking of making the tropics a home. Probably it will be the same thing over again: impulse and chance compelling another change. . . .'

As he hurriedly sealed and addressed the envelope, a porter took his luggage down to the cab, and within a few minutes he was again on the familiar decks of the *Barracouta*. It was just three weeks since he had disembarked, and now for the second time he watched the New York skyline recede in the morning mists.

When the *Barracouta* sailed into the harbour of Saint Pierre, a flock of naked little boys rowed out in absurd tublike canoes to dive for coins. Their aquatic skill so impressed Hearn that one of his first Saint Pierre projects was to get pictures of them for a magazine article.

Being as yet unfamiliar with the mechanics of his camera, he engaged two professional photographers to catch the boys

in graphic poses. He had promised the young divers ten cents apiece, and when they gathered on the beach, a crowd of native onlookers also assembled. One thing after another went wrong, and the boys were sent home after being told to return the next day. More trouble developed during the second attempt, and, in all, Hearn and his photographers tried six fruitless times to get the pictures. Each time the crowd of native spectators was larger. And each time the boys were noisier — jostling and yelling for their money. Finally matters reached a climax.

There were seventeen clamorous urchins to be paid off that day, and Hearn had the wildest difficulty in identifying them. Every little black, brown, and yellow boy in the neighbourhood shed his clothes and began shrieking for an unearned dime. It looked to Hearn as though he had a hundred boys to pay.

At last he got the legitimate seventeen in line, surrounded by a howling mob. But as fast as he paid them off at one end of the line, they ran back to the other end 'so as to make the paying eternal and incomprehensible.' When he saw what was happening, he adopted the only course of action left to him. He turned around and ran. He ran as fast as he could, and 'all the horrid little naked boys' ran after him, a queue of pandemonium trailing after him up into the city.

When he took refuge in the house of the photographers, his pursuers collected before the street door; and he counted twenty-five in the mustering. All of them were insisting that they had not been paid, although he had already paid off thirteen of the original seventeen. Finally the furious little mob charged up the stairway, and the police had to be summoned to quell the disturbance and escort Hearn from the building amid universal tears and lamentations. In the afternoon he returned to the beach, and financial adjustments were made to everybody's satisfaction. But no usable pictures were ever obtained.

Even after he learned to operate his camera, he had trouble

getting the pictures he wanted. He was especially eager to get some unposed photographs of the picturesque *porteuses*, the native women-carriers; but to catch them unaware was seldom possible. If a graceful bronze figure halted for a moment, there was a mad flurry in a near-by doorway as the waiting Hearn brought his camera into play. But by the time he had located the *porteuse* in his finder, she was generally on her way again, leaving him in fuming profanity.

Sometimes he asked two or three of the *porteuses* to pose for a picture, offering a few coins as reward. But their response was always the same. — They would pose willingly, *mais oui!* But anything so important as having their picture taken demanded their Sunday garb! If Missié would wait only one minute they would run back home and change! Hearn could never persuade them to pose as they were.

He had more success when he hired some of the attractive mixed-bloods to pose for him in the nude, for this required privacy and did away with distractions and hurry. If his subjects were young women, they were usually bashful, giggling and talking softly among themselves. But they were sufficiently impressed to be tractable, and however long he pottered over his 'detective camera,' the svelte golden bodies were obediently still. But even then his pictures never satisfied him, for much of the beauty of the natives was a beauty of skin tints, and a great part of their charm lay in their grace of movement.

One day on a Creole plantation an African drummer played and sang for him, and his temperamental camera miraculously recorded 'an instantaneous photograph of the drummer in the very act of playing.' Otherwise his one-hundred-and-six-dollar purchase netted him very little but irritation and disappointment.

In his domestic arrangements he was much more fortunate. He found a comfortable little suite of rooms on a secluded street, 'so steep that it is really dangerous to sneeze while descending it, lest one lose one's balance, and tumble right across the town.' His narrow balcony overlooked this street, and

beyond the opposite roofs he could see the green mornes and mountains. In addition to his living-quarters and kitchen, there was a bare little servant's room where he installed Cyrillia, a middle-aged mixed-blood.

Cyrillia's personal belongings were pitifully few. A cheap trunk with broken hinges held her few threadbare clothes, and a wall shelf displayed her remaining possessions. Beside a bottle of holy water stood another bottle filled with camphor dissolved in *tafia*, her panacea for all minor ailments. The shelf also held a little wooden monkey about three inches high, the dusty toy of a long-dead child; a broken image of the Virgin which was even smaller; the Virgin's lamp, a little wick floating in a tiny glass of olive oil; and a chipped cup which held a few buds or bright blossoms as Cyrillia's daily offering to her deity.

To Hearn the infinitesimal Virgin was the most pathetic. It was only the upper half of the image, artfully arranged in a little straw-filled box to hide its lack of feet. Sometimes Cyrillia stuck small flowers into the straw, making a miniature hedge of blossoms over which her Virgin peeped out in gentle submission.

One day he asked if she would like him to buy her a real *chapelle*, a bracket altar with conventional images and ornaments such as were found in all Creole bedrooms, including his own.

'*Mais non*, Missié,' she answered wonderingly. 'I love my Virgin. She has been with me through all my troubles. It would be wicked to throw her away!'

Besides Cyrillia his household included a kitten she adopted, and a little serving girl named Victoire, who came in each day to help with the work. Large-eyed little Victoire was becomingly self-effacive, but Cyrillia gently dominated the household. Each morning at five she wakened Hearn and handed him his towels when he was ready to go down to the beach. Although the few white people on the island usually observed European customs, Hearn wished to live as the natives did, and eat their food. Breakfast was therefore not

served until eleven o'clock, but when he returned from the beach a nourishing drink was waiting for him. Generally it was *cocoyage*, made by whipping a fresh egg, a little Holland gin, some grated nutmeg, and a generous portion of sugar into the liquor poured out of a green coconut.

Cyrillia's repertory of Creole dishes seemed infinite; but now and then she insisted that he have beefsteak or a roast. And she tried to tempt him with queer little desserts. Was he a pasteboard man, or an image, that he didn't eat? The truth was that he often ate more than was justified by the amount of exercise he could take. Frequently by noon the heat was too great for any exertion at all, and in the afternoon he usually found it so oppressive that even mental effort was out of the question. He had to get his writing done in the morning and lounge through the rest of the day with a cool drink beside him.

The evenings, though, were the only part of his schedule with which he found any real fault. Saint Pierre rose and retired with the sun, and after dark the streets were virtually empty. There was very little visiting from house to house, and because of insects lamps and candles were seldom lighted. But his little balcony was wide enough for a rocker, and with his pipe to smoke and Cyrillia's kitten to purr on his knee, he managed well enough. Until bedtime he would dream and meditate or map out his next forenoon's work. Sometimes he thought out long passages which he had only to write down verbatim the following morning.

Nor was he entirely without companionship during the quiet evenings. A. Testart, a New Orleans Creole who had been living in Martinique for a number of years, occasionally came to chat with him. And there was Leopold Arnoux, a French notary, who became his most treasured Martinique friend. He had probably met Arnoux when he had a 'will' drawn up to be sent to Henry Alden, '... a little document you spoke of ... enough to settle your claim to books, in extreme circumstances.' The editor had promised to pay the express on his books and have them insured for him, and

Hearn had sent this document to him shortly after arriving in Saint Pierre the second time.

Sometimes, also, Cyrillia would come out to sit on the balcony floor for an hour or so. One moonlit night, while frost-brilliant clouds slowly boiled into various shapes, she amused herself by discovering sheep, cows, faces, and even ships with sails in the shifting formations. But finally she tired of her little game and after a period of silent watching sighed: '*Travaill Bon-Dié joli!*'

'Would you like to see the moon through my telescope?' Hearn asked, coming out of his own meditations.

Cyrillia hurriedly declined, saying it wouldn't be right to look too closely at the things the Good-God had made. — But would Missié believe that she had once seen the sun and the moon fighting?

Hearn puzzled for a moment and then asked if she had seen an eclipse.

She nodded slowly and thought perhaps she had. She and some friends had put a bowl of water on the ground and had looked in the water to see the battle. The sun and the moon had fought for a long time and the moon had been the strongest! The sun had had to go away! — Why did they fight like that?

'They don't fight,' Hearn answered. 'You only think they do.'

'Oh, yes, they do,' she insisted. 'I saw them, and the moon won!'

Soon she asked another question. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a ladder long enough to reach the clouds? Then she could see what they were made of!

'They're only vapour, Cyrillia. People often go up into the clouds around the top of La Pelée.'

Oui, but those weren't *real* clouds. You couldn't touch the sky, however high you climbed!

'But there isn't any sky to touch. It's only an appearance.'

No sky? — What was that up there?

'That's only air. Beautiful blue air.'

And what were the stars fastened to?

'They aren't fastened to anything. They're suns, just like our sun; but they're so far away that they seem small.'

Missié mustn't say that! It was wicked! Where would the Good-God stay if there wasn't any sky? And where were heaven and hell?

'Is hell in the sky, Cyrillia?'

Yes, the Good-God had made heaven in one part of the sky and hell in another. Missié mustn't say there was no sky! He only said it because he was a Protestant! Protestants didn't love the Good-God!

'But I'm neither a Protestant nor a Catholic,' Hearn answered.

'No, no! You're not a *maudi!* I *know* you've been baptized! You're a Protestant! How can you say such wicked things?'

'Very well, then, I'll not say them any more.'

With that, Cyrillia picked up her kitten and went off to bed, her sky serenely overhead and her Missié admittedly no worse than a Protestant.

In less important ways, too, she tried to instruct and protect him. One morning he took a long walk and forgot to take his umbrella along. The sun was high and blazing when he returned, and as soon as he got upstairs he went over to the heavy red water-jar which felt deliciously cool and dewy. But before he could raise it to his lips, a scream cut across the quiet of his shadowy room and Cyrillia was snatching the jar from him. '*Yo pa fai ça ici!*' Did Missié want to kill his body? — One minute, and she would bring him a little punch with sugar and rum in it!

Although she was ubiquitously watchful, in some instances it did her no good to tell him that people didn't do such things in Martinique. During the long enervating afternoons he was inclined to sit in a current of air if he could find one; and he insisted on taking off his hat as soon as he came in from a walk. Also, he often washed his face and hands while he was perspiring. But though she eventually sub-

sided into compassionate wonder at such rashness, on one point she was adamant. *Missié simply must not wash his face with soap!* His body, yes. But not his face. It would kill the light in his eyes!

'Don't be so foolish, Cyrillia!' he would protest. 'Soap can't hurt me. I've always washed my face with soap!'

To his guardian-housekeeper, privately contemplating his blinded, sunken eye, this was all too evident; and if he soaped his face in peace, it was only when she was not in the house.

CHAPTER

16

'READER, if you be of those who have longed in vain for a glimpse of that tropic world, — tales of whose beauty charmed your childhood, and made stronger upon you that weird mesmerism of the sea which pulls at the heart of a boy, — one who had longed, like you, and who, chance-led, beheld at last the fulfilment of the wish, can swear to you that the magnificence of the reality far excels the imagining.'

Hearn knew that many of the sketches he wrote while living in Martinique would never be published in *Harper's Monthly*. Henry Alden had to bear in mind his ultra-conservative subscribers. But one had to write what it was given him to write when the mood was upon him. What Harpers did not consider suitable magazine material might later be included in the West Indian book he hoped they would publish for him. '*Pa combiné, chè!*' fell in that category, and with '*La Vérette*' it covered his first months in Saint Pierre.

'Into the life of the tropical city you enter as in dreams one

enters into the life of a dead century. In all the quaint streets — over whose luminous yellow façades the beautiful burning violet of the sky appears as if but a few feet away — you see youth good to look upon as ripe fruit; and the speech of the people is soft as a coo; and eyes of brown girls caress you with a passing look. Love's world, you may have heard, has few restraints here, where Nature ever seems to cry out, like the swart seller of corossoles: "*Ça qui lè doudoux?*"

'How often in some passing figure does one discern an ideal almost realized, and forbear to follow it with untried gaze only when another, another, and yet another come to provoke the same aesthetic fancy, — to win the same unspoken praise! How often does one long for artist's power to fix the fleeting lines, to catch the colour, to seize the whole exotic charm of some special type! One finds a strange charm even in the timbre of these voices, — these half-breed voices, always with a tendency to contralto, and vibrant as ringing silver.'

Week after week the picturesque life of Saint Pierre brought pleasant surprises; and even the quaint furnishings of his rooms continued to delight Hearn. The red earthen jars filled three times daily with mountain water '*toutt vivant.*' The tall bronze-stemmed *verrines* where his candles burned steadily despite vagrant drafts. The immense bed whose carved wooden sides reached down to the floor; and its smaller companion, the siesta couch. Even the funny little angels and Virgin on the *chapelle* behind the small oil lamp which he was expected to light each night.

It seemed impossible that he would ever tire of the gentle, antiquated homelife he had fallen heir to. And the kindly natives who administered to his comfort, circling his existence with their trays and bright turbans, their foulards and soft Creole chatter — how could they ever cease to charm him? Their childlike joys and quick compassions touched and warmed him. When a three-masted schooner caught fire and had to be set adrift, the natives moaned as if witnessing a human tragedy. '*Pauv' malhèrè!*' '*Pauv' diabe!*' A girl with tears streaming down her cheeks sobbed: '*Toutt*

baggaïe-y pou allé, cassé!' (All its things-to-go, broken!)

Day by day tropical Nature — savage, somnolent, exulting in furious colour — continued to bewitch him. Undoubtedly, he admitted, she was turning her best side toward him. But that side was no less agreeable because he suspected there was another he did not see.

His enthusiasm for this newly adopted life survived all incidental shocks of readjustment, although there were moments of homesickness when he felt like an exile. At such times he grew tired of the eternal palms against the sunlight, and during the nights he was hot with anger when he heard insects gnawing at the few English books he had brought with him. But such momentary lapses were rare, and despite the enervating climate Martinique was to be one of his life's two great fulfilments. During this first year, nevertheless, it might have been its end.

In November smallpox swept through Fort-de-France; and by Christmas it had reached Saint Pierre. When the carnival season arrived, pest-stricken natives masked their pocked faces and staggered out to join the celebrants in the streets. Within a week the epidemic doubled, tripled, and quadrupled itself. The sick were smeared with a native salve and wrapped in banana leaves, and great kettles of tar were lighted at night along the streets.

The terror and helplessness before the deadly scourge were much the same as Hearn had witnessed during the yellow-fever epidemic in New Orleans. And he heard, drifting across the narrow street from little dormer windows, the same piteous moaning as death made its rounds. Neighbouring shopkeepers, small children, beautiful *sang-mêlé* girls — it seemed that each day quick-lime was poured over the frightful brown mass which was all that remained of a friendly face he had known or admired a few days earlier.

The whites on the island seemed exempt. But the Negroes and mixed-bloods appeared to have no natural immunity, and not even the priests could induce them to be vaccinated. By March the death-rate was between three and four hundred

a month, and the mixed-blood servant class was being decimated. Saint Pierre was losing its most handsome octoroons and loveliest *capresses*, the girls and young women dying at an appalling rate. Physicians feared the whole generation would be wiped out.

Earlier Hearn had written Doctor Matas that the happiness of living in Martinique was more than any ordinary mortal deserved. Just to look about made one want to cry for joy. But now it was a different story. Corpses were being carried through the streets, and tired stretcher-bearers were taking sufferers to the pesthouse if there were no relatives or friends to care for them.

To make his depression complete, Hearn was struggling with serious financial problems. His money was gone, and as yet he had sold nothing to Harpers. He was living on credit, and any day the whole structure of his life might crumble beneath him. It was resting solely upon occasional loans from Leopold Arnoux and the lenient sympathy of the natives.

On Good Friday, the thirtieth of March, the death-bells in the city were silent. The hours were marked by cannon shots, and down in the harbour the ships formed crosses with their spars and turned their flags upside down. The entire coloured population, following an ancient custom, donned purple and black mourning and climbed the mornes to visit the innumerable shrines and crucifixes. This year their prayers were for the cessation of the plague. In the cemeteries the dead were being buried two in each grave.

By the middle of April, sanitary conditions were deplorable, and as the smallpox epidemic wore itself out typhoid fever took its place. This new pestilence bore down upon hitherto untouched elements of the population; but Hearn, Cyrillia, and little Victoire came through both epidemics unscathed.

Yet, as if by sympathetic vibration, Hearn's nights were disturbed by feverish dreams — of eviction and starvation — and he noticed a change in the languor which he had ac-

cepted as a pleasant part of becoming acclimated. It was no longer a delicious indolence that left his brain free, but an oppressive feeling of vital exhaustion.

His muscles ached, and breathing was difficult. Clothing, even a sheet at night, was almost unbearable. The slightest physical effort made his heart race madly while he dripped perspiration. At the same time his whole range of thought contracted, became a prisoner of his ailing body. His mind functioned faintly, slowly, and incoherently; and even his memory was clouded. He dozed over his writing and fell asleep if he tried to read. When he deliberately forced himself to think or study, his eye and temples throbbed with pain and a great weight in his head crushed him down into a semi-stupor. His skin prickled and tingled, and night-sweats drenched him. Toward morning he would drop off into an exhausted sleep; but when he wakened and stood up, it was like rising from a grave. This, he thought, was surely a hint of what the poets meant by 'death-in-life.'

While he was going through these trying days, all the disadvantages of living in the tropics were accentuated. The native mixed-blood life that had seemed so gentle and simple was now dull and irritating. He complained that he spoke its language and had adopted its customs and yet could not mix with it mentally. He circulated in its current like a drop of oil, and was always alone.

— And what could he do in his aloneness? There were no libraries, few available books, and virtually no periodicals. If he wanted any reading matter, he had to order it from abroad and wait weeks for it to get through the endless quarantine. Even then intellectual activities could be indulged in only at the risk of health and life itself. This was a land where one could do nothing but plant cane and cocoa, make rum, cultivate tobacco, read advertisements of Madras handkerchiefs and foulards, and eat, drink, sleep, and perspire! The thoughts and habits of other centuries still prevailed here simply because Time itself moved slowly, as though it too were enfeebled by the heat.

The violence of tropical colours irritated him; the luscious tropical fruits sickened him; and he grew tired of the curse of insects and the threat of snakes. In desperation he asked himself how much longer he could endure the heat of blinding blue days and the empty misery of sleepless nights.

Yet all this was only a prelude.

Despite Cyrillia's pleadings, he refused to stay in bed during the daytime, and early one afternoon he left the house to take a short walk. After a few steps, however, he was transfixed by the malignant power of the light. The blue sky and the glare of the yellow walls burned into his brain, blurring all thought. The flaming azure of the sea dazzled him with pain, and the green mornes flickered and blazed. — Was the whole world catching on fire?

An overpowering dizziness seized him, and he shut his eyes against the flaring and flashing. Dumbly he began to grope, trying to get away from the white wrath of the sun, the green fire of the hills, and the monstrous colour of the water. . . .

When he regained consciousness, he was lying in his bed. The back of his head was filled with iron, while a strange pain was stinging through his eyeballs, and his pulse pounded furiously. Suddenly the pain expanded and filled his skull, crowding out all sensation but the sound of his own cries. Time stood still through a long storm of suffering while consciousness intermittently succumbed and weakly revived. Vaguely he knew that this was a supreme struggle.

Through stifling days and sleepless nights Cyrillia and her friends tended his anguished deliriums. When medicine failed, they climbed the mornes for herbs; and when the physician gave up hope, they relied upon their own skill. They supplied him with nourishment when often there was no money for their own food. Missié was being threatened by the black wings of death, and they pooled their resources to save him.

When the fever at last subsided, all heat seemed drained from his body. Tropical Nature had had her way. She had

baptized him with fire to thin his Northern blood. Cyrillia kept all the windows of his room closed, but even so he lay shivering in his bed, wondering that he had ever imagined it would be delicious to die of cold. He wanted warmth, now, and stimulants; and his gentle coloured nurses did all they could to make him comfortable. None of his dreams of angels had ever held more sweetness than this realization of woman's tenderness.

As his strength slowly returned, tropical perfumes and colour-tones and the timbre of tropical voices became more acutely pleasant than ever before. He had survived the ordeal of acclimatization, and after six weeks of illness the fascination of the tropics — the *frisson* of delight he had first known — seized him with renewed vigour. Behind it, though, was an admonition like the softly anxious voice of a gold-skinned girl plaintively repeating: '*Pa combiné, chè! Pa combiné conm' ça!*' ('Don't think, dear! Don't think like that!') To the native mind, no one could think intently without suffering. Thinking brought pain, unhappiness, and old age. '*Doudoux, si ou ainmein moin, pa combiné — non!*'

'If you love me, don't think!' Hearn would have liked nothing better than to heed this admonition of tropical Nature. But he could not go on forever borrowing from Leopold Arnoux and relying on the forbearance of his landlady, laundress, and tobacconist. It was midsummer now, and he had earned only one hundred dollars in ten months. — He had to pay off his debts and re-establish his credit! — He had to get busy and write!

A frantic letter went to Henry Alden, asking for any kind of commission — even the hardest of all work, translating. Alden's reply must have contained not only a sizeable check for his first manuscripts, but assurance that other acceptances would follow, for his letter made Hearn dizzy because he was 'too glad.'

His financial troubles were now at an end. But as his Martinique sketches began appearing in *Harper's Monthly*, he found another reason to be unhappy.

'Chita' had come out in the April issue to receive universally favourable notice. As his first purely creative effort, the story of the storm-orphaned Chita held magic and stimulation for a wide range of readers. (Back in New Orleans George Cable cried 'plagiarist,' but admitted Hearn's literary triumph.) And Hearn, having devoted long hours to polishing and proof-reading, read his tale of Last Island with satisfaction. He could now see a few words he would want to alter if it was published as a book; but it was printed as he had written it, and it was not an unworthy piece of work.

However, he was too far away from New York to read proof on his West Indian writings, and each published sketch tore at his sense of artistic integrity. He insisted that he could never finish a text in manuscript, even by rewriting it six times. Longhand was too vague. Only print was positive and critical enough to show his success or failure in restraint, proportion, colour, and the purposeful choice of words. Through proof-reading he accomplished more than by three complete rewritings of the manuscript.

He wrote this to Alden, and asked if arrangements could not be made whereby he could properly finish his work by doing his own proof-reading. But there was no way Alden could allow him such a privilege, and finally Hearn wrote him a 'last' letter.

No kindness and no money, he declared, could help him any longer bear the torture of seeing himself in print as someone else. The whole 'style' of the composing room — the deletions, changed punctuation, reparagraphing and condensations — robbed him of all personality. The one necessary stimulant for every truly artistic writer was the assurance that his individuality would be respected. With that assurance he would suffer anything to find voice. Take it away from him and he was killed! What was the use of tearing out one's nerves and brain only to appear before a quarter or half million people as someone else? With the exception of 'Chita' none of the articles in *Harper's Monthly* had

been him. They had scarcely been a suggestion of him! The writing for which he suffered more than Alden would ever know was treated like a block of material to be hewn to fit an orifice! His articles were not pages of writing, but parallelograms of type! He had waited a long year to see nothing but parallelograms of type! He was no longer asking for the impossible, however. He was not demanding a change in the immense machinery that was crushing him. He now asked only for his freedom, the right to place his work where it could live — even if it paid him nothing. For if his personality (which in Alden's professional judgment might be far less than he himself held it to be) had to be sacrificed each time he appeared in print, he would like to retract his promise to submit his work to Harpers.

Hearn mailed this outburst with the same high indignation that informed it. And then he began to think.

London. New York. Cincinnati. New Orleans.

His grim knowledge of privation brought afterthoughts which modified the picture. — There was no publisher in America who would hold up magazine articles until an author thousands of miles away could read proof on them. — If Harpers agreed to make a book of 'Chita' or publish a volume of his West Indian sketches, he would simply have to go back to New York to read the proofs. Till then he'd better bow to necessity.

Having swallowed his pride that he might continue swallowing his bread, he promptly wrote Alden to disregard his last letter. Fortunately Alden was willing to do just that; and Harpers had no further complaints from their West Indian writer. Acclimated, and making enough money for comfortable living, he would have been supremely happy if there had been no urge or need for intellectual activity. Gathering his material was easy enough, but converting it into manuscript remained a monumental task.

When weariness or the heat made him lay aside his writing, he sometimes joined little Victoire in playing with the house-cat. Or perhaps he tried again to teach Cyrillia how to tell

time by the clock. Often both he and Cyrillia had their patience tried to the breaking point in this futile endeavour. — The hours gave her no trouble, Missié, but the minutes were so hard! And anyway, why should she learn about the clock? Her clock was the *cabritt-bois*, the great cricket that stopped singing exactly at half-past four. When it stopped singing she wakened, and that gave her plenty of time to prepare Missié's little cup of black coffee before he went down to the beach! In the end Hearn admitted her logic and his own defeat.

Sometimes, wishing to relax, he would engage her in desultory conversation until drowsiness sent him to his couch.

'Cyrillia, as I came up the stairs a little while ago I heard you talking to someone. Who was here?'

'No one, Missié. I was talking to my own body.'

'But why do you talk so much to your own body? What are you telling it?'

'I talk about my own little business, Missié.'

That was all he could ever draw from her.

One day he noticed a bunch of dried palm leaves and withered flowers tacked to the wall over his bed, and he questioned her about them. She had got them from the *reposoirs* of the last Corpus Christi procession, she explained, and had put them there to protect him.

'Protect me? From what?'

'They have been blessed, Missié. They ought to keep the zombis away.'

Zombis were among the many supernatural Things which complicated the otherwise simple lives of the natives. Though they lived in deadly fear of these Things, they accepted them as a matter-of-fact part of life, the same as crucifixes, images of the Virgin, and the multitudinous little wayside shrines that shed protection up through the mornes. The Martinique conception of zombis was extremely primitive and vague. In their most frightening aspect zombis were dreadful creatures who could assume any shape they chose. Sometimes

they looked like domestic animals or familiar friends and then turned into hideous Things before the horror-stricken eyes of their victims. No Negro or mixed-blood cared to meet any living creature on a lonely road after dark.

But Cyrillia had her own ideas about zombis; and she instructed Hearn carefully. Zombis, she said, were generally seen in the city between two and four in the morning. Before the Angelus rang, they went back where they had come from, because they didn't want to meet anyone in the streets.

'Are they afraid to meet people, Cyrillia?'

'No, but they don't want anyone to know their business.'

And if a dog howled at night, Missié mustn't look out the window. The dog might be a *mauvais vivant*, and if he saw Missié watching him he would think he was too curious.

'But what would he do?'

'He would put out your eyes for looking at what you shouldn't.'

'Cyrillia, did you ever *see* a zombi?'

'*Mais oui!* Lots of times! They come in my room at night and rock quietly in the rocking-chair and look at me. I say, "What do you want? I never hurt anyone. Go away!" And then they go away.'

'What are they like?'

'They look like people. Sometimes very beautiful people. I only see them when the oil burns out of the Virgin's lamp and the light dies.'

Hearn rarely contradicted her simple belief in witches and wizardry, but with time he grew resolute about zombis. Possibly he was remembering the goblins of his childhood. 'There are no such things as zombis, Cyrillia. That's all nonsense. You must believe me!'

But Cyrillia was unshakeable. She had seen zombis with her own two eyes. Everybody had seen zombis. Children who were not baptized saw them all the time — even in broad daylight! She would do what she could to protect Missié, but it would be easier if he would only listen and believe.

'Very well. Protect me as best you can. But I still say there are no zombis! And now I'm going to sleep.'

When Hearn needed literary inspiration, he often went down to the Savanne du Fort, where Saint Pierre idlers congregated. If he had his camera along, a group of *sang-mêlé* girls (one drop of black blood to one hundred and twenty-seven drops of white) might tempt him into trying for a picture. One day *une fille de couleur* passing by inspired protracted research into the tragic results of miscegenation during the island's early colonial days.

Or, leaning over the mossy river-wall, he would become intrigued for the fortieth time by the skilful activities of the *blanchisseuses* below. These were the native laundresses who washed the city's linen at the river's edge and spread it on the rocks to bleach. Part of their skill was in judging if the storm clouds on Mont Pelée were likely to send flash-floods down the river-bed to sweep their laundry out to sea.

Once he went up on Morne Rouge, 'in clouds, close to Pelée,' and lived for a month or so in a mountain-cottage to escape Saint Pierre's stifling heat. While there he collected folk-tales of zombis and witchcraft from the natives.

And in September, 1888, he scaled Mont Pelée with a party of guides and climbers, falling down 'more than two hundred times' as he climbed the seven miles of tortuous forest trail over tropical roots covered with slimy moss. It was 'beyond any question the most terrible journey' he had ever made, and he returned feeling as if he had been broken on the wheel. But near the top he swam in a crater lake; and on the summit he listened for possible volcanic rumblings until the clouds parted and a rainbow spanned the magnificent vistas spread out below him.

Green peaks and ravines and mornes surged off into billowing distances of pure blue. And as he stared down through the violet air, he was stirred by the antiquity of the weirdly tossed world thus revealed to him.

But soon a stronger emotion took hold of him. Subconsciously he considered the present only the past extending into the future; and as the imperturbability of the stupendous view bore in upon him, he saw time whole and felt the weight of a cosmic grief.

All this astonishing beauty would endure after he was dead and could never again look upon it!

CHAPTER 17

SAINT PIERRE's climate was more or less seasonless. 'A little less heat and rain from October to July, a little more rain and heat from July to October,' was about all the difference Hearn could detect. Although much of the time he was drenched in perspiration, he had no more illnesses, and he was less nervous than at any other time in his life. But everything he accomplished was a victory over physical and mental lethargy, and it was almost impossible to judge the quality of his work. Yet he had the satisfaction of knowing that his ability to do any writing at all was well-nigh a phenomenon. Most authors had given up writing, died, or fled from the tropics.

There was, however, one scholarly writer living in Saint Pierre. This was Doctor J. J. J. Cornilliac, an eccentric but charming old gentleman who opened his well-stocked library to Hearn's West Indian researches. Through him and Leopold Arnoux Hearn met other French and Creole families of the city, giving him, when he wished it, the stimulation of

cultured contacts. He found the upper-class Creole women both gracious and pleasant to look at, but their lives were so piously sheltered that he was amazed by their ignorance of modern thought. On the whole, it was more rewarding and entertaining to talk to Cyrillia. Long hours of comfortable conversation in Arnoux's shady courtyard, and now and then a passing friendship with some educated European transient completed the list of his social diversions. With his large acquaintance among the natives, he had as much companionship as he wanted or could afford.

After living in the tropics for a year and a half, he seldom read or spoke the English language, and English phrases were beginning to look a little odd. He suspected that a few more years in the Antilles would make it difficult even to write in English. Also, a mind accustomed to discipline became like a garden long uncultivated — the rare flowers of thought returned to their primitive forms or were smothered out by rank growths which should have been pulled out and thrown away. Yet tropical Nature — nude, warm, savage, and amorous — daily grew more beautiful; and he had little desire to go contrary to her local laws and customs. He even found himself ready to confess that the aspirations and inspirations of his Northern life were all madness. They seemed, almost, to be wasted years which might better have been dozed away in a land where the air was always warm and the sea sapphire! Yet if he was to follow his wishes and continue living in the West Indies, he could not doze until he had made a considerable amount of money. And he would have to make it in very short order, for tropical Nature was viciously zealous in upholding her no-work law.

Since Hearn's departure from New Orleans, George Gould, the Philadelphia oculist, had been trying to maintain their correspondence. But the past year and a half had been too intent and episodic for letter-writing, and only Hearn's intimate friends had heard from him. During the next few months, however, he wrote to his persistent admirer more regularly.

Gould held his literary ability in high esteem, and he was warmly and humanly interested in his welfare. But he was also a natural reformer, and a quondam Unitarian minister; and Hearn's sensuousness soon had him mounting the pulpit. Hearn listened respectfully, but he offered his own views with equal candour.

'I am convinced now that most of our fashions are deformities; that grace is savage, or must be savage in order to be perfect; that man was never made to wear shoes; that in order to comprehend antiquity, the secret of Greek art, one must know the tropics a little (so much has fashion invaded the rest of the world); and that the question of more or less liberty in the sex relation is like the tariff question — one of localities and conditions, scarcely to be brought under a general rule.'

If this dismayed Doctor Gould, perhaps he was mollified by another passage in the same letter. 'Perfect natures,' Hearn wrote, 'inspire the love that is a fear. I don't think any love is noble without it. The tropical woman inspires a love that is half a compassion; this is always dangerous, untrustworthy, delusive — pregnant with future pains innumerable.'

When Gould suggested that he prepare a series of lectures to deliver before private clubs if he went back to the States, he answered 'No!' *He wouldn't do it for anything!* — It wasn't that he shrank from the real world because he was pessimistic or didn't find it beautiful. The fault was not with the world but with himself. He had inherited certain susceptibilities, weaknesses, and sensitivities which made it impossible to adapt himself to the ordinary milieu. He had to make his own world wherever he went. True, he was deprived of much knowledge that way. But he also escaped pains which Gould, for all his knowledge, could not wholly understand — simply because he *could* mingle with other men. And by the way, it was no small disadvantage to be five feet three inches high. Success in life was largely dependent on the power to impose respect, since the expansion of one's individuality at everyone else's expense was still the law of

existence in modern civilizations. And the higher the social development, the sharper the struggle.

Hearn's letters to Gould were long but not numerous, for he could afford little time for correspondence. During his second year in Saint Pierre he was finishing his Martinique sketches and writing a novelette based on a Negro revolt Leopold Arnoux had survived. If he had to go back to New York to read proof on a book, he wanted to take along as much West Indian material as possible.

Most of the work on his novelette was done during the last months of 1888 while he was staying closely in his rooms to escape a yellow-fever epidemic. This time, to even the score, it was the white foreigners who succumbed in large numbers. But Hearn and his household again escaped.

In February, 1889, he finished his novelette, 'Youma,' and sent it to Harpers. Most of his West Indian sketches were also finished, and he emerged from the long strain of gruelling work feeling that his soul had lost its literary wings. For three or four months he had been going through 'a sort of crisis,' and he no longer felt the same inspirations. For better or for worse, the tropics had caught him; but he felt there was not much more he could do with Martinique for the present.

While he was in this mood, Henry Alden wrote that 'Chita' was to be published as a book, and he immediately began laying plans to go North to read its proof. He wanted to return to the tropics before New York was winterbound, but he was so loath to leave Saint Pierre that March and part of April slipped away while he dallied. In the interim Harpers accepted 'Youma' for magazine publication; and he was encouraged to think his hopes for a West Indian volume were not groundless. The thought that he could polish up his sketches and read proof on both 'Chita' and 'Youma' finally goaded him into a decision. He would leave for New York the first week of May.

But even the words 'leave for New York' were too much. Doctor Gould had again invited him to Philadelphia, and he

now wrote him a letter. He was returning to the States for a few months, he told him; but New York was stupefying, and he knew too many people there. He wanted to be quiet and see only one or two friends when he was in good trim for a chat. If the oculist could find him a very quiet room in Philadelphia, where he could write without being bothered by noise, he'd try his luck there.

Comforted by the thought that preparation would be made for his return, and away from New York, it was not unpleasant winding up his affairs in Saint Pierre. The change would be good for him, and through the summer he could work, work, work in the blessed stimulation of a Northern climate! And when he returned he'd have a larger income to depend on!

At half-past four one morning little Victoire stood by his bed with his cup of fragrant black coffee. — What? — So early? His heart jumped as he remembered what day it was; and he drank his coffee slowly in the faint blue light of dawn. Victoire timidly pressed a farewell gift into his hand. Two vanilla beans carefully wrapped in a piece of banana leaf.

He had already received so many souvenirs from his humble mixed-blood friends that Cyrillia had brought a special wooden box to hold them. Manm-Robert, from the neighbouring tobacco-shop, had given him a tiny packet of seeds from a gift-orange. (As long as he kept the seeds in his vest pocket, he would always have money.) Azaline, his laundress, had sent him a little pocket mirror, and Cerbonnie had brought a small glass of guava jelly. Cyrillia had given him a package of cigars and a box of French matches; and Mimi, a little girl living near-by, had brought him a small paper dog. It was her favourite toy, but he had been forced to accept it lest she cry. He had also received chocolate sticks, coconuts, sugar-cane, and various queer fruits and vegetables; and as he finished his coffee, he remembered that these touching gifts had not yet been packed in their box. — Ah, Mimi! What on earth could he do with a little paper dog in New York!

Neighbours were still coming in to say good-bye when

Radice, the boatman who was to row him out to the steamer, arrived to say the ship had been sighted beyond the lighthouse. Radice helped him finish packing and then hurried him down to the wharf, where other friends were waiting to see him off.

Fifteen minutes later Hearn stood under the deck awnings of the *Guadeloupe*, taking one long last look at *Le Pays des Revenants*. It was a jewel-clear morning, and as he looked through his telescope he saw Saint Pierre as through a diamond lens, sharp and sparkling. Up from the sweep of blue bay the quaint peakings of the town covered the steep slopes with red and yellow and white-of-cream.

Could he see the mountain water glittering down the stone streets, or did he only imagine it?

In the bright green hills above the town, the black Christ hung on his white cross, and the White Lady of the Morne d'Orange gleamed among the palms.

Suddenly the farewell cannon-shot boomed out over the bay, and behind the *Guadeloupe* was a great whirling of whitened water which settled into a steady stream as the ship began moving. The blue harbour swung slowly around. The green island came closer on the left and shrank back on the right. And the mountains began to move. The yellow façades of Saint Pierre, the long wharves thronged with colourfully turbaned women, the white cathedral spires, the palms and statues in the hills — everything veered, changed place, and began floating away, steadily and swiftly.

As Hearn watched, the town disappeared and the island was again the emerald silhouette he had first seen from the decks of the *Barracouta* two years earlier. In all its lovely green shape he could see no sign of life. It was again a silent, enchanted form of tropical Nature drowsing in the clear blue light.

Soon the island itself was turning blue — becoming a dream.

Dominica drew near in flashings and ribbings of colour, and then receded southward. A pearl-grey cloud in the north slowly revealed itself as the double profile of Guadeloupe.

But Martinique was still visible, Mont Pelée peering high over the rim of the south.

As day faded, the towering mountain gradually turned into a ghost, still lingering on the horizon. The sun plunged into the sea and the hollow west bronzed the flickering wave-backs. Slowly then Mont Pelée vanished, yielding to the indigo night. And the moon swung up, young and lazy, as if in a hammock.

The next morning, though it was futile, Hearn again looked toward the south. La Pelée was gone. But he consoled himself by remembering that he would soon be sailing back to her.

Past 'the island litany of the saints' — Montserrat, low Antigua, tall Nevis, Saint Christopher, ghostly Saint Martin, Santa Cruz, hopeless old Saint Thomas, Puerto Rico, the 'Vision of Saint John,' and grey Tortola — the *Guadeloupe* came out at last to the empty, double vision of sea and sky. At night the Southern Cross was no longer in sight; but by day the sea was a magnificence of burning blue.

Each morning the air was a little cooler, and after the relentless heat of the tropics Hearn's brain 'cleared and thrilled into working order.' But each noon the sky was a little paler and farther away. At last, on a dim, chilly morning, the horizon rounded into a blind grey sea and the Jersey coast vaguely took shape. The parrots on board sat silent, with closed eyes; and two squirrel-like monkeys trembled and twittered plaintively.

Walled in by smoke, the ship moved through a white twilight of fog, and since there was nothing else to see, Hearn leaned over the rail to watch the swirling wake. Suddenly an infinitesimal black hand was tugging at his coat, and he turned to find one of the little monkeys straining at its leash to reach him. While he petted the small tropical exiles, they huddled silently under his comforting words; but when he went away their beseeching cries trailed after him in frightened protest.

For hours the *Guadeloupe* glided cautiously through the

white gloom; and then a cold wind blew the mists away, revealing a blank sky over churning iron-grey waters.

Finally the harbour of New York slowly opened and came forward, and as Hearn looked at the majestic shoreline — a solid rampart of grey buildings profiled high against the sky — his nervous, antagonistic fears arose. Thank God, he wouldn't have to stay in New York any longer than he chose!

At the Harper offices Henry Alden welcomed him with the news that 'Chita' would be published as a book within a few months, and he could start reading proof immediately. 'Youma' would appear as a magazine serial the following winter; and a volume of his West Indian sketches would be published sometime in 1890.

Hearn decided to spend a week or so in New York before retiring with his manuscripts and proofs; and again he registered at the United States Hotel. He wanted to think a little more about going down to Philadelphia. How did he know he would like the Quaker City? And what kind of man would Gould turn out to be?

During the past two years the friendship between Hearn and Henry Krehbiel had grown mutually passive and apathetic, and Hearn's first wish was to see Joseph Tunison. He sent him a note, asking if he could come over to the hotel after dinner; and he waited for a reply until dinnertime. After dinner he went back to his room and waited again until bedtime. But neither Tunison nor any word of him appeared. The next afternoon, as he was leaving for a weekend in the country, probably at Alden's place in New Jersey, he received Tunison's answer. He had been engaged the previous evening, and his reply had been sent to the wrong room.

When Hearn returned to New York, he went over to the *Tribune* offices, relying no longer on note-writing. But he got there only to find that Tunison had left a few seconds earlier for an unknown destination! Collecting himself, he went back to his room and wrote Tunison a letter — one of the most famous tirades ever to indict the modern complexities of Manhattan.

'Dear Joe, — By the time this reaches you I shall have disappeared. The moment I get into all this beastly machinery called "New York," I get caught in some belt and whirled around madly in all directions until I have no sense left. This city drives me crazy, or, if you prefer, crazier; and I have no peace of mind or rest of body till I get out of it. Nobody can find anybody, nothing seems to be anywhere, everything seems to be mathematics and geometry and enigmatics and riddles and confusion worse confounded: architecture and mechanics run mad. One has to live by intuition and move by steam. I think an earthquake might produce some improvement. The so-called improvements in civilization have apparently resulted in making it impossible to see, hear, or find anything out. You are improving yourselves out of the natural world. I want to get back among the monkeys and the parrots, under a violet sky among green peaks and an eternally lilac and lukewarm sea, — where clothing is superfluous and reading too much of an exertion, — where everybody sleeps fourteen hours out of the twenty-four. This is frightful, nightmarish, devilish! Civilization is a hideous thing. Blessed is savagery! Surely a palm two hundred feet high is a finer thing in the natural order than seventy times seven New Yorks. I came in by one door as you went out at the other. Now there are cubic miles of cut granite and iron fury between us. I shall at once find a hackman to take me away. I am sorry not to see you — but since you live in hell, what can I do? I will try to find you again this summer.

'Best affection,

'L. H.'

As soon as he mailed this letter, Hearn assembled his luggage and left for the railway station.

Whatever awaited him in Philadelphia would be an improvement over New York!

CHAPTER 18

George M. Gould had studied at Harvard University and the universities of Paris, Leipzig, and Berlin before occupying an Ohio Unitarian pulpit for a year, and later studying medicine. Although he had now been a practising oculist for only one year, he was already both favourably and unfavourably known in medical circles. Along with numerous ophthalmological writings, he was working on the first of his medical dictionaries; and though he had as yet attempted no literary writings his name would eventually appear on a volume of verse, two volumes of semi-philosophical writings, and various critical and historical studies. None of these, however, would create the stir to be called forth by his notorious attack on Hearn in the astonishing biography he would preface: 'Of Lafcadio Hearn there has been, and there will be, no excuse for any biography whatever.'

Hearn's headlong flight from Manhattan had allowed no time to notify his Philadelphia friend of his coming: nor

had Doctor Gould ever seen a picture of him. But no identi fication was needed when a little one-eyed man with a huge tropical hat appeared in Gould's reception room like a bird blown into a strange doorway. The oculist promptly welcomed him and announced that he was to be his guest.

Upon receipt of his letter from Saint Pierre, Doctor and Mrs. Gould had prepared him a comfortable room in their own house; and after his latest bout with New York their cordial hospitality was doubly acceptable. When he suggested the status of a paying guest, Gould insisted that such a thing was not to be mentioned. His only desire, he said, was to help him in any way he could. And as the self-confident, self-righteous physician looked at his timid, poorly tailored little guest, and talked with him, he was convinced that his help was needed.

His first act, naturally, was to examine Hearn's eye; and he 'found that he had about twenty-five diopters of myopia.' Ophthalmology was then none too advanced, and present-day oculists are not inclined to accept this diagnosis as accurate. Such enormous myopia would have rendered his eye virtually useless, and it is hardly conceivable that he could have been afflicted with more than half that amount. Moreover, Doctor Gould was at that time developing his conviction that eye-strain had shaped the lives and writings of many famous authors, and he was sometimes tempted to exaggeration in proving a favourite theory.

But whatever its exact degree, Hearn's nearsightedness was very great; and Doctor Gould was understandably surprised when he refused what aid properly fitted glasses would have given him. Unless he was ill, his eye did not now cause him pain, and he insisted that glasses strained it too much. He often used a small telescope for distant vision, and to his magnifying or 'pocket' glass he had now added 'a little lens or monocle,' and these supplied the only optical assistance he accepted during the remainder of his life. The monocle was used very rarely, and then only for a moment. If he met a

stranger in whom he was especially interested, he would hold the lens to his eye for an instant and thereafter carry in his memory the surprisingly exact picture his brief but intent examination had given him.

After failing to persuade him to wear glasses, the oculist next took up the problem of his wide tropical hat. It had been noticeable even in New York; and in sedate Philadelphia it was mildly stupefying. Some other hat, Gould suggested, might be more appropriate now that he was back in the States.

But Hearn only laughed. He had survived the long New Orleans campaign against his 'ten-gallon' Texas hat, and he was even more fond of this tropical one. He admitted that it might seem out of place; but he liked it, and that was that. If passers-by lifted an eyebrow, he continued on his way, serenely not seeing.

Though the conventional, socially minded Gould became mortified and grew more earnest, Hearn's loyalty to his hat was unshakeable. His headgear was his one invulnerability. No one could attack him through his hat.

One day, however, Gould heard that a string of small boys had trailed him through the staid streets of the Quaker City rhythmically shouting: '*Where* — *did* — you-get-that-*hat! Where* — *did* — you-get-that-*hat!*'

This was quite too much for Doctor Gould; and at last Hearn yielded and purchased a hat Philadelphia could look upon with more approval. His sartorial compliance was partly an affable gesture toward the Pennsylvania city, for he was thoroughly enjoying its peaceful beauty and rather liking its smug aloofness from pushing, roaring New York. But the substitute headgear he wore during the remainder of his Philadelphia visit was largely a token of his deepening, childlike affection for his strong-minded medical friend. And his fondness was to a considerable extent justified. Gould saw to it that nothing interfered with his work, and he spent many evenings talking with him (jotting down names and dates and pertinent quotations whenever Hearn

spoke of his past life) or strolling with him through the quiet Philadelphia parks while he discussed his writings and hopes and fears. Hearn was eager to please his new friend in any way he could, and soon his devotion resulted in a very real and painful concession.

Gould had asked for his photograph while he was in Martinique, but he had not had a satisfactory one to send him. Now the oculist said he should always have a good picture on hand, and he offered to take him to his own photographer. Hearn dreaded the ordeal of having his picture taken, but though he tried to beg off, he finally capitulated and went with him.

As usual, he turned his right profile to the camera; and one picture was taken from that angle. But Gould wanted a front view, revealing his entire face; and he was correct in asserting that pictures taken from the right side did not give his true expression. His seeing eye appeared too protrusive and alert, giving his face a falsely aggressive expression.

But Hearn would not agree to a full-face pose, leaving his blinded eye completely exposed. Not even for 'Gooley' could he do that!

Doctor Gould argued and pleaded, while the impatiently waiting photographer looked on; and for no one else would Hearn have endured such a humiliating scene. Soon he was writhing in tortured embarrassment, but it was wholly impossible for him to turn his disfigurement toward the camera.

At last Gould offered a compromise. — Very well, he would be satisfied with a two-thirds view. Surely Hearn wouldn't object to that! His sunken eye would not be brought into full view, but the greater part of his face would be presented and the photographer could get a reasonably good likeness.

Even this was more than Hearn could permit. But he was worn out and aching, and he desperately offered his own compromise. — He would agree to a two-thirds view if he could *close his eyes!*

Feeling no remorse over having battered him into such a concession, Gould accepted it as the best he could hope for; and the extraordinary photograph was taken. Hearn's head was bent down a trifle, his eyes closed, and his face turned slightly aside.

In his excoriating 'Concerning Lafcadio Hearn,' Gould later said this picture remained for him the most truthful and expressive ever made of his one-time friend. 'Expressive because non-expressive,' and truthful because of its 'negations,' 'renunciation of outlook,' and 'absolute incuriosity as to the future.' Less prejudiced people also considered it expressive and revealing, though for other reasons. Sadness and the quiet dignity of suffering made the photograph hauntingly memorable — as though Hearn was submitting, not to a dominating George Gould, but to Fate herself.

Although much of Gould's 'help' was misguided and heavy-handed, Hearn's affection never wavered while he remained in Philadelphia. And whenever possible Hearn aided the oculist with his literary projects and marketing. He would not accept Gould's condemnation of 'the inner emptiness of Spencerism,' and when Gould asked the exotic little aesthete to note that beauty was 'a needless, harmful, and even impossible thing in a world of adamantine logic and necessity,' Hearn attended him in the flesh only. But when Gould pontificated on other subjects, he gave his full attention. Aside from his high regard for the medical profession, his almost abject admiration for the physician was based on his respect for higher education, a scientifically trained mind, and self-confidence. He himself had none of these blessings while Gould exuded them from every pore.

And now, after a few weeks, Gould's flaming strain of evangelism came to the fore and he addressed himself to his greatest undertaking. Though he had the highest regard for Hearn as an artist, Hearn the man stood before him a lost soul. An erotic pagan with no sense of duty, responsibility, or right and wrong. Human beings, he told his misguided friend, were not always and could never wholly be 'the slaves

of the senses and the dupes of desire.' Intelligence, beneficence, and purpose lay behind biology! And as Hearn listened to sermonizings on 'Duty, stern daughter of the voice of God,' his medical friend assured him that the greatness of man's soul depended upon his obedience to conscience and his recognition of his duty toward others.

After two years of tropical sensuousness and the debilitating effect of tropical climate, Hearn found these ideas worthy of contemplation. His own fatalistic beliefs had certainly not brought him much consolation, and these invigourating Northern ideas had the tang of inspirational strength in them. Soon he was writing Henry Alden that Gould was proving to be an even larger man than he had imagined. And how wonderfully a strong, well-trained mind could expand a weaker and undisciplined one when the teacher took time and pleasure in teaching! Already Gould was making him over in an ethical way — 'though I fear it will be several years before I can show the result in a durable piece of work.'

Presently, however, he committed the error of making an extravagant statement. Gould, he announced, had given him a soul. And forthwith, flushed with gratification, Gould urged him to incorporate this 'new spirit or soul' in some kind of ethical study or 'art-work.'

Hearn had nearly finished his proof-reading and the final draft of his West Indian sketches, and he admitted he would have time for a new piece of writing before cold weather. But he braced himself against Doctor Gould's wishes. Acknowledging the existence of a personal soul was one thing: attempting to write from such a radically changed viewpoint was quite another. — Better wait until he had adjusted himself to this new outlook!

But Doctor Gould wanted evidence of his conversion in print, and during their long walks at night he talked of little else. Again, reluctantly, Hearn yielded to his friend's wishes; and he consented to attempt a short piece of fiction. The story was to be a romantic portrayal of man's anguished struggle with his conscience; and after the plot was evolved

and the characters thought out, he started writing. Through the days he worked; but at night he often rebelled against continuing. His protests were futile, however, for Doctor Gould 'held him to the task' until it was finished.

The ineffective story, titled 'Karma,' was an absurd swatch of melodrama which Harpers lost no time in rejecting. And if Doctor Gould — its self-styled 'inspirer' — was correct in later terming 'Karma' nothing but 'a seeming creation' with 'only the telling, the colouring' being Hearn's actual contribution, Hearn was thereby partially exonerated for his most dismal artistic failure. *Lippincott's Magazine* published the story in the following spring, and the lack of comment it excited was the kindest treatment possible.

Toward the end of the summer, Doctor Gould was away from Philadelphia for two or three weeks, and Hearn wrote him long and frequent letters. He was working half-heartedly on another story titled 'Ruth,' never to be finished; and though he and Gould had been studying Schopenhauer, he now turned back to Herbert Spencer as his 'only salvation.' A period of dark, rainy weather along with Gould's absence permitted the recent convert to backslide, and one gloomy day he wrote his absent host:

'My Most Dear Gould, — I am really quite lonesome for you, and am reflecting how much more lonesome I shall be in some outrageous equatorial country where I shall not see you any more; — also it seems to me perfectly and inexplainably atrocious to know that some day or other there will be no Gould at 119 S. 17th St. That I should cease to make a shadow some day seems quite natural, because Hearn is only a bubble anyhow ("the earth hath bubbles"), — but you, hating mysteries and seeing and feeling and knowing everything, — you have no right ever to die at all. And I can't help doubting whether you will. You have almost made me believe what you do not believe yourself, — that there are souls. I haven't any, I know; but I think you have, — something electrical and luminous inside you that will walk about and see things always. Are you really — what I see

of you — only an envelope of something subtler and perpetual? Because if you are, I might want you to pass down some day southward, — over the blue zone and the volcanic peaks like a little wind, — and flutter through the palm-plumes under the all-purifying sun, — and reach down through old roots to the bones of me, and try to raise me up.'

This was Lafcadio Hearn speaking, stripped of his Gould improvements and decidedly lonely as he stood again in the midst of his old uncertainties and inadequacies. Friends both in the States and Martinique had lately been advising him not to return to the tropics for at least a year, and his improved physical condition made him agree that such a course would probably be wisest. And he was not quite ready to face the intellectual loneliness waiting for him in Saint Pierre.

It was the difficulty of writing in the enervating heat, however, that eventually led him to defer his return to the West Indies. And while he was wondering where he could go to escape the Eastern winter, he came upon Percival Lowell's 'The Soul of the Far East' while browsing in a bookshop.

After he read the book he felt 'like John in Patmos — only a damned sight better,' and he wrote Doctor Gould: 'I have found a marvellous book, — a book of books! — a colossal, splendid, godlike book. You must read every line of it. Tell me how I can send it. For heaven's sake don't skip a word of it.'

With his interest in Japan thus reawakened, he began dreaming of the Orient. And when Gould returned home, he agreed Japan might be the place to go. But Hearn's wallet was now empty, and until he received more royalties from Harpers he could not even go down to New Orleans or Florida for the winter. For the past two months Elizabeth Bisland had been asking when he was coming to New York, but Gould reminded him how discontented New York invariably made him and said that the West Indies or Japan

was the logical place to go. — Why not go to New York for a day or so and have a talk with Henry Alden?

After five months Mrs. Gould was evidently weary of their house-guest, for Gould now told Hearn that his wife was jealous of his friends and no longer happy over having Hearn in their home. Hearn took this information good-naturedly and Gould lent him forty dollars to go to New York, telling him to come back to talk with him after seeing Mr. Alden. Making what arrangements he could to cancel his indebtedness to Gould, Hearn gave him a letter to be delivered to Henry Alden at a later date. He told Doctor Gould that his books should be worth about twenty-five hundred dollars and that he couldn't yet take them out of Alden's possession. But as soon as he could make the necessary adjustments (meaning, probably, when the money he owed Alden could be paid from his royalties), he would tell Gould to present the letter and obtain the books as security for the forty-dollar loan and whatever other indebtedness he had incurred by his stay in Philadelphia.

According to Gould, the whole idea of having him take charge of the library, which included numerous scrapbooks, manuscript notes, etc., was Hearn's own; and Hearn never denied it. Apparently this seemed to him the best way to provide against being penniless in the near future, for he later wrote that Gould had said: 'All right. When you want any money on the books I'll be glad to let you have it.'

But if this original arrangement with Doctor Gould concerning his library can be set down with any degree of clarity, it laid the foundation for a prolonged controversy which remains obscure despite a voluminous body of published and unpublished letters, statements, and stenographers' notes now available. Suffice it to say that after Hearn's death the controversy involved practically all of his most intimate friends and engendered the venomous hostility which inspired Gould's vindictive 'Concerning Lafcadio Hearn.'

But now, in October of 1889, the two men parted the best of friends. Nor was Hearn's devotion weakened when shortly

after he arrived in New York he received a letter from Gould saying due to his wife's attitude he could never again see Hearn in his home. He enclosed twenty dollars in this letter as an additional loan to help see him through his stay in New York; and Hearn sent him a promissory note for the total sixty dollars thus lent him. During the next few months Doctor Gould's letters repeatedly urged him to leave New York as soon as possible. He had always been unhappy there, he again reminded him. He would never be able to do his best work in such an atmosphere. Hearn's replies were filled with gratitude and affection for his 'brother' and 'teacher'; but he assured him he would 'make his way' all right, and Gooley mustn't worry.

He was now outside the zone of the oculist's influence, and in New York other more understanding friends were interesting themselves in his welfare.

CHAPTER 19

Some months earlier, Hearn had written Henry Alden from Saint Pierre: 'I think under certain conditions I can find the power to please — just as a certain wind instrument will play of its own accord if placed in a fitting current of air. . . . But I am convinced I have no creative talent, no constructive ability for the manufacture of fiction. I cannot write a story. Even "Chita" was not a story: it was a mere crystallization of sensations into symmetrical shape. . . . What is needed is the expression of real life, human life. That I know I shall never be able to give. Real life is something I spend my whole existence in trying to get away from as far as possible. This is perhaps morbid, — a sign of defective organization; but it is part of my nature and cannot change or modify: it becomes more marked and positive each year.'

With only a few phrases deleted from the magazine version, 'Chita' had been published in book-form shortly before Hearn left Philadelphia. It was dedicated to Doctor Matas, and despite its author's modest opinion, the 'mere

crystallization of sensations' was proving an artistic success. In his story of a storm-orphaned child rescued by Louisiana fishermen, Hearn had harmoniously twinned the ghostly and the earthy, while his description of the sinister fury with which Nature lashed the weird, semi-tropical coastline made the plot's locale an integral part of the strangely vibrant story. The *Boston Evening Transcript* went so far as to say: 'By right of this single but profoundly remarkable book, Mr. Hearn may lay good claim to the title of the American Victor Hugo. . . . So living a book has scarcely been given to our generation.'

The 'devilishly beautiful' Elizabeth Bisland had long been telling her friends of Hearn's incomparable conversational gifts, and now that he was in town and his 'Chita' was being discussed in literary circles, there was a demand that she prove her claims. Alice Wellington Rollins was the first to meet Hearn, and she was so thoroughly impressed that she persuaded him to accept a dinner invitation for the following Saturday night. She overcame his protests by assuring him that the evening would be most informal with only the 'family' present. Mr. Rollins had suffered financial reverses and they were sharing their apartment with Kate Douglas Wiggin and her husband and Ellwood Hendrick, a literarily inclined young chemist, and his sister Anne.

On Saturday evening, Hearn unfortunately set out alone for the Navarro Apartments on Central Park South, and disaster was the natural result. For an hour he walked the rainy streets hunting the address, and the Rollins coterie finally gave up hope and sat down to dine without him. Eventually he found the right building; but the doorman directed him to the service elevator, and he arrived in the Rollins dining-room by way of the Rollins kitchen — an utterly defeated little figure in spring-bottom trousers and a 'pea-jacket,' a wide, fawn-coloured hat dangling from his hand. In an almost imperceptible voice he explained that he had lost his way; and though everyone tried to gloss the situation over, very little could be done with it. He was too

miserable to eat, and during the remainder of the meal he spoke only in monosyllables.

Mrs. Rollins had treacherously invited a few select friends to drop in after dinner, and this was the culminating misfortune. Hearn's painful silence seemed to shriek through the drawing-room as he sat huddled in his chair 'like a little wet bird.' Big, kind-hearted Ellwood Hendrick endured the sight as long as he could, and then Mrs. Rollins agreed that it would be an act of mercy to take her honour-guest away. Hendrick was tactfully casual, but Hearn gratefully admitted he would like to leave at once; and Manhattan's newest literary lion was led quietly out of the room.

Down on the street the rain had ceased, and in the fresh night air Hearn expanded happily as the two men strolled along Sixth Avenue. His rear-door entry into New York society was something to chuckle over. At Hendrick's suggestion they stopped in a beer-cellar of questionable repute but excellent beer, and soon Hearn's voice was gliding from one fascinating topic to another. As he theorized about this and that, Ellwood Hendrick sat mesmerized until well into the morning. Elizabeth Bisland was certainly right!

After this fine ending to a wretched adventure, Hearn and Hendrick saw each other two or three times a week, inaugurating a friendship which was to gladden the remainder of Hearn's life.

During these same early days in New York, Hearn formed another important acquaintance. 'Two Years in the French West Indies' was to be the title of his West Indian book, and while planning the illustrations he and William Patten, the Harper art editor, became good friends. Patten was interested in Oriental art, and Hearn often borrowed curious volumes on Japanese art and literature from his shelves.

One night, while they were discussing Japan, Hearn said he had often thought of going there and very likely would if it weren't so expensive. There was little question but what Japan would offer even better material for travel sketches than he had found in the Antilles.

Patten came to attention instantly. Perhaps he could work out a plan, he said, whereby Hearn could get to the Orient. Just as a friend, of course. Not in his capacity as a Harper representative. And the rest of the evening was given over to exploring the idea. The first thing, he decided, would be for Hearn to write him a letter, outlining the kind of material he would look for and how he would treat it.

A few days later, after careful reflection Hearn wrote out a prospectus. He would try to give a general account of the daily existence of the common people, in the light of personal experiences bearing upon it and in such a manner that the reader would feel he was not so much observing Japan as *living* there. He then listed sixteen phases of Japanese life and culture which he felt should be dealt with.

Patten next interested C. D. Weldon, a Harper artist, in the project. And Weldon agreed to accompany Hearn if the journey could be arranged. The idea would be to sell illustrated articles to the Harper magazines with the hope they would later be published as a book. Toward this end Patten's third step was to confer with Henry Alden, who gave the project, as a private enterprise, his hearty approval. Harpers could make no definite commitments or assignments, but he felt certain their periodicals would be able to use at least some of the sketches such an expedition would yield. As a second paper for his portfolio, Patten asked Alden to put his reactions on paper, and this the editor did. No writer of English, he declared, was so capable as Hearn 'of fully appreciating and of adequately portraying with the utmost charm and felicity every shade, however quaint and subtle, of the life of strange people.' The result of his studies should be a revelation to all readers.

The enterprise was now beginning to look quite promising, and its three promoters were filled with optimism. But by this time December had arrived, and the low state of Hearn's finances was thrown into sharper relief by the thought of again going to a strange country where he knew no one. And this time he would not even be able to speak or understand

the native language. He'd have to prepare what protection he could by earning some money right away!

Patten again came to his assistance by helping him obtain a minor assignment from Harpers. They were planning a series of French translations, and Hearn agreed to translate Anatole France's 'Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard' for one hundred and fifteen dollars, a stenographer to be lent him by Harpers to speed the work. Shutting himself away from the world, he began toiling over the French text, for the book was to be published in January.

But one day the weather seemed to be against him, and he was unable to make any progress. He was now living in a flat on West Tenth Street with Joseph Tunison, and he happened to remember the pair of shoes he had left at Krehbiel's when he first went to the West Indies. An extra pair of shoes was one more pair of shoes. Especially if he was going to Japan! And though it meant negotiating Manhattan's traffic, he set out after his shoes.

Unfortunately, the Krehbiels were out of town that day, and a new maid answered the bell. She had never seen the dark little one-eyed man who asked for a pair of shoes she had never heard of, and though he said he knew where to look for them, she refused to let him enter. Nor would she answer his furious ringing after she had closed the door against his protestations.

Empty-handed and seething with anger, he worked his way back down Manhattan. Arriving home, he wrote Krehbiel an indignant note concerning his maid's rudeness. He had been treated like a common thief, he said, and if Krehbiel cared to see him before he left for Japan, he would have to come to his flat.

When Krehbiel read this message, he answered it in just thirteen words: 'Dear Hearn: You can go to Japan or you can go to hell.' And thus ended a friendship which had been dying a natural death for two or three years. The two men chanced to meet only once after this mutual display of vicious pettiness; and they stared at each other in cold silence.

Hearn was too busy, and too well supplied with other friends to be greatly disturbed by the incident. It is said that he completed his translation of France's book in the surprisingly short time of two weeks. While Patten was trying to solve the problem of his transportation to Japan, he then wrote three magazine articles, did a 'supplement' for *Harper's Weekly*, and spent many of his evenings with Ellwood Hendrick.

His conception of Elizabeth Bisland was quite different from what it had been during their New Orleans days. He wrote Doctor Matas that she was a silken moth emerged from the chrysalis of former days. (Perhaps, he said, she had once seemed *une jeune fille un peu farouche* simply because she had been impatient with trivialities and small egotisms.) He and Hendrick had been spending as much time with Elizabeth as her numerous, more romantically inclined admirers would allow; but now she was on a 'flying trip around the world,' and Hearn's letters to her were diffidently affectionate.

'Oh! you splendid girl!' one of them began. 'Will it really give you some short pleasure to see this old humbug's writings again? . . . — And you found the loose bar at last, and shook it out, and flew! I much doubt if they will ever get you well into the cage again, — that was so irksome to you. But perhaps the world itself will seem a cage to you hereafter: — it will have grown so much smaller in that blue-flashing circuit of yours about it. Perhaps when human society shall have become infinitely more fluid and electric than at present, — which it is sure to do with the expansion and increasing complexity of intercommunication by steam and wire, — this little half-dead planet will seem too small to mankind. . . . Even now there is no more fleeing into strange countries, — because there are no strange countries: everything is being interbound and interspersed with steel rails and lightning wires; — there are no more mysteries, — except what are called hearts, those points at which individualities rarely touch each other. . . . I have been so afraid of never seeing you again, that I have been hating

splendid imaginary foreigners in dreams, — which would have been quite wickedly selfish if I had been awake!'

During these same months he was also writing to a new correspondent. While he was still in Philadelphia a letter had come from a James D. Hearn in Ohio, saying he was his brother and had read of him in a Cleveland paper. This was the first word Hearn had received from a relative since leaving Europe, and being suspicious of autograph-seekers he had asked his unknown correspondent to answer certain personal questions. In reply, a letter had come to New York in which James had answered the questions correctly and enclosed his photograph and one of their father.

The brothers were making no immediate plans to see each other, but in the exchange of letters now taking place, James sketched the outline of his life. During boyhood, he said, he had attended a boarding-school in Hampshire, England, until he was sixteen. (Elsewhere there is word that he then spent some time with the bohemian Richard in Paris, 'good old Dick' again coming to the aid of his brother's family.) Without going into details, he said he had left Europe for New York and then had gone to live with friends in Wisconsin. Chance had later brought him even nearer his brother, for he had moved to Gibsonburg, Ohio, during Hearn's Cincinnati years, although neither brother had known the other was alive.

James, like Lafcadio, had paid for being the son of Rosa and Charles Hearn; but he had inherited fewer instabilities. Eventually he was to settle down as a farmer in Michigan, finding a simpler rooting than Hearn's wanderlust and mystic intellectualism would permit. In speaking of their father, Hearn said in one of his letters: 'I suspect I do not love him. The soul in me is not of him. Whatever there is of good in me — and, I believe, whatever there is of deeper good in yourself — came from that dark race soul of which we know so little. My love of right, my hate of wrong, my admiration for what is beautiful or true, my capacity for faith in man or woman, my sensitiveness to artistic things, which

gives me whatever little *success I have* — even that language-power whose physical sign is in the large eyes of both of us — came from Her.'

This was not a time, however, to dwell too much in the past; for the future was calling, and the present was by no means disagreeable. With Elizabeth Bisland out of town, Ellwood Hendrick was now his sponsor — and protector. Hendrick could turn aside most of the demands that he produce his wondrous conversationalist, but when his sister and her friend Helen Gould joined in demanding that he introduce them to the elusive little writer, he cautiously broached the subject to Hearn. And Hearn was repaying his sympathetic tact with such unquestioning trust that he readily agreed to accompany him to the palatial home of Jay Gould, the nation's 'monster of capitalistic greed.' There was a bad moment when Hearn entered the most overwhelmingly magnificent drawing-room it had ever been his unhappy lot to encounter. But Hendrick was equal to the crisis, and Hearn was at his memorable best as a conversationalist before his two charming young hostesses.

On another occasion it was Henry Alden who led him through a doorway familiar to the élite of Manhattan. But this time he walked most reluctantly; for it was not two gracious young women he had to meet, but a group of internationally known writers and artists in the Union League Club.

The turned-up collar of his too large 'pea-jacket' almost met the sweeping brim of his battered hat. And a triangle of scarlet flannel glared out inadvertently above his loose, low shirt-collar and wispy tie. After he had met the impeccably tailored dinner-guests, he did the only thing Lafcadio Hearn could have done. He started straight for the door.

Henry Alden, however, caught up with him before he reached freedom, and a dejected little one-eyed writer sat down to dine with the world's notables. This time it was William Dean Howells who saved the evening. Upon being told the 'Mr. Hearn' he had met was the one and only Laf-

cadio Hearn, Howells rose from his chair and went around the table to shake hands with him again. His cordiality and praises made all men Hearn's brothers for the rest of the evening. Maybe, if it weren't for the beastly winters, New York wouldn't be so bad after all!

After following numerous leads which ended in failure, Patten now, in the last days of January, left for Montreal, Canada, on a bright new trail. He had heard that William Van Horne, president of the Canadian Pacific Railroad Company and Steamship Lines, was an enthusiastic collector of Japanese art. Here, if anywhere, free transportation to Japan could be obtained!

Van Horne was immediately interested when Hearn's name was mentioned, for he remembered 'Some Chinese Ghosts' with great pleasure. He had been greatly impressed by Hearn's knowledge of Chinese porcelains as revealed in that ill-fated book. Patten felt it was a forgone conclusion that he would underwrite the expedition; and within a day or so he was able to write Hearn that all was arranged. In return for travel sketches extolling the scenic advantages of the Canadian Pacific route to the Orient, Van Horne would supply the men with transportation from Montreal. He had suggested the early part of March as the best time for their departure, and he had promised (manna from heaven!) to give each traveller two hundred and fifty dollars for incidental expenses.

Hearn was at first delighted. — He and Weldon would do something quite new. Not just another offering of visual impressions. Most of the books about Japan were like Gautier's book on Spain, in which there were no Spaniards.

But Japan was extremely far away, and he would have to stay there more than a year if he was to do his best work. And even with the unexpected money from Van Horne, he would have to earn more before he started. During the next week or so old memories rose to haunt him. London — New York — Cincinnati — New Orleans — Saint Pierre.

— Had he ever gone to a strange city without starving and nearly dying? Would Tokyo be next?

The prospect grew so dark and threatening that at last he wrote a letter to Henry Alden. There were hundreds of difficulties about his situation in regard to the proposed Japanese trip, he told him. He had no assurance of any means beyond the two hundred and fifty dollars to be paid him in Montreal, for he could scarcely expect any remittances from America for at least five months. Even if he could earn something before he started, he would have to spend it for a few absolute necessities and to pay a few small debts. Circumstances had been much more favourable for him in the West Indies, and yet even there he had nearly failed for want of means. Furthermore, the artist Weldon was free of financial worries and in addition was to receive far higher pay for whatever work Harpers accepted. His own conditions were grossly unfair, and he wouldn't be sorry if someone else would tackle the job.

The next day he received an official reply from Harper and Brothers. The Messrs. Harper, he was told, were in no way responsible for the Japanese enterprise and had only promised to avail themselves of the literary and art results so far as the material proved satisfactory for use in their periodicals. They wished now, however, to make more definite arrangements with him regarding the literary results of the expedition.

This they did in seven explicitly detailed paragraphs, designating the kind of material they would consider, how much they were prepared to take, and what rates and terms he could expect. They left Hearn to accept or reject the arrangements as he saw fit.

Alden, speaking as a friend, told him he ought not to break his agreement with the Canadian Pacific; but if he had any thought of doing so, he should do it now rather than later. He should once and for all make up his mind.

Patten thought they could find some way to improve his financial outlook, and Hearn agreed that if he could manage

in Japan until his royalty checks began coming through, everything should be all right. 'Chita' was doing quite well, and the West Indian book (a copy of which he already had) should also sell. And 'Youma,' now running in *Harper's Monthly*, would probably bring in something as a book. After a day or so of tormented indecision, he accepted the Harper arrangements.

Patten helped him place two magazine articles, and he also prepared to give 'Youma' special bindings in book-form. Blue, red, white-and-blue, and blue-and-black cloth would dress up the little book in a gala assortment of bindings for the spring trade. This should fatten Hearn's royalties while he was preparing his material in Japan.

Things seemed, after all, to be working out well enough; and presently it was March and time to pack.

Having the neat habits of an orderly bachelor, Hearn's packing was always something of a ritual. And usually attended by excitements, misgivings, and last-minute sadness. He was to leave New York the morning of the eighth, and on the evening of the seventh, Ellwood Hendrick stopped by to see if all was in readiness. Only the odds and ends remained to be tucked into his luggage, and after Hendrick left, he wrote a few letters before finishing his packing.

'What I want to say,' he wrote Elizabeth Bisland, 'is that after looking at your portrait I must tell you how sweet and infinitely good you can be, and how much I like you, and how I like you, — or at least *some* of those many who are one in you. I might say love you, — as we love those who are dead — (the dead who still shape lives); — but which, or how many, of you I cannot say. One looks at me from your picture; but I have seen others, equally pleasing and less mysterious. . . . Turn by turn one or other floats up from the depth within and rushes to your face and transfigures it; — and that one which made you smile with pleasure like a child at something pretty we were both admiring is simply divine. . . . I do not think you really know how sacred you are; and yet you ought to know: it is because you do not know

what is in you, *who* are in you, that you say such strangely material things. And you yourself, by being, utterly contradict them all. . . . Forgive all my horrid ways, my dear, sweet, ghostly sister. Good-bye, Lafcadio Hearn.'

He also wrote to his brother James, promising to send an address after he got to Yokohama. This was the last letter that went between the brothers, and after Hearn's death James wrote of him: 'He may have been a genius in his line, but genius is akin to madness, and I do really think that dark, passionate Greek mother's blood had a taint in it.'

The next morning Ellwood Hendrick took Hearn to the station, where he and Weldon boarded the train for Montreal. Eight thousand miles of new land and water lay ahead, but though Hearn felt the pull of beckoning horizons he experienced little exultation. His heart still yearned toward the tropical South and he was going westward toward 'the most eastern East.'

Until he came to the Rocky Mountains he could find little that appealed to him in the long trip across snow-covered Canada. Temperatures that ranged down to twenty-five degrees below zero precluded enthusiasm, and day after day of blanketing whiteness was a strain on his eye. Nevertheless, with the Canadian Pacific in mind, he garnered a commendable crop of travel notes.

On the eighteenth of March, he and Weldon boarded the *Abyssinia* at Vancouver; and the seventeen-day Pacific crossing was decidedly disappointing. Grey days with gales of rain, sleet, and snow were now and then relieved by a day filled with heavy green seas and a wan sun. An icy headwind let him stay on deck only a few minutes at a time, but this was no real loss. For on this dreariest of oceans there was never a sail or remote point of land to be seen.

In his poorly lighted cabin the marbling reflections of water ran like smoke across the ceiling, and the pale light coming through the portholes was intermittently blotted out by waves crashing against the hull of the ship. Here, too, he spent little time.

Occasionally he went to the steerage to watch the hundred or more Chinese passengers in their cramped quarters. Most of them lay in crude wooden bunks, chatting, sleeping, or smoking opium. And three candles lit a low bamboo-covered table where a silent game of fan-tan was always in progress.

But most of his waking hours were spent in the ship's little smoking-room, where each day the captain came in to predict an uprising among the Chinese crew and steerage passengers.

At last the *Abyssinia* entered the Pacific current that warmed the coast of Japan. Unlike the wonderful azure stream of the Atlantic tropics, it was a waste of black ink. But it was warmer and smoother than the grey ocean behind; and faint blue mountains were visible above the dark rim of the water.

Next morning Hearn and Weldon were on deck as the first streaks of dawn lit the cold fresh air. Mountains to starboard rose black against the flush of sunrise; and as the sky slowly turned pale blue, Hearn studied it anxiously. Suddenly, where he had seen nothing, the exquisite snowy cone of Fujiyama hung in the sky, its base lost in the blue distance. As the sun brightened, its tip grew pink and then turned to white and gold. The blue mountain ranges beneath were still wrapped in darkness, and only streaks of rain sloping down from its summit seemed to tie it to earth. After a long moment of silence Hearn breathed softly: 'I want to die here!' Weldon, leaning on the rail beside him, then added his own tribute. 'I don't!' he exclaimed. 'I want to *live* here!'

CHAPTER 20

HEARN and Weldon landed in Yokohama on the fourth of April, and preferring to work independently, they parted after agreeing upon occasional consultations. Hearn found inexpensive quarters in a small waterfront hotel run by a mulatto named Carey — 'kind, and a good man to the bones of him.'

He next hunted out a letter of introduction from Henry Alden to Professor Basil Hall Chamberlain, an Englishman who was, remarkably enough, teaching Japanese and philology at the Imperial University in Tokyo. Professor Chamberlain was a distinguished writer on Japanese life and literature, and he and Hearn were not total strangers. Alden had sent him a copy of 'Some Chinese Ghosts,' and among William Patten's books on the Orient Hearn had in turn been impressed by the Englishman's writings. Alden thought he might help Hearn find employment, and Hearn now wrote him the purpose and circumstances of his presence in Japan.

He would be willing, he said, to act as English tutor in a private family or do anything else within his abilities. Without realizing how fortunate it would prove to be, he closed by mentioning his New Orleans acquaintance with Ichizo Hattori, who he thought was on the university staff and might have a kindly remembrance of him.

With this necessitous chore off his mind, he next morning hired a jinrikisha and runner (*kurumaya*) to take him through the native sections of Yokohama. The swart little runner's name was Cha, and his smile was so gentle and his gratitude so infinite that Hearn was warned against him. — If he didn't take care, Cha would have twice what he earned before the day was done! And so he did. Having a human being for a horse, trotting tirelessly between the shafts, aroused Hearn's compassion.

As he rode through the narrow Japanese streets, his *kurumaya's* smile was reflected on every side. All the small, dark natives seemed to be looking at him in gentle kindliness, half-smiling as if to wish him well. The world itself seemed smiling, and the receptive sightseer — as small and dark as any native — was moved to smile back.

Everything was perfect! — The cool spring air was touched with blue, letting him see distant objects with surprising clarity. His jinrikisha was the cosiest little vehicle possible, and above Cha's bobbing white mushroom hat the streets led on and on alluringly. The small shops decorated with blue pennants and banners, the frail little blue-roofed houses, the little brown natives in their dark blue costumes — everything was entrancing! He was in a world constructed on the smallest, daintiest scale imaginable, a world of lesser and more kindly beings, a world of hushed voices and slower, softer movements. A veritable world of elves!

There was an atmosphere of tantalizing mystery in this elfin dream-world which he finally traced to the profusion of Japanese and Chinese hieroglyphics which filled the streets. In white, blue, black, and gold they rode on the backs of labourers' clothing, waved on banners and draperies, and

glimmered on paper screens and lacquered signposts. Though he could not translate the simplest character, they cried out to the eye and smiled and grimaced like faces.

Cha was similarly ignorant of the English language, but Hearn at first had no trouble in telling him where he wished to go. He simply urged him on — anywhere! everywhere! — with wide, enthusiastic gestures. But his decision to spend the afternoon visiting temples precipitated a crisis. When he said 'Temple,' the blue-clad Cha stood motionless between his shafts, only the wingtips of perplexity disturbing the calm of his smile.

'Temple, Cha! Temple!' Hearn repeated more loudly, as if to force understanding by the sheer volume of his voice. Passers-by turned startled faces; but Cha remained a statue of placidity in woven sandals and a mushroom hat.

The only solution was a trip back to the hotel, where Hearn learned the magic phrase was 'Tera e yuke!' After pronouncing it, he rode off at Cha's best speed.

Tokyo temples were usually built on cliffs or hilltops, and long flights of steps led up to them under ornate, dragon-swarming gates or starkly simple *torii*. The *torii* were symbols of Japan's national religion, Shinto, and when Hearn passed under one as he climbed toward his first temple, the weirdly solemn structure towered against the sky like a gigantic ideograph. The door of the temple was locked, but he had read enough about the barren emptiness of such buildings to be only momentarily disappointed. And as he followed a path through the temple grounds, he came upon the most beautiful sight a Japanese spring could offer — a grove of cherry trees in full, snowy bloom against a pale blue sky.

Riding back through streets of little dwellings which resembled huge wicker birdcages, he came out at last on a curving road overlooking the bay. With aching muscles he arrived at the top of a long flight of stairs and saw a desolate, poverty-stricken little Buddhist temple on a barren plateau. A sharp wind was blowing in from the bay, and the smiling old white-robed priest who welcomed him coughed con-

tinually. After showing him through the dim interior, the old man bowed and held out a bowl into which Hearn dropped a few coins, only to discover it was filled with hot water. Having no tea to offer his guest, the priest was offering the best he had. Hearn's face went red with humiliation; but no change came over his host's gently wrinkled features. Carrying the bowl away, he returned with another and courteously motioned Hearn to drink.

In pale light filtering through the paper screens of a more imposing temple, Buddhist priests served him tea and little cakes stamped with the Swastika, the Indian symbol of the Wheel of the Law. And through the interpretations of a young Buddhist student, he was able to talk with the holy men. When he rose to leave, the priests escorted him to the entrance, and the student asked where he was living and promised to call on him. His name, he said, was Akira, and he was only that week finishing his studies at the temple.

Hearn continued visiting temples until he was exhausted, and that night he dreamed thousands of ideographs were fleeing past him as he rolled along low, luminous streets in a phantom jinrikisha. Cha's vast white mushroom hat was bobbing up and down before him, and as the ideographs streamed by, they moved their brush-strokes like monstrous insects.

Within a few days, true to his promise, Akira stood bowing and smiling at the door of Hearn's room. His black hair was cut low across his forehead, and his white *tabi* (digitated stockings) peeped out from under the hem of his long kimono. After he was seated and tea had been ordered, he placed himself at Hearn's service. — Could he take his new friend to some of the more interesting temples in Yokohama, or perhaps talk with him about Buddhism? And would Hearn-San be kind enough to tell him some of the many things he wished to know about America? He was now free until October, when he was going to Kyoto, the Buddhist holy city, to edit a magazine.

Here was a windfall, and Hearn promptly engaged the

young Buddhist as guide and interpreter. Chamberlain's 'Handbook of Colloquial Japanese' had already showed him how difficult it would be to gain even a working knowledge of the language, and during the summer Akira could give him invaluable assistance in studying Japanese life and philosophy.

Professor Chamberlain had immediately answered his letter with promises of assistance, and during this first week one or the other had written each day. English instructors were still in demand in the government schools, and feeling confident that Hearn could teach either English or English literature, Chamberlain had sent a note to Hattori, who was now Vice-Minister of Education. Hearn was willing to go anywhere in Japan, and Hattori had already offered him a post in Kyushu and was hopeful of finding him an even better one before many weeks. It appeared reasonably certain that he would have a good position by autumn.

In one of his first letters to America he wrote Elizabeth Bisland: 'I feel indescribably towards Japan. Of course Nature here is not the Nature of the tropics, which is so splendid and savage and omnipotently beautiful that I feel at this very moment of writing the same pain in my heart I felt when leaving Martinique. This is a domesticated Nature, which loves man, and makes itself beautiful for him in a quiet grey-and-blue way like the Japanese women; and the trees seem to know what people say about them, — seem to have little human souls. What I love in Japan is the Japanese, — the poor simple humanity of the country. It is divine. There is nothing in this world approaching the naïve natural charm of them. No book ever written has reflected it.'

And to Henry Watkin he wrote: 'I trust to make enough in a year or two to realize my dream of a home in the West Indies; if I succeed, I must try to coax you to come along, and dream life away quietly where all is sun and beauty. But no one ever lived who seemed more a creature of circumstances than I; I drift with various forces in the direction of least resistance, — resolve to love nothing, and love always too

much for my own peace of mind, — places, things, and persons, — and lo! presto! everything is swept away, and becomes a dream, — like life itself. . . . If I do not, in spite of myself, settle here, you will see me again. If you do not, I shall be under big trees in some old Buddhist cemetery, with six laths above me, inscribed with prayers in an unknown tongue, and a queerly carved monument typifying those five elements into which we are supposed to melt away.'

If the pale blue Nipponese spring had remained so, Hearn's initial trance of quiet happiness might have lasted longer. But it started to rain, bringing him his usual 'blue devils.' He could not get out to gather more notes, and he devoted most of his time to worrying. Living expenses seemed even higher than in New York, and here he sat — thousands of miles from America, weatherbound, and his money disappearing! This was exactly what he had feared, but he had let Patten and Alden reassure him — fool that he was!

He became so uneasy that he wrote Doctor Gould to get his library from Henry Alden, sell it, or keep the library and send him what money he could. And he enclosed a 'fictitious I.O.U.' for five hundred dollars 'for board and lodging during the summer of 1889,' which Gould was to present to Alden along with the letter Hearn had given him before leaving Philadelphia. At the same time he wrote Alden to give the library to Gould upon request. Presumably his debt to the Harper editor had not yet been settled, but he had decided Alden did not actually need his books as security.

As the Yokohama rains continued, his nervous apprehension plunged him into resentful brooding, and he inaccurately blamed Harpers for his trip to Japan. — Yet they hadn't definitely agreed to take a single word he wrote! And who was this Weldon to be hurrying him along lest Scribners get their series of Japanese sketches started first? From the time they left New York, Weldon had assumed charge of the expedition and made him feel like an underling! Characteristically overlooking the royalties he would continue to receive from Harpers, he told himself he had made only five hundred

dollars during the past year. — What was Harpers trying to do — starve him again as they had done in the West Indies?

While he was in this irrational mood, a letter came from Henry Alden, evidently questioning his instructions to give Doctor Gould his library and also containing certain directions about his collaboration with Weldon. And a cold white rage descended upon him as he snatched his pen. 'H. M. Alden: —' he began. 'I have received a letter from you.' And the floodgates were down.

Alden, he wrote, had got him to make a will in his favour and then had abandoned him in the middle of an epidemic. He had also broken all his promises and lied in every possible way to dupe him into the power of his brutal, ignorant firm. All this he might have forgiven, but Alden's desire to utilize him 'simply to illustrate the idiocies of a sign-painter' rather overreached the plan. And on and on and on.

When he had finished this outrageous tirade, his anger was not yet appeased, and he wrote another letter. The second letter was addressed to J. Henry Harper, and in it he accused Alden of having defrauded him. Furthermore, he said, since Harpers were under no obligation to him, he presumed he was under no obligation to them. He wanted nothing further to do with them and was therefore enclosing his book contracts. As a parting gesture he gave Henry Harper permission to go to the devil.

Still seething, he hurried down and mailed these letters on a steamer sailing within an hour or so; and as he returned from the wharves, he happened to meet Weldon, whom he had not seen for a number of days. Oblivious of its effect upon the artist's status, he told him triumphantly what he had done. When Weldon asked what he proposed to do about the Canadian Pacific, he answered loftily: 'Van Horne can use the article describing our trip over here, or Harpers can settle with him about that!' (According to existing records, the Canadian Pacific did not reprint the article Hearn had sent to Harpers.)

During the last days of June, a restrained letter arrived

from Harper and Brothers, saying there was no reason why he should return his contracts and they were therefore being held subject to his orders. And Henry Alden's reply was even more forbearing. He had become sufficiently attached to Hearn, he wrote, to feel all the pain a friend could feel upon finding his friendship had been wholly and from the first not only misunderstood but construed into hostility. Couldn't Hearn imagine that he had given him disinterested advice and sympathy? He had freely expressed his appreciation for his literary genius and had co-operated with him in every way he could. 'Caring still enough for you to wish you to understand me, I remain sincerely your friend, H. M. Alden.'

But Hearn was still too self-hypnotized to feel any twinge of remorse. Harpers paid him one hundred and fifty dollars for his article, 'A Winter Journey to Japan,' and their London agents had little difficulty in persuading him to accept his royalties for 'Chita,' 'Youma,' and 'Two Years in the French West Indies.' But, as he wrote Joseph Tunison, he had 'broken altogether with the Harpers.'

As an aftermath to this lamentable episode, Doctor Gould duly obtained Hearn's books from Henry Alden. But he neither sold them nor sent any money to Japan. Bitter and conflicting statements by both Hearn and Gould shed little light on what actually happened between the two former friends during the next few months. This much, however, can be stated with certainty. Three years later, Gould wrote asking Hearn if he wished his books sent to Japan, and the following year he made a similar gesture. But in the interim there had been bickering and sharp words, and Hearn would neither answer his letters, fearing Gould would distort his words, nor allow any of his New York friends to approach him. Gould kept the library until some four years after Hearn's death, making use of it in preparing his book on Hearn before turning it over to Hearn's literary executor.

Had Hearn not been confident of obtaining Japanese employment, he might have been slower in severing his Harper

connections. But he would not start teaching until September, and now for a few weeks he felt adrift and forlorn. A torturing nostalgia for the tropics came over him, and to his surprise he was even homesick for the United States. While he was feeling persecuted and lost, he sent a note to Elizabeth Bisland, asking if she would later on try to find him employment with some American newspaper or publishing firm. 'I shall get along somehow,' he wrote. 'But I am so very tired of being hard-pushed, and ignored, and starved, — and obliged to undergo moral humiliations which are much worse than hunger and cold, — that I have ceased to be ashamed to ask you to say a good word for me where you can.'

His depression likewise crept into a letter to Tunison. 'I am steeped in Buddhism, a Buddhism totally unlike that of books — something infinitely tender, touching, naïf, beautiful. I mingle with crowds of pilgrims to the great shrines; I ring the great bells; and burn incense-rods before the great smiling gods. . . . The women are, at first sight, disappointing: at second sight, delightful; — on further acquaintance, unapproachable in grace of manner, dainty simplicity, exquisiteness of character. They have something about them totally indescribable — something not physical so much as sympathetic and emotional. . . . But I do not know whether I shall always like this country. It will be better to be a Japanese school teacher than to work for the Harpers at $500 a year. Still, it seems to me for the first time that my life is really a failure.'

Nonetheless, Dai Nippon continued to charm him; and its religions 'seized and absorbed' his emotions. He remained in Yokohama most of the summer, doing enough tutoring to protect what was left of the money he had brought from America, and gaining a basic knowledge of native culture and legend under the faithful Akira's guidance.

Their jaunts into the surrounding country were usually pilgrimages to famous or hidden temples, and Hearn was impressed by the seeming joyousness of both Shinto and Buddhism. On festival days children played games on the steps

of the temples, and mothers praying in the sanctuaries let their babies creep over the soft, padded floors in crowing freedom. Blessed, indeed, he thought, were those who did not too much fear the gods they had made!

One god, however, seemed to have been created out of the very elements of fear and dread. This was Emma-Do, 'Lord of Shadows, Judge of Souls, King of the Dead.' Each Buddhist sect had its own conception of the appearance of the gods, but wherever Hearn saw an image of Emma-Do he was impressed by the frightfulness of the terrible red figure and the tiger fury of its cavernous eyes and mouth.

His favourite among the innumerable divinities was Kwannon, the goddess of pity and mercy, who had renounced Nirvana to save the souls of men. But he was touched most deeply by faintly smiling Jizo, the god of the ghosts of children. The most indigenous of Japanese divinities, Jizo ruled over the Sai-no-Kawara, the place of unrest where children went after death. There he protected them from demons as they played with little mounds of pebbles. Images of the gentle, childlike god were invariably surrounded by small heaps of stones built up by mothers praying for dead children; and sometimes pebbles were carefully balanced on their knees and shoulders.

In the middle of July, Akira introduced Hearn to what became his favourite of all Japanese festivals — the three-day Festival of the Dead. At night lanterns with paper streamers were hung at the entrances of all Yokohama houses, and lighted pine knots were fixed in the earth to guide the spirit-visitors. In the cemeteries microscopic offerings of food and water were made on the lantern-lit graves; and incense smoke drifted up into the night as prayers were murmured. On the third night, priests fed the ghosts who had none among the living to care for them.

On the third night, also, were the ceremonies of farewell. Wherever possible the ritual followed throughout Japan was as picturesque as symbolic. In each home a closely woven straw boat, seldom more than two feet long, was

freighted with bits of choice food and messages of abiding devotion. After dark the frail craft were launched on canals, streams, lakes, or the sea — each with a miniature lantern glowing at the prow and incense burning in the stern. In calm weather the phantom fleets would travel for hours, glimmering down creeks and rivers to the coastlines until far out into the sea the night sparkled with the lights of the dead.

Linking the revered past with the transitory present, parenthood ranked above all other Japanese relationships. A man honoured first his parents, then his grandparents, his parents-in-law, his children, and last his wife. Hearn's allegiance to the past and his mystic sense of heredity helped him appreciate this Oriental attitude, even though there had been nothing in his life to awaken filial devotion. At the same time he was discovering many traits among the common people to which he automatically responded. While Japan could never give him the contentment he had known in the tropics, it was to afford him a lasting assuagement.

That he should find this assuagement in a land which paid homage to the ghostly dead may not have been entirely fortuitous. Before leaving America he had written: 'Perhaps the man who never wanders away from the place of his birth may pass all his life without knowing ghosts; but the nomad is more than likely to make their acquaintance. I refer to the civilized nomad, whose wanderings are not prompted by hope of gain, nor determined by pleasure, but simply compelled by certain necessities of his being, — the man whose inner secret nature is totally at variance with the stable conditions of a society to which he belongs only by accident. . . . To such an experience may belong, I think, one ultimate result of all those irrational partings, self-wreckings, sudden isolations, abrupt severances from all attachments, which form the history of the nomad — the knowledge that a strange silence is ever deepening and expanding about one's life, and that in that silence there are ghosts.'

*

CHAPTER 21

In the latter part of August, Hearn signed a contract to teach English in the government schools at Matsue, chief city of the remote province of Izumo. His monthly salary would be only one hundred dollars, but in Matsue that amount would equal two hundred American dollars.

Izumo lay along the northern coast of western Japan, and as the island's oldest province its history dated back to the legendary Kamiyo, an era when only the ancient Shinto gods existed. The 'Province of the Gods' was as yet virtually untouched by the Occidental influences sweeping over the island, and for this reason Hearn found the appointment especially attractive. Although he sensed the fugitive charm of Old Japan still hanging over the island like an emanation from the celestial Fujiyama, his stay in the open port of Yokohama had made him antagonistic to the Meiji New Order. He saw the pandemonium of nineteenth-century civilization invading the cloistered loveliness of the Far East, and he abhorred its effects. He wanted no part of the

militant, pragmatic New Japan whose heart he declared as hollow and bitter as a dried lemon. Yet he had one cause for regret as he prepared to leave Yokohama.

Upon learning of his lonely discouragement earlier in the summer, Elizabeth Bisland had sent him a letter of introduction to Paymaster Mitchell McDonald, an American naval officer then stationed at Yokohama. Gallant, good-natured Lieutenant McDonald had been her Tokyo escort on her trip around the world, and she had not hesitated to recommend him to Hearn. He had no marked literary interests, but in Hearn's estimation his cheerful disposition, affectionate consideration, and romantic calling more than offset the absence of that mutual bond. Also, he was at home in the mysteries of business and finance — a blithe, competent man whose tactful goodfellowship was a boon and a tonic. He was 'a *man* as well as a gentleman,' and Hearn was sorry that his Matsue appointment was putting three hundred and fifty miles between him and this stalwart new friend. During the next year the young naval officer was to be transferred away from Japan, but occasional letters would support their friendship until his return to the islands. He was to be a Far Eastern counterpart of robust, kindhearted Ellwood Hendrick, and after Hearn's death these two devoted friends would join Elizabeth Bisland in protecting his interests.

Although Hearn and Akira had punctuated their busy weeks of sightseeing with occasional days on the southern coast, Hearn wanted more swimming before he began teaching. Izumo's finest beach was at Kizuki, some twenty-five miles from Matsue; and here, too, was the great Kizuki temple, the oldest and holiest of all Shinto shrines. The young Buddhist Akira knew little about Shinto and was somewhat disdainful of that crude, nationalistic cult. But he readily consented to accompany Hearn to Kizuki for a week or so of swimming and then help him get established in Matsue before going back east to Kyoto.

To reach Izumo, they went by rail to Kobe and then engaged jinrikishas for the four-day trip across western Japan.

This took them through remote Shinto sections where Europeans had never been seen, and in many of the primitive villages the half-naked natives gathered around wonderingly. They asked Akira all manner of questions about the foreigner he was accompanying, and he began to complain of trouble in understanding their dialect. Sometimes an old man would approach Hearn to touch his clothing, apologizing for his curiosity with humble bows and smiles.

One evening the travellers arrived in a Hoki village resembling a faded print from an old Hiroshige picturebook. Their *kurumaya* drew up before a weather-beaten little hotel where an aged, gentle-faced innkeeper came out to welcome them. Even among the lower classes Japanese aesthetics retained its exquisite attention to detail, and in this little medieval inn everything called forth Hearn's myopic admiration. The old flowered lacquerware, the porcelain wine-cups with a single golden figure of a leaping shrimp, the bronze teacup-holders, even an iron kettle covered with dragon and cloud designs — all these were part of ancient, uncontaminated Japan and had probably never before been looked upon by foreign eyes! As he ate, he assured Akira that anything ugly or commonplace in the island empire was the direct result of foreign influence.

When they reached Kizuki they passed under a huge *torii* and rolled along narrow streets sloping down to the sea. Although the little town was a summer resort and pilgrims' mecca, its atmosphere was quiet and unhurried; and its beach was ideal. Hearn learned to his great disappointment that foreigners were not permitted in the temple, and only a few Europeans had ever been allowed to visit its extensive grounds; but swimming and sun-bathing tempered his chagrin. He also was wonderfully banqueted by a high Kizuki official and priests from the temple who showed him valuable manuscripts and regaled him with legends of local deities. When he left Kizuki, two or three straw boats of the dead went with him, one of the unique little specimens destined for Professor Chamberlain.

After the grey, primitive villages of the highlands, Matsue was a delightful surprise. The clean little city, with a population of thirty-five thousand, stood on a strip of land between the Shinji Lake and the Sea of Japan. The Ohashi River flowed through the town to connect these two bodies of water, and to the west lake and sky met on the horizon.

Until the violent revolutions of 1871, Matsue had been a feudal stronghold; and all but the children of the isolated little city remembered the samurai customs of their earlier years. A distinct cultural tone still lingered, and this was being fostered by the current provincial governor, Yasusada Koteda, who was also reviving sword and spear contests and old-fashioned horse-races.

The campus of the government schools — primary, elementary, ordinary middle, and normal schools — was bounded on two sides by canals, and across the street were the Izumo gubernatorial offices. Hearn was to teach four hours a week in the normal school, with the rest of his time given to the adolescent boys of the middle school. The autumn term would begin on the second of September, and after Akira helped him find a comfortable hotel room, he accompanied him to the campus where he reported to Sentaro Nishida, dean of the middle school and instructor of English.

Nishida was a frail little man whom Hearn immediately liked. After explaining his duties and the methods of instruction, Nishida introduced him to his Japanese teaching colleagues, showed him through the various buildings on the campus, and then took him to meet the Izumo governor. When they entered the gubernatorial offices, they found a group of school officials assembled there in rich ceremonial robes of coloured silk. Hearn was conscious of his commonplace Western dress, but before he had time to feel embarrassed, the governor rose and greeted him. He was much taller than the other men and in his face Hearn saw 'the placid force and kindliness of a Buddha.' They talked a few moments through an interpreter, and after tea was served, the new foreign teacher went back to the middle school feel-

ing himself twice blessed in meeting men like Sentaro Nishida and Yasusada Koteda.

Akira was staying on until time to report to Kyoto, and after Hearn's first day with his classes, he hurried back to the hotel to confide in his faithful young friend. It was going to be difficult to learn all the boys' names — especially since he couldn't even pronounce them with the class roll before him! — but otherwise he anticipated no difficulties. Nishida had thoroughly prepared the classes for him, and while the boys couldn't understand everything he said, they understood whatever he wrote on the blackboard. Most of them had been studying English since childhood, and all of them were marvellously docile and patient.

The boys of the middle and normal schools were subjected to very severe military training, and their academic burdens were equally heavy. Along with the regular courses taught in Western schools, all Japanese students learned the written and spoken forms of their own language, a huge alphabet of Chinese ideographs, and — worst of all — the English language, with which their native tongue had nothing in common. No literal translation could accurately render the simplest Japanese phrase into English, and frequently the dissimilarity of thought was as great. A national diet of boiled rice and bean-curd had not produced a notably sturdy race, and often the students paid a tragic price for their education. Young minds and bodies too frequently gave way under the strain, and this was to cause Hearn much concern and sadness. Otherwise he could find no cause for complaint among either the officials, instructors, or students of the Matsue schools.

He was pleased to find the English idea of 'masters' was not tolerated, and though the students were extremely respectful, they showed no trace of servility or fear. When he entered a classroom, his uniformed pupils rose and bowed in unison. After bowing in return, he sat down at his desk, bent his head far down over the listed names, and slowly called the roll. In the normal school the bowing was done at the sharp command of the class captain, and the students answered the roll-

call with resonant promptness. Sometimes, after laboriously pronouncing a difficult name, the 'Present!' would be shot back at him with such quick vigour that his head jerked up in startled surprise. No change came over the earnest faces before him during the ensuing silence while he again found his place.

Although all cadet-students were required to greet instructors with a smart military salute, Hearn encouraged his classes to address him as '*Sensei*' (Teacher) instead of 'Sir.' And if any of his Japanese students thought their foreign *sensei* odd, it could not be detected in their deferential admiration. Nor was he ever in Japan made conscious of his blinded eye. For this he must have been particularly grateful, since he knew the effect unsmiling Occidental faces still produced on many of the natives. If a foreigner was tall as well as stern, small children often fled in tears to their mothers.

In the teachers' lounge of the middle school each instructor was assigned a desk equipped with a small *hibachi* (charcoal brazier) for lighting pipes and receiving ashes. Between classes and during vacant periods the staff members gathered here to rest and smoke or map out the next hour's work. Tea was served at regular intervals, and since two or three native teachers could speak English, Hearn might find a friendly chat in which he could join. Most of the time, though, the stillness was broken only by the ticking of the clock and the sharp clang of a slender metal pipe rapped against the edge of a blue-and-white *hibachi*. The normal school lounge was more pretentious and cheerful, but Hearn preferred the dingy little teachers' lounge in the middle school, where Sentaro Nishida's desk stood next to his own.

Shortly before Akira was to leave for Kyoto, Nishida learned of Hearn's failure to see the Kizuki temple, and within two or three days Hearn received an invitation to visit the Shinto shrine the following weekend. Takanori Senke, the *Guji* (high priest) of the temple, was a personal friend of Nishida, and the Senke family had been in charge of the

temple for eighty-two generations. Since the *Guji* knew Hearn was a Western writer, he was evidently setting aside the prohibition of his ancestors because he felt the time had come for the world to learn of the revered home of Shinto.

Triumphantly Hearn and Akira set out a second time for Kizuki, and this time the first stage of their journey was made by water. A Lilliputian steamer bore them across the Shinji Lake with Hearn sitting cross-legged on the roof of the little cabin, happily viewing the mountainous horizon through his telescope.

It was dusk when their jinrikishas rolled into Kizuki, and the shutters of the little houses and shops were being closed for the night. But after they had eaten and rested, the innkeeper suggested a nocturnal visit to the temple grounds, and Hearn welcomed the idea.

It was a moonless night, and the men carried paper lanterns to light their way along a superb avenue of century-old trees and bronze *torii* leading out to the foot of the mountains. At the end of the long avenue, a massive gate opened into the outer court of the temple where the pale yellow lanterns of nighttime pilgrims were gliding about like huge fireflies. In a second court the imposing façade of the Hall of Prayer loomed up through the darkness, and the soft handclapping which accompanied Shinto prayer filled the enclosure with a sound like the constant splashing of water. Few people entered the courtyard of the temple itself, the innkeeper said. But in the daytime it could be seen through the open doors of the Hall of Prayer, and pilgrims contented themselves with bowing before this outer edifice, praying from a distance.

The next morning Hearn and Akira were eating their breakfast when a young Shinto priest in blue ceremonial dress came to announce they were awaited at the temple. There was a panic-stricken moment when the priest said Akira must wear ceremonial trousers, for the Buddhist student had white *tabi* with him but no ceremonial dress. The innkeeper came to the rescue, however, and while Akira redressed and the young priest sipped a cup of tea, Hearn looked

to his own appearance. There was nothing he could do but straighten his tie and smooth his collar.

This was one of the numerous Shinto festival days, and as the three men hurried down the temple avenue, they passed groups of kimonoed pilgrims coming and going. Hundreds were milling about the towering doorway of the Hall of Prayer, and after dropping their coins or handfuls of rice in a box placed before the threshold, they clapped their hands four times and bowed their heads in brief prayer. So many worshippers were streaming up to the great doorway that the clapping now resembled the continuous rushing of a waterfall.

After passing through the Hall of Prayer, Hearn saw an imposing structure of great pillars and massive beams in the innermost court. At the bottom of a broad flight of iron-bound stairs a double line of priests stood waiting in gold and purple robes and high fantastic headgear; and a picture of Assyrian astrologers Hearn had studied in his childhood flitted through his mind. The priests remained solemnly motionless while he approached; but their eyes followed this first Occidental to be allowed inside their temple. When he reached the foot of the stairs, they bowed simultaneously and again stood rigidly erect while he removed his shoes. After a ritualistic hand-washing he ascended the steps with Akira and their guide, and the voluminous silken robes of the attendant priests billowed about them as they fell in at the rear of the little procession. Hearn felt like a clumsy barbarian in his graceless foreign clothes.

Inside the temple he was conducted to the far end of an immense hall where the gold brocade curtains of a shrine had been drawn apart. Before the golden curtains a majestic bearded figure sat on the floor in hierophantic immobility, statuesquely commanding in a towering headdress and white robes spread out in sculptured, undulating folds. This was the *Guji*; and following Akira's example Hearn knelt before him and bowed his head to the floor.

The *Guji*, as well as his attendant priests, possessed aquiline features in striking contrast with the indistinct features of

their humbler countrymen; and their aristocratic faces bore a military rather than a sacerdotal expression. Yet, when Akira took up his duties as interpreter, Hearn found his host surprisingly gracious. After discussing the temple's history, legends, and customs, he turned to a low silken bench where a collection of relics had been laid out for his guest's inspection. A jade flute, antique helmets, a bundle of long arrows with double-pointed heads, a metal mirror, onyx and jasper jewels, and four or five superb swords. After a white-robed young woman came in to dance a sacred *Miko* dance, the *Guji* and his chief priest conducted Hearn through the temple library and other buildings, pointing out Shinto curios and paintings a thousand years old. As a final gesture of hospitality, Takanori Senke led him to his private residence where he opened a zealously guarded chest and let him examine manuscripts written by ancient emperors, war lords, and poets.

Unlike Buddhism, Shinto had no great body of literature or profound philosophy; and Western theologists were calling it mere ancestor worship combined with nature and emperor worship. But next day as Hearn travelled back to Matsue, he began wondering if this nationalistic faith might not be something more deeply vital. Many aspects of Shinto were crude and childishly absurd, but he felt this Kizuki visit had let him glimpse the whole soul of a race, where the fires of heroism, the magnetism of loyalty, and the sustaining strength of blind faith had become inherent and instinctive.

'I have just returned from my first really great Japanese experience,' he wrote Professor Chamberlain that night. 'It might have impressed even a more unbelieving mind than my own.'

CHAPTER 22

WHEN Akira left Matsue, Hearn had no one to come home to, and he was more conscious of being a newcomer. He grew dissatisfied with the noisy hotel where he was staying; and he began to worry about the innkeeper's little daughter. Her eyes needed medical attention, and he repeatedly urged her father to take her to the hospital. But nothing was done. — A strange and heartless parent, *that* man! Finally he himself paid a doctor to care for her and in hot indignation moved away from the inn.

Wanting nothing more to do with hotels, he rented a small house in a garden which sloped down to the broad glassy mouth of the Ohashigawa opening into the Shinji Lake. Close by was a many-pillared white bridge, and to the right of his garden the lake reached off to a framing of dim grey peaks. He found kimono and *tabi* very comfortable to wear in the house, and he was already accustomed to Japanese floor-beds and their little wooden 'pillows.' His middle-aged

maid could cook only native food, but the addition of raw and fried eggs gave him a satisfactory diet.

Very early each morning he could hear from far off the dull thud of the rice-cleaner as its ponderous fifteen-foot mallet fell rhythmically into the rice-tub. To him it was the most pathetic sound of Japanese life — the patient, laborious pulse of the land. And then would come the booming of a large bell in the Zenshu temple, followed by melancholy echoes from a small Jizo shrine near his house.

These moments before sunrise were always lonely; but if he slid open his paper window overlooking the garden, he forgot everything but the view. It was a vision rather than a view, and since the windows of the blue-roofed houses across the river were still closed, it was all his. Faintly tinted mist veiled the bases of the mountains on the far side of the lake and streaked the higher peaks in nebulous bands. Here and there a mountain tip rose above a wavering length of gauze like a dark pointed island, while strips of lower ranges stretched out of sight in the filmy chaos of slowly rising fogs. As he watched through his telescope, the sun's yellow rim tinted the hazy, shifting scene with spectral violets and opalines. And the treetops in his garden and the houses across the river turned to gold.

Soon men and women living on the opposite bank would come down the stone steps of the wharves. After washing their faces and hands, they dried them on small blue towels and rinsed their mouths. Then they turned to the sunrise and clapped their hands four times before saying their Shinto prayers. Gradually the clappings multiplied, from the river and lake banks and long white bridge and little boats coming out on the water, as all Matsue dutifully saluted the rising sun.

As he dressed and prepared to leave for the campus, the sound of wooden clogs and *geta* pattering over the bridge increased in volume. It was a rapid, merry, musical sound, like an enormous dance. All the world seemed twinkling along on tiptoe, over the bridge and down the road.

Despite his loneliness at dawn, Hearn was contentedly happy during his first months in Matsue. He went so far as to deliver an address before the Izumo Educational Association; and he was the governor's guest both in his home and at ceremonial functions. He was 'perfectly treated' and felt that if anything he was accorded too much honour, especially when the local paper gave prominent space to his casual remarks and doings. Even when the cold rains of early winter set in, one lovely day could make him forget a whole week of gloomy weather.

As the rains continued, however, a wave of pneumonia swept over the town, and Sentaro Nishida fell dangerously ill. Never anxious about his own lungs, Hearn was greatly relieved when Nishida recovered. But within a few days he himself became seriously ill, and while he was bedfast an unusual thing happened. Matsue was smothered in snow, the first storm piling it five feet deep around his little house and over his garden. The temperature went down to fifteen above zero, and charcoal *hibachi* were only illusions of heat. Matsue houses, he wrote Professor Chamberlain, were as cold as cattle-barns.

This was the first serious check to his enthusiasms, and during his slow convalescence he was worried and lonely. A few more such winters would surely put him under the ground! Nishida (often called 'The Saint of Matsue') now made a suggestion which for some time had been on the tip of his tongue.

When the revolution had overthrown shogun rule and restored the emperor to temporal power, the entire feudal system had been swept away. With the downfall of the ducal *daimyo* the aristocratic *samurai*, or 'two-sworded men,' had also been ruined. With their holdings confiscated, they had been forced out of highly privileged security into sudden, helpless poverty. Nishida's family belonged to the *samurai* class, and his mother had lived for some years with another *samurai* family named Koizumi. The Koizumis had one daughter, Setsuko, and it was concerning Setsuko Koizumi,

now twenty-two years old, that Nishida had been thinking. If Hearn-San was to stay in Japan for any length of time, he should have a wife to manage his home and see that he had the right kind of food.

Since the nucleus of Japanese society was not husband and wife but parent and child, marriage ties did not have the importance given them in the Occident. Nor were they vested with religious significance. Furthermore, marriage between an Englishman and a Japanese woman could be readily dissolved, such inter-racial unions seldom being looked upon as permanent alliances.

Setsuko Koizumi could remember nothing but poverty and trouble, and Nishida was sure she would be a quiet, dutiful wife, grateful for the kindness and protection of the foreign teacher. He also felt sure Hearn would neglect no responsibilities he might assume. Believing both his friends would benefit from such an arrangement, he now broached the subject to Hearn.

Hearn listened quietly.

A marriage of convenience for a lifelong worshipper of Venus!

Nishida proposing to act as middle-man for a dreamer of high romance!

But he had always known he was dreaming in vain, and he had often said the best he could hope for was the gratitude of some meek young creature who might feel attached to him because of his kindness. He had likewise said if he ever married, he would choose some quiet little person who would stay in her domestic sphere and be content with his affection. Back in the years when he made such remarks, he had not supposed he would ever marry; and he had certainly not been thinking of a Japanese marriage. But chance was now offering to give his words prophetic significance.

It was true, as Nishida said. Though he hoped to go back to the tropics, there was much work ahead of him in Japan, and he needed companionship and someone to look after his domestic needs. Japanese women were dainty and appealing,

and a native wife would not interfere with his work. He could still come and go as he pleased.

— Ah, well ——

After a day or so Hearn told Nishida if he cared to approach the parents of Setsuko Koizumi, he would be interested in further discussions of such a marriage.

Nishida then conferred with the Koizumi family and found them willing to give their daughter in marriage to the foreign teacher. Everyone said he was gentle, and too talented for such an isolated place. He would be kind to Setsu, and a good son-in-law. He was not like other foreigners. In the olden days a *samurai* would have preferred death to marriage with a foreigner; but the times had changed, and there was the matter of a roof over one's head, and rice in one's bowl. — Yes, it would be an acceptable marriage.

Setsuko was not inclined to scorn a foreign marriage, for she was bitterly conscious of having suffered at the hands of her own race. But she knew nothing of the customs and traditions of foreigners, and for this reason she was fearful of marrying Nishida's one-eyed friend. She may also have been, in secret, a little sad. She was not a pretty young woman, but there was the charm of a gentle grace about her; and though centuries of tradition could subdue instinctive revolt, youth could still dream. But her heart was not engaged elsewhere, and she was a properly pious daughter. She was also highly impressed by the fact that she would have a home of her own, with no husband's family to serve. Parents-in-law could be very cruel if they wished.

Professor Chamberlain was the only available Occidental friend with whom Hearn could have discussed his contemplated marriage; but there is no evidence that he did so. In truth, after meeting Setsuko and her family, he appears to have felt no need for counsel. Through Nishida all agreements and details were quickly arranged, and the ceremony took place in January, 1891.

Hearn had made his decision without realizing what a crucial step he was taking. And his marriage would have its

price. But though he did not suspect it, he was now entering upon the greatest fulfilment he would ever know. In his forty-first year he made his compromise and came to terms with life, and it brought him the signal victory of his private existence.

Throughout their married life Hearn was to be aware of baffling racial differences, while Setsuko would be more conscious of Hearn's bewildering personal characteristics. But where understanding was impossible, mutual kindness and forbearance would make its absence less noticeable.

At first, however, the language barrier had to be surmounted. Setsuko knew no single word of English, and Hearn's Japanese was extremely rudimental. For a number of months they had to talk through an interpreter, and during this time Hearn applied himself to learning Japanese. Setsuko, he said, was never to learn English. She was a true daughter of Old Japan; and so she must remain. With a foreign language came foreign ideas, and his wife was not to be contaminated by Western influences.

Through the diligent use of dictionaries they gradually evolved a language of their own, which they called *Hearn-San kotoba* — 'Hearn's dialect.' This was a simplified Japanese dialect which Hearn's whimsical misuse of words and clumsy pronunciation often made highly amusing. Nonetheless he declared their private dialect much easier to understand than the English spoken by most of his native friends.

Setsuko soon learned to credit many of her husband's idiosyncrasies to his artistic temperament. But his emotional extremes seriously alarmed her, and she could not dismiss them so categorically. Sometimes when she entered his study, she found him weeping, or laughing until the tears streamed down his cheeks. At other times he was so lost in his work that he appeared to be in a trance, his face drawn and white. At last she could conceal her anxiety no longer, and she took her fears to Nishida. — Did Nishida-San think her husband was losing his mind? — What must she do to help him?

Nishida assured her that Hearn was not going mad. He was a very sensitive and nervous man, and too deeply interested in his writing. That was all. There was no need for alarm. But it would be better if he didn't work so hard. He should have more pleasures, and see his friends oftener.

Acting upon this advice, Setsuko persuaded Hearn to take her to wrestling matches and art exhibits, both of which he enjoyed. But when she suggested that he was working too hard, his answer was always the same. 'I'm only happy when I'm working. I never get tired when I have something to write. So you can help me and make me happy by telling me all the legends you know and anything interesting you see or hear.'

Far from being able to curb his industry, she soon realized that nothing whatsoever was to interfere with his writing. This conflicted with her own industriousness, for though the young bride had a maid to do the housework, she enjoyed doing much of it herself. Hearn marvelled at the number of times she swept the immaculate, padded floor-mats; but in the flush of her proprietary zeal, she seemed invariably to be cleaning when he was trying to concentrate on his writing. At first, if she wanted to invade his study, he indulgently agreed to stroll in the garden until order was restored. But before long such concessions lost their novelty and he was pacing about restlessly, fuming to get back to his work. Setsuko quickly learned to manage better; and soon she had her work arranged so their little paper-walled house could be absolutely quiet when he was at home. Even opening a chest-drawer, unless it was pulled out cautiously, might 'break his beautiful soap-bubble.' Thinking of it that way made his requirements seem more reasonable.

If he took for granted, however, his own inviolable sphere of activities, he respected her similar rights. In all household affairs he gave her a free hand and insisted that she use her own judgment. 'I know how to teach and write, and that's all,' he would tell her. 'You know better about other things. It will please me most if you do as you like.' Upon occasion

her decisions ran counter to his wishes, but he stood by his word. He might make a tentative plea, but if she was not impressed, he retired in good order. '*Gomen — gomen!* Little Setsu is right!' '*Gomen*' meant 'I'm sorry,' and it came easily to his tongue. In the beginning she would have preferred more advice, but fortunately she was a capable young person and her judgment soon proved worthy of the confidence he placed in it.

The government was paying Hearn a 'foreign' salary, much larger than that paid native instructors, and by such a scale living expenses in Matsue were absurdly low. But all her life Setsuko had counted each *sen* twice, and she thought her husband shockingly extravagant. Had she insisted, he would have tried to be more thrifty. But Japanese wives did not insist, and her timid reproofs usually went unheeded.

He enjoyed helping her select her clothing, and she noticed he looked admiringly at brilliant colours, although 'his quiet conscience' made him agree the delicate shades were more suitable. But if it was one kimono she wanted, he might choose eight or ten.

'But they're so cheap!' he would explain apologetically when she protested. 'I want you to have lots of kimonos, and just seeing you wear them will give me great pleasure.'

And at art exhibits, if she admitted liking a print that attracted him, he promptly bought it and assured her they really should have paid more to help protect the artist from being robbed.

In time she learned to avert some of his small extravagances by purposeful indirection; and when he realized she was a better manager than he, he gratefully placed his finances in her hands. His personal requirements were few and simple, and each month she was able to deposit a large portion of his salary in the bank. But she could do nothing about the money in his pockets, and for the rest of his life he happily showered his household with little gifts and generosities. Though she was sometimes dismayed and discouraged, she reminded herself that such things rose 'from the kindness of

his heart,' and she worked the harder to offset them by her own rigidly careful management.

The entire household revolved about the requirements of his work, and no one dreamed of questioning a ruling emanating from his study. In return, when he laid aside his pen he took his place in the family circle as an affectionate and sympathetic member, adapting himself to its customs and traditions and sharing its smallest interests and excitements. His study was inviolate, but between it and the living-quarters were quickly responsive bonds.

Undoubtedly in planning his marriage both Hearn and Nishida had acknowledged that it might be only temporary. Yet within a few months Hearn was writing Page Baker: 'Of course I will send you a picture of my little wife. I must tell you I am married only in the Japanese manner as yet, — because of the territorial law. Only by becoming a Japanese citizen, which I think I shall do, will it be possible to settle the matter satisfactorily. By the present law, the moment a foreigner marries a native according to English law, she becomes an English citizen, and her children English subjects, if she have any. Therefore, she becomes subject to territorial laws regarding foreigners, — obliged to live within treaty limits, and virtually separated from her own people. So it would be her ruin to marry her according to English form, until I become a Japanese by law; — for should I die, she would have serious reason to regret her loss of citizenship.

'As for going abroad, — I mean back to you all, — I don't know what to say. Just now, of course, I could not if I would; for I am under legal contract. Then my plans for a book on Japan are but a quarter finished. Then, my little woman would be very unhappy, I fear, away from her people and her gods. . . . But later on perhaps I *must* go back for a time to see about getting out a book. Then I will probably appeal to you for a year's employ or something. The Orient is more fascinating than you may suppose: here, remember, the people *really* eat lotuses: they form a common article of diet. But no human being can tell exactly what the future has in

store for him. So I cannot for the life of me say now what I shall do.'

Their little garden house had served Hearn's bachelor requirements very well; but now he had a wife, an interpreter, a maid, and a cat Setsuko had rescued from urchins down at the edge of the river. With the arrival of spring, she began speaking of a larger house, with an entrance hall, and all the rooms in good taste. During the New Year holidays, she pointed out, Hearn had donned formal Japanese attire and made the conventional round of calls with Nishida: he was a personal friend of the governor: he was present at all the teachers' banquets: and he was serving on important Izumo committees. He was a man of position and consequence in Matsue; and he should live accordingly.

They therefore went house-hunting, Hearn seeing no reason for a change but willing to accept it. Near an ancient castle behind the city they finally found what Setsuko wanted — a small *samurai* estate with a narrow river running in front of its dignified gate. The spire of the castle rose above the trees on the opposite bank, and behind the house a mountainous hill overlooked the garden. After they moved their little household into this more suitable establishment (only a few very rich men had finer ones), both of them missed the sunsets over the lake; but Setsuko was glad to get away from the noisy Ohashi Bridge. Try as she might, she had not been able to make the clattering of the *geta* sound like a merry dance!

Hearn now began enjoying a mildly gregarious life. His students were devoted to him, and frequently little groups of his favourites from the middle school came to call. Sometimes they brought family heirlooms for him to examine, or data collected for his writings. And they would sit around him in a rapt, uniformed circle while he told them stories of America or explained Western ideas difficult for them to understand. Much of his success as a teacher derived from his intuitive nature, his quickly sympathetic response to youth, and his interpretative genius. Already he sensed the problems

Occidental thought presented to the Oriental mind, and with patient, sensitive care he strove to reach the understanding of his Matsue pupils through their imperfect knowledge of English. Their delight in the tales he related to them (often during their class periods, now that the afternoons were growing long and warm) and the eagerness with which they brought their questions to him bore witness to his success. While he taught them the English language, he was simultaneously translating Western culture into terms they could comprehend.

Instructors from the middle school also came to call; and frequently, with Setsuko's encouragement, he would invite three or four of his colleagues to dinner. Upon such occasions Setsuko remained in the background, but after the meal was cleared away, she could hear spirited singing as his guests entertained him with popular Japanese songs.

To a large extent Hearn's interest in folklore was born of his exotism — an exotism of time as well as place. His intrinsic homelessness and his fealty to the past stressed the importance of man's cultural ties with his forebears, his inherited identification with a racial group. Japanese folklore particularly attracted him because it was being threatened by infiltrations of the scientific civilization he had grown to loathe. Contributing his personal opposition to these nineteenth-century inroads, he aligned himself in any way he could with native customs. Setsuko's strict adherence to old-fashioned etiquette was a joy and comfort; and under her guidance he was now well adapted to Japanese home life. He sat on a chair only when he was writing; and after a prolonged novitiate of burning small round holes in his kimono, girdle, floor-cushion, and the floor-mats, he had at last mastered the difficult art of smoking a native pipe. And his acceptance of native food was so complete that when 'manufactured' bread appeared in Matsue, he astonished the local baker by refusing to eat it.

Each day he and Setsuko walked about the garden in clogs and light kimonos, surveying their domain with quiet pride.

The appearance of a new flower was an event, and Setsuko pronounced its name carefully as Hearn examined it through his magnifying glass. She also watched for queer insects to show him; but she was horrified when he began feeding a snake they discovered living in the lotus pond.

'Snakes don't mean to be harmful,' he reassured her. 'They won't hurt you if you let them alone. When I lived in the West Indies and was sitting very still reading, a snake sometimes crawled up my arm, across my shoulders, and travelled down my other arm and went away. I went right on reading and thought nothing of it.'

This was probably apocryphal, but it quieted Setsuko's fear. — And why tell her about the deadly fer-de-lance?

During the early summer, Hearn fell ill, and his Japanese diet disagreed with him so violently that the Koizumi family became greatly alarmed. In the midst of the excitement, Setsuko's father prepared to pledge himself to a year of semi-starvation if the gods would let his son-in-law get well. Although he was weak with pain, Hearn quickly protested, but it was only by a fine display of anger that he eventually persuaded his father-in-law to substitute a more rational promise. Luckily, Setsuko found a cook who could prepare foreign food, and after a two-day return to 'the fleshpots of Egypt' he recovered.

Sentaro Nishida was the most welcome guest in their home; and in August he and Hearn went to Kizuki to view calligraphy exhibits and swim for a week or so. But after one day Hearn became so lonesome for Setsuko that he wrote her to join them. Takanori Senke entertained the three at supper one night, and afterward in the lantern-lighted courtyard of his residence two or three hundred brightly costumed natives gave a private performance of a harvest dance Hearn had been wishing to see. The *Guji* also presented him with pictures of the *Miko* dance he had previously witnessed and gave him some curious manuscripts expressly written for him.

After Nishida left Kizuki, Hearn and Setsuko visited a number of Izumo villages to attend festival celebrations and

watch the dances. The little town of Yabase had such a fine beach that they tarried a few days to enjoy the swimming. Hearing of a special dance to be performed in a neighbouring village, they went over to attend it, accompanied by a throng of Yabase citizens. But the dance was disappointing, and for the first time Hearn encountered Japanese hostility. Though he wore Japanese dress, he attracted the natives' attention and they left their dance to throw sand and mud at him. Setsuko was outraged, and with the protesting, sympathetic people of Yabase surrounding them, they quietly retreated from the hostile village. It gave Hearn a decidedly unpleasant sense of being an alien, he wrote Professor Chamberlain; but he said the pelting had not been very savage. A foreign mob would have thrown sticks and stones, which the bad-mannered natives had been careful not to do.

In another letter to Chamberlain he pronounced Mionoseki the most 'Japanesey' town he had yet seen. The picturesqueness of the place enchanted him, and: 'Here also are sold magical rice-seeds. Whatever crop you wish to grow, this rice-seed will produce. Only sow the rice and pray. There will arise barley, wheat, maize, watermelons, or cabbages, according to the heart's desire.' But why, oh why did the Japanese prefer bathing resorts where the bottom was all jagged rocks and stones instead of velvety stretches of sand? Was it because of their rare artistic perception of the beauty of stones? 'I have been a convert to this religion of stones; — but stones under water, unseen, sharp-edged, brutal, only remind one of the shores of the Lake of Blood in the Buddhist *kakemonos*.'

In a remote section of the province he and Setsuko entered an inn which was noisy with drinking and rowdiness. 'Let's not stay here a second!' he exclaimed, pulling at her sleeve. 'This place is a hell!' The innkeeper was already bowing and smiling before them, but Hearn spat out, 'I don't like your hotel!' and led Setsuko outside, blushing in embarrassment over her husband's rudeness. Unquestionably he was angry that she had been exposed to such vulgarity; but there was

something else he was also trying to protect. Normally anything he deplored could be laid at the door of Occidental influence, but after nearly a year and a half in Japan he was glimpsing uncontaminated aspects of native life which were disillusionizing. He was trying to keep his vision of Japan as lovely as possible.

After he took Setsuko back to Matsue, he went alone to visit a famous Jizo cave by the Sea of Japan. The labyrinth of caverns was reached through narrow openings along a jagged coastline of high black cliffs, and he waited in a fisherman's hut in an isolated village while his English-speaking *kurumaya* was hiring a rowboat. Presently scores of inquisitive natives had gathered around the shack, half-clad men and naked boys blocking the door and windows to stare at him in stolid silence. When the old fisherman could not drive them away, he angrily closed the sliding windows. But there were small holes in the lower panes of the paper *shoji*, and the natives took turns peeking in. Seeing a hole higher up in one of the *shoji*, Hearn himself turned spy. With his eye tight against the tear in the paper, he peered down at the swarthy, squalid natives scrambling to look in at him through the lower holes. When a boat had been engaged, he 'effected a sortie' down to the beach, followed by all his glum, still-silent spectators.

Arriving at the Jizo caverns, he glided from one dim grotto to another, seeing pale stone images of the protecting god, a Fountain of Milk, thousands of little towers of pebbles built by the ghosts of dead children, and three light but distinct prints of small bare feet still wet in the sand.

Skirting the coastline to Kaka, he had a second experience with native curiosity. As he sat waiting for his dinner in the village inn, with the *shoji* open to the summer air, another silent crowd gathered around him. But this time the natives were smiling and pleasantly attractive.

Wishing to shield his guest while he ate, the innkeeper closed the sliding windows in front. But the crowds hurried from one opening to another until all the walls were closed,

making the room warm and close. When the onlookers still refused to leave, the proprietor argued and ranted; and Hearn's *kurumaya* gave him a wondrous translation of what was said.

'You-as-for! *What* marvellous is? *Juggler* is not! *Theatre* is not! *Wrestler* is not! *Honourable guest* is! August to-eat-time to-look-at *evil* is! *Returning-time* to-look-at *good* is!'

It was all very well to tell the excluded spectators they might look at the foreigner when he returned to his boat; but soft, laughing voices began to cajole.

'Oba-San! O-Kayo-San! Shoji-to-open condescend! Thing by-looking-at worn-out-is-not! Hurry-to-open!'

Soon Hearn saw a shadow on a high *shoji* whose panes were torn in a number of places. Presently an eye gleamed at every hole, and as he approached the *shoji*, the peepers dropped down to the ground and ran away laughing timidly. He poked a pear through one of the holes, and after a hesitant moment the shadow of a small hand reached across the paper pane to appropriate the offering. Another pear was taken as gently, and despite an old woman shouting 'WIZARD!' the pieces of pear and radish he poked through the holes were thereafter readily accepted amid little bursts of laughter.

After he finished his dinner he asked the innkeeper to reopen the *shoji*, and on every side the natives closed in again as friendly, silent observers. Hearn sat on his cushion and smoked and smiled, and when he returned to the beach, his new friends trailed along behind him with no sound but the pattering of their *geta*. Intent upon his every move, they crowded close to the water as he and his *kurumaya* climbed into their boat. The children clambered into small craft moored along the shore, and their heads shone velvety black in the sun as they gazed and waited. But no one spoke a word. Watching the gently smiling faces as he glided out over the water, Hearn had the sensation of being asleep — softly wrapped away from reality.

Here in Kaka, for this fleeting moment, his vision of Japan was true. All things were gentle and charming; and he was lulled by deep contentment.

CHAPTER 23

Coming to Japan from America had been for Hearn like entering a rarefied, highly oxygenated atmosphere; and that feeling was still with him. But now he was having to admit the cost. He experienced no profound joys or pain, and he was finding his writing little more than hard, dry work. He was trying to complete a book of travel sketches, confined to the more emotional phases of Japanese life; but he could detect no strong thrills. He could not decide, he wrote Chamberlain, whether this was caused by the difference in ancestral history or the fact that the Japanese were psychically smaller. For some time he had been suspecting that the Japanese soul-stream had little depth. It seemed to flow like Japanese rivers — over beds three-quarters dry, very clear and charmingly be-shadowed, but made profound only (and temporarily) by some passional storm. 'But how sweet the Japanese woman is! — all the possibilities of the race for goodness seem to be concentrated in her. It shakes one's faith in some Occidental

doctrines. If this be the result of suppression and oppression, — then these are not altogether bad.'

Missing the ardent attendance of stirring inspiration, he was becoming restive as he laboured over his book; and letters from America made him more so. His household relations had turned out to be extremely happy, he wrote Ellwood Hendrick, and they were binding him to Japan just when he was beginning to feel like leaving. But one could never really get close to the Japanese men. Even one's best friends had a certain far-offness. To clap a man on the back and say, 'Hello, old boy!' would be terribly vulgar. 'So each one has to tickle his own soul and clap it on the back, and say "Hello" to it. And the soul, being Western, says: "Do you expect me always to stay in this extraordinary country? . . . Hurry up and save some money." '

As he began his second year of teaching, the dread of another Izumo winter brought his vague feelings of restlessness into the open. During the previous winter the *hibachi* in the classrooms had been so inadequate that at Nishida's suggestion he had worn his overcoat while he was teaching. Even so, he had been chilled to the bone from morning to night, and his lungs had made him constantly uneasy. The weather had been unusually severe, but Chamberlain had cautioned him in the beginning that winters along the Sea of Japan were reputed to be unbearably cold. He was forty-one years old, and his recuperative powers were not what they once had been. And he had others to think of besides himself. Having followed native tradition, he was now supporting seven people. Setsuko, her father, her mother, her grandfather by adoption, and three servants. Financially it was no appreciable burden to support so many people in Japan, but the moral burden was heavy enough. One couldn't let a little world grow up around him without recognizing his responsibilities to it!

As the September days grew cooler, he worried himself into a state of extreme urgency. He discussed his situation with Nishida, and he likewise talked it over with his physi-

cian. They both agreed that Izumo winters were too rigorous for him, and in the face of his anxiety they advised him to seek a teaching post in one of the southern provinces.

The thought of leaving Matsue made him poignantly unhappy. But the old, familiar process had been set in motion — restlessness working its way toward imperative flight; and he now wrote to Chamberlain asking if he would again use his influence with the government officials in Tokyo. Although Chamberlain had retired from teaching because of ill health, he promptly found a position in southern Japan which paid twice Hearn's present salary, and he promised definite news within a short time.

While Hearn waited, Ellwood Hendrick also came to his assistance by offering him money for a trip back to America. After visiting with old friends for a little while, he could return to Japan and devote himself with renewed vigour to his pen of fire.

What a dear, glorious chap Hendrick was! Hearn replied. He couldn't accept the generous offer, for Chamberlain had just that day written that a position in southern Japan was now his. But he'd never forget it. Never! However, there was no need to talk about his 'pen of fire.' He had lost it. There was no need for it in dreamy, gentle, visionary Japan. But how the tropics still pulled at his heartstrings!

The new post Chamberlain had obtained for Hearn was that of English instructor in a large government college at Kumamoto, in the province of Kyushu. Kyushu was an island forming the bulging southern end of Japan, and its climate was much warmer than Izumo's. With his income doubled and no need to worry about his lungs, the future now looked brighter.

But the present grew sad. Otani, Tanabe, Ochiai, Asakichi. Would there be such splendid lads as these in the Kumamoto college? And while he was not foolish enough to expect another Nishida in the world, would the Kumamoto teaching staff have men like Katayama, Nakamura, Sato, and the jolly Tamura?

He tried to think that he might some day be again living in the shadowy old samurai house by the castle, but he was painfully aware of past experiences. Separations had usually turned out to be forever. Kumamoto was not too far away, however, and since Setsuko's relatives preferred to remain in Matsue, there would be good excuse for getting back occasionally.

He did what he could to dispel his brooding sadness, and though preparations for moving disorganized the peaceful routine of his home life, there was palpable excitement in the air. Setsuko had persuaded the cook, maid, and *kurumaya* to go along to Kumamoto, and none of them had ever lived outside of Izumo. Nor had Setsuko herself. Although the prospect of leaving their birthplace was frightening, it promised momentous adventure.

The air was now crisp and chilly, and Nishida was suddenly bedfast with recurrent lung trouble. Loneliness radiated from his empty chair in the teachers' lounge, and his condition became so grave that Hearn was not allowed to see him. When his books and papers were packed, he sent his little study-lamp to his best-loved native friend. 'It isn't much, but it burns well and will serve as a souvenir.' And he also sent him his treasured *uguisu*, a little Buddhist holy bird Governor Koteda's daughter had given him during his first weeks in Matsue. 'Ho-ke-kyo!' was the only song in the feathered mite's repertoire, but he sang the holy name in slow, meditative sweetness and followed it with a wild, ecstatic burst of passionate warbling. His little pet's new kimono was pretty, Hearn wrote in the accompanying note, for he had just finished moulting. 'He has never been sick and I don't think he will give you much trouble. If he does, give him to someone who will love him and be careful of him.'

While he waited for his passport during the last days of October, there were farewell banquets with their peculiar blend of gaiety and sorrow. He received a pair of Izumo feudal vases from his teaching colleagues, and his middle-school students presented him with a fine old *daimyo* sword.

He was also honoured by a farewell assembly in the middle school, and in the name of his schoolmates young Otani delivered a touching address in English.

The cadets of the normal school were the last to tender the foreign *sensei* a farewell banquet, and afterward they escorted him home in military formation. At his gate they broke ranks and shouted hearty farewells, promising to march to the steamer when he left for Kumamoto. But this they were unable to do. The next day Asiatic cholera broke out in the upper school, and within two days a number of the cadets and their instructors were dead. The normal school was closed and its remaining cadets were scattered out through the province.

The middle and elementary schools were also closed, but the students remained in Matsue, and when Hearn's passport arrived, he begged the middle-school director to allow no students to gather and accompany him to the steamer. The cholera danger was too great. But the director only laughed.

An hour before sunrise on the morning of his departure, some two hundred middle-school cadets and their instructors stood at his gate. In smart formation they escorted him and his household down through the city and across the Ohashi Bridge to the little steamer at the wharf. There more teachers and students were waiting, and a large number of Matsue citizens and friends. And in Hearn's pocket was a farewell letter and some personal souvenirs Nishida had sent by his aged father.

Hearn looked around at the large assembly, looked up at the little house in the garden, at the long white bridge, and at the morning haze still hanging over the lake and the distant mountains. And his throat tightened. But suddenly the little steamer shrieked for her passengers, and he went aboard.

Climbing onto the roof of the cabin, he waved his hat and shouted good-bye as the boat pulled away from the wharf. A long '*Aaaaaaaaaa*' rose from the uniformed ranks of the students as they waved their caps in reply, their brass ideo-

graphs flashing in the early sun. '*Banzai! Banzai!*' floated out across the water; and Hearn stood where he was, waving and watching until he could no longer see the houses and wharves of Matsue.

Here again was the familiar sensation of a page being turned between chapters. But this time his thoughts were lingering on the chapter which had ended. Would he ever again know such a long, unbroken experience of human kindness?

There was little time, however, for retrospection. For this time, too, he was not travelling alone. His wife and servants were calm but tense as they faced the outside world, and it behooved the master of the household to be optimistically reassuring while they were borne toward their new home.

Kumamoto was a sprawling, half-Europeanized city dominated by a fortress now occupied by a huge garrison. And national sentiment was declared to be even stronger than in Tokyo itself. In earlier times Kyushu had been the national centre of spartan conservatism, and this was still reflected in the plain attire and direct manners of the natives. Of these things Kumamoto was openly proud, and so far as Hearn could see, she had nothing else of which to boast. No great temples, no wonderful gardens, no quaint, pretty streets. Swept by fire during the revolution, the city seemed a wilderness of flimsy shelters hastily erected before the smoke had cleared away. The college buildings and a few hotels were blatantly new and large, but the town as a whole was 'devilishly ugly and commonplace.'

After a few days Setsuko found a house as large as their former home, but it was two miles from the campus and its garden was most ordinary. A silk dyer lived next door, and in front of his dingy little home-factory lengths of purple, rose, and blue silk were stretched out on bamboo poles to dry in the sun.

Hearn's entire household felt 'like fish out of water,' and the maid and *kurumaya* had difficulty in making their Izumo dialect understood. But the *kurumaya* had a very short time

in which to try, for as soon as Hearn learned that he had forsaken a wife in Matsue, he was sent back home. Setsuko was in a constant state of amazement over new sights and customs, and one morning she came to tell Hearn that a strange goblin creature was in the garden next door. Not knowing what to expect, Hearn hurried to the *shoji*, only to be confronted by a goat. Geese and a pig were equally unbelievable, for none of these was ever seen in Izumo.

The new *kurumaya* Hearn hired was an old man who delighted him with stories of fox superstitions, a subject he was treating at length in his book. But it remained for a second new manservant to furnish him with a comical demonstration of such widely prevalent superstitions.

Many Kumamoto people followed the 'vulgar' custom of furnishing their own music for entertainment instead of hiring *geisha*, and one evening Setsuko heard that a neighbouring family were celebrating the birth of a child. The mother was going to play the *samisen* while the mother-in-law beat the drum and the father danced. This seemed most extraordinary to Izumo natives, and Hearn let his wife, maid, and the cook go up the street to view the proceedings.

Hearn was in his study at the back of the house when they left, and the new manservant was posted at the front entrance to guard against intruders. After a few minutes the man decided it would do no harm if he likewise attended the event. But when he opened the street gate, he found himself in total darkness. No moon, no stars, and not one lighted window to be seen!

Retreating in astonishment, he breathed a prayer to the gods and reassembled himself. Then he opened the gate again. And again the world was wrapped in solid, impenetrable black!

This time — grimly — he knew what was wrong; and he prudently went back to the front door and waited impatiently. When Setsuko and the servants returned, he cautiously asked if there had been any light in the street. Of course, they said — there was a big moon, and lights in all the houses!

'I knew it — I knew it!' he exclaimed excitedly. '*It was a fox that put his hand over my eyes!*'

Setsuko ran for her husband in great excitement; and though Hearn questioned the man carefully, he could make him change no detail of his strange recital. At last, realizing that his veracity was being doubted, the man led everyone outside and pointed dramatically at the gate which had twice opened upon total blackness. Peals of laughter answered him, for he was pointing, not at the street gate, but at a larger, similar gate which opened into the woodhouse!

On the college campus Hearn was having troubles of his own. The buildings were so large and scattered that it required most of the ten-minute interval between classes to get to the teachers' lounge. As a result, he rarely went there; and when he did he sat quietly in his corner and smoked his pipe. The teachers seemed polite enough, and six or seven of them spoke English, while two also spoke French. But after a month's time he had formed no friendships among them. He said 'Good morning' and 'Good evening,' and very little more. At their first banquet, with no Nishida beside him, he was sure he made queer mistakes about the dishes and the chopsticks.

Nor were his students as pleasing as those he had taught in Matsue. This was partly because they were older, but also because they were imbued with the 'Kyushu spirit.' Military training was mandatory, and while the cadets were courteous and eager to learn, their imperturbability was something more than native placidity. Beneath it upon occasion a fiery consciousness of strength displayed itself menacingly. Hearn was convinced that any national emergency would transform the whole student body into a corps of 'iron soldiery.' Between student and instructor there was no old-fashioned gentleness such as united teacher and pupil in Izumo, for New Japan was firmly in the saddle in Kumamoto.

Through the middle of the day the weather was still warm, and during his half-hour at lunchtime Hearn often climbed a

high hill behind the campus. At the top a broken stone Buddha guarded one of the sunken graves in an abandoned cemetery, and he sat down beside it to rest against a crooked tombstone. Moss had distorted the Buddha's smile, and he tried to scale it off as he meditated or stared down on the campus.

One day he noticed there were no shadows in the landscape spread out below him, and he was reminded of the pictures in old Japanese books. There was a ghostly quality about the old pictures because Japanese artists had used no shadows in depicting daytime scenes, being unwilling to blacken the hours of the Sun Goddess. But the Occident had eventually taught native artists to put shadows in their paintings, and as he thought about this, his prejudice spun out a whole sequence of bitter ideas which later became an essay of haunting sadness.

Yes, the West had taught Japan to see shadows in Nature. And in life. And Japan had wondered at the shadows of machines and the shadows in the hearts of the men who tended them. And soon she had refused to study any more such shadows. But some of them still clung to her, and she couldn't possibly get rid of them. For all her progress (great iron warships looming up in the quiet bays of little Izumo fishing villages!) the world would never again seem to her quite so beautiful as before.

Another time he looked down on the many-windowed college buildings and mourned their purely utilitarian architecture. Identical ones could be found in Auckland or New Hampshire! And with the exception of the dear old man teaching Chinese, not one of the college professors was teaching anything about faith. Only facts, facts, facts! Kumamoto instructors were the scholars of the proud new generation, holding that such a simple thing as faith was fit only for the men-in-straw-raincoats. The broken stone Buddha, looking down on the college with his placid, mossy smile, was contemplating a formidable enemy, for down there the youth of Japan was being moulded!

The responsibilities involved in teaching these young men of New Japan sometimes weighed heavily, and he was beginning to think the whole educational system was wrong. Academic standards were often too low, and the students were cruelly overworked. And what would they have if science took away their faith? Any faith's justification lay in its ability to accept and use the revelations of modern science. But would science eventually erase even the memory of Buddha's words from the mind of Japan?

Yet in a different mood he was inclined to agree with those who said: 'All else may change, but the heart of the nation will never change.' And he was collecting examples of Dai Nippon's technique of international jujitsu — instances when she had welcomed the invasion of Western civilization only to turn it to her own secret advantage while the admiring Occident looked on unsuspectingly.

He was finding teaching in Kumamoto a lonely and disheartening business, but fortunately he was not without his refuge. At home he entered a smiling little world of his own — a world of old ways, old thoughts, and old courtesies, so intangibly gentle and artless that sometimes he was afraid it might vanish. Depending on him for food, clothing, protection, and guidance, it had in a way become himself. When he was pleased, it laughed; and when he was preoccupied, it fell silent. When he was unhappy or in trouble, it prayed to its gods. Sometimes he longed for American or European companionship; and sometimes he wakened in the night so overcome by a yearning for the tropics that he could not go back to sleep until he had tired himself out by reading or writing. His little home-world could not penetrate the foreign core of his aloneness; but it was so appealingly dependent on him that its power constantly increased, and he could no longer imagine what he would do away from it.

When he wrote, he sat on a chair at a specially built high desk; but otherwise, like the rest of his household, he ate, talked, read, and slept on the floor. He was now eating

native food at noon, but substantial Western meals in the morning and evening, and his health was excellent. Setsuko smiled contentedly when he showed her that even his kimonos were getting a bit tight. She herself was thinner, however, and she was not as happy as she had been in Matsue.

During the summer holidays he took her with him to Kobe and Kyoto, and in August they went up to the Oki Islands off the northern coast of Izumo. This, he wrote Nishida, was 'to please Chamberlain,' who was preparing a Japanese guide-book, 'and also to please myself.' Setsuko was none too eager to visit the isolated little islands, for she knew most of the villages were primitive and the natives barbarously crude. But that was precisely why Hearn wished to see them.

Foreigners having never been seen on most of the islands, the natives were even more desirous of seeing him, and in one little town their curiosity got out of control. Despite the innkeeper's wildest shouting, a jostling crowd pushed into the flimsy building and packed the stairway and hall outside the visitors' second-story room. Late comers swarmed over the roofs of adjacent buildings, and agile climbers scaled the inn's balcony posts and crowded the eaves outside the strangers' windows, hooking their chins over the sills to stare in at them in sullen silence. Finally the tiles began giving way, and when three or four boys fell to the ground, the police had to be called to restore order.

Setsuko was frightened, remembering stories about the times when Japan was closed to 'the foreign devils'; but Hearn told her there was nothing at all to fear. When the islanders' curiosity was satisfied, they would behave better. He felt sure such a primitive place would yield many valuable notes.

But the natives' curiosity appeared to be insatiable, and their manners did not invite friendliness. All the next day, and the next, they surrounded him wherever he went, and Setsuko's nervousness persisted. After a third day of being relentlessly attended by the silent, pressing mob, he was

glad to take his wife and his notebooks to a more civilized community.

A few Izumo samurai families had fled to the Oki Islands when the shogunate was overthrown, and in one village Hearn and Setsuko 'fell in love with a little samurai boy who was having a hard time of it.' Setsuko was so attracted to him that she wanted to take him home, and Hearn was very enthusiastic about the idea. In January the child would be old enough to enter school, and he certainly should have more advantages than the Oki Islands could offer him. If he became homesick, or was too much trouble for Setsuko, they could send him back. His family was more than willing to try the experiment, and a few days later little Masayoshi left the islands with his benefactors.

At Mionoseki, Nishida joined the vacationists for a week's happy reunion, and while the two men watched Setsuko supervise Masayoshi's swimming, Hearn confessed his uneasiness about her. She was quite thin, and she didn't enjoy travelling as much as she had the previous year.

Although Nishida was some ten years younger than Hearn, he was wiser in the ways of Japanese women, and he told his friend not to worry. Very likely, he said, Setsuko would be happier now.

There was a religious ban on hen eggs in Mionoseki, and since the Hearns were staying on for a few days, Nishida sent back an irreverent box of eggs from Matsue so Hearn's diet would not lack that important food. And from Kumamoto Hearn wrote him two weeks later that Setsuko was already changed. 'She is now always laughing and happy, and even talks about travelling next summer. Just as you said.' But it took some time to adjust the household to its youngest member, and after Nishida had spent a weekend with them, Setsuko was distressed to find there had been a hole in the mosquito netting over his bed. Hearn promptly wrote to apologize, and added: 'We all promise that if you make us happy by coming here again, there will be *no* hole in the mosquito curtain.'

The previous winter had brought no snow, and there were stoves in all Hearn's classrooms; but at home his study had often grown chilly at night and he had been bothered by a stubborn cough. Now, after two winters of paper window-panes and *hibachi*, he proposed to have a warm room in which to write. Like his two daily meals of Western food, this was an admitted defeat; but living native might mean dying before he had any creditable work accomplished. So he wryly acknowledged himself a victim of Occidental comforts and went house-hunting with Setsuko. He wanted a native house, of course, but one that would lend itself to the required alterations.

A few days of careful searching were ended when they found 'a pretty house, with a pretty garden — surrounded by cemeteries and images of the gods.' Glass bells tinkled at the eaves, and among the artificial hills and strata-trimmed pines in the landscaped garden a shady summer-house promised to be an ideal study during the warmer months. After carpenters built a flue for a stove and substituted glass for paper in the *shoji* of one room, the Hearns were settled for another winter. And from his 'glass-box of a study' Hearn sent forth innumerable letters and notes to Chamberlain and Nishida.

His first impressions of Japan were a treasured memory, he confessed, for his illusions were 'forever over.' But he was now seeing with a more critical eye and he was comforted by thinking his writings would thereby benefit. His book was long since finished and was to be brought out by Houghton, Mifflin and Company in Boston, but he was constantly sending more material for it and they might lose patience! Nishida collected and translated Japanese ballads and other data for him, and he in turn translated Latin sentences and helped Nishida with difficult English passages. 'A red-nosed man' was a term of opprobrium, he explained, because it meant the man was a drunkard; and he went at length into the psychology and physiology of the phenomenon. He acted as an information exchange between Nishida and Chamberlain,

and he sent both of them anything he came upon that might interest or aid them. He also wrote to his former Matsue students when they turned to him with their problems; and long letters went back to America.

A young Buddhist student was incorporated into the household as guide and interpreter, and small Masayoshi was properly clothed and enrolled in school. With four servants regularly employed on the premises, Setsuko's responsibilities were becoming complicated. But nothing interfered with her husband's teaching and writing. When it was time to clean the wells, she made the arrangements; and Hearn went out to talk with the cleaners while they worked, hurrying back to his desk to record their legends and superstitions concerning Suijin-Sama, the god of wells. And when the city firemen came by to play their hose over his trees and roofs, Setsuko explained their traditional call and Hearn generously doled out courtesy-money for *sake*. Even the servants were trained to watch for anything that might interest him; but though domestic affairs often lured him from his study, they were never presumptuous enough to enter it.

CHAPTER 24

IN JANUARY of 1893, Hearn completed the last article he wished included in his 'introductory' Japanese book, and by this time the manuscript was much larger than Houghton, Mifflin and Company had originally stipulated. If they were reluctant to accept the additional material, he wrote them, he would be willing to forgo payment for it. The important thing was to make the book as comprehensive as possible. Privately, he considered Houghton, Mifflin and Company 'the Macmillans of America, beautiful printers, and essentially a *literature* firm.' But though he was eager to retain them as his publishers, he planned to shift to another company if they refused to include all the material he had sent them. After hesitating a little, they agreed to publish his entire, bulky manuscript as 'Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan,' in two volumes.

He had tried to keep this first book on Japan thoroughly sympathetic and free from morbidness, and here and there he

had injected a touch of 'fun' as a concession to the modern mood. He was dedicating it jointly to Lieutenant McDonald and Professor Chamberlain; and in the preface, as he would do in subsequent books, he was stressing the point that his interest in Japan was an interest in its common people. But despite this precaution his sensitive interpretations were to arouse a certain amount of Nipponese upper-class criticism. 'Lafcadio Hearn gives an unworthy picture of Japan,' some of the New Order adherents later declared. 'He writes of matters in which the modern Japanese are no longer interested.' Although he was constantly aware of this thinly veiled antagonism, its source neutralized its sting. And soon after his death, public opinion was to elevate him to the position of Japan's most revered Western writer.

With the 'Glimpses' off his working schedule, Hearn relaxed by looking through his earlier writings; and he found them so 'florid' that he wished he could rewrite them to sober them down. The highly ornamental style he had painstakingly developed now seemed too rich, and he planned to devote a year or so to simplifying it. Otherwise he still felt he was on the right track and working toward something really worth while. As soon as he could save enough money to buy Setsuko a little home and provide her with a comfortable bank account, he would feel safe in giving up teaching to devote all his time to writing. She was managing to put away so much of his salary that he hoped he could do that within a couple of years. He could then go to China and the French Orient and the Philippines, to get notes for a new series of travel sketches!

In April, Chamberlain passed through Kumamoto on his way to northern Kyushu, and stopped by for a few hours. Setsuko came in to pour tea for her husband's distinguished friend, and he spoke Japanese so beautifully that she blushed over her own words. Three years of correspondence had given the men so many mutual interests that they seemed scarcely to have skimmed the surface when it was time for Chamberlain to leave. The next day it snowed, and Hearn worried about

his friend's cold and what weather he would find farther north. In his loneliness he packed a box of books and Japanese talismans to send him, and mourned over all the fine things he had intended to say.

After this brief contact with a European friend, Kumamoto seemed all the more barren. Compared with Matsue it was superficial, insincere, and jingo; and after a year and a half he still had no intimate friends. His discouragement over the government's educational policies was increasing, and within a few days one of his most brilliant students wrote in a theme: 'When I think of my child-studies, my first days at school, I can hardly avoid despair. Embarrassments have come. I feel my bodily energy slipping away; my diligent spirit is gone; my brain seems dull, feeble, and unrenewable. And the more I am dismayed, the worse I become in all things. I feel a destruction gathering over me. But who made all this so? I think it was my negligence, that I have no one to blame but myself.'

As Hearn sat in his study contemplating this sad confession, he knew what to expect. Some day he would call that lad's name and get no answer. It would not be the first time he had had such an experience. Nor the tenth. The boy was accusing himself of not studying enough when in reality he was killing himself with overwork. — *Damn* Japan! He wondered if he had been right in encouraging his Matsue pupils to cling to their love of country and emperor in the face of modern changes. How he detested the selfishness, vanity, and vulgar scepticism of this ruthless, ugly New Japan! The delicate souls were passing away, and the rough stayed on to triumph. Perhaps, after all, the loss of her nationality might not be the worst fate Dai Nippon could suffer!

And now Kumamoto began impressing him with another unhappy aspect of the island empire. Her earthquakes. He had acquired a 'really disgusting fear' of earthquakes, and at every violent tremor his thoughts went straight to the nearest bamboo patch. Yet such a refuge was very uncomfortable when the whole night had to be spent there!

Capriciously the memory of his first published writing came back to him — his story of the indestructible man. Upon approaching the end of his serial, he had realized it would be necessary to dispose of his hero. Yet how was that to be done? A man who could sit down on circular saws and pass through all manner of conflagrations and dynamite explosions with impunity was certainly beyond the touch of death! After puzzling awhile, he had hit upon a neat solution by invoking the dreadful power of Nature. He had simply arranged for the earth to open and swallow his hero into oblivion.

It was entertaining to recall this demonstration of youthful ingenuity, but nonetheless he himself was no indestructible man. And earthquakes did not always finish off their victims with such dramatic suddenness. There was such a thing as being pinned under wreckage and slowly burned to death.

Nor did he fear earthquakes for himself alone, but for all his household; and now there were eleven under his roof, Setsuko's mother, father, and grandfather having recently arrived from Matsue. 'My people,' they were, and his interest in them made him that much more vulnerable. Disaster could strike him from eleven different directions!

Earlier he had written Ellwood Hendrick that indulging in the luxury of filial piety was 'a virtue of which the good and evil results are only known to us Orientals.' But he was becoming very fond of Setsuko's mother, and the two old men intrigued and frequently amused him. Especially the grandfather, who called him 'Hellum.' Austere, absent-minded, and quite deaf, the patriarch of the family rarely allowed the customary courtesies to be offered him — demanding them, instead, a split second before they could be extended. The entire household catered to him indulgently, and often he caused ripples of merriment difficult to conceal. Comical little misfortunes were always befalling him, and his dignity could give way to frenzied excitement.

As a young samurai he had been in charge of a war-lord's small son, and he was not only very fond of children but per-

sonally kind and gentle. Yet his military background endowed him with a peremptory sternness often incompatible with the infirmities of his years. One day, after boarding a little steamer for a short trip along the Izumo coast, he sat down to smoke, only to find he had forgotten his tobacco pouch. Immediately he ordered the boat turned back, and in deference to his age and authoritative voice the captain complied. Upon reaching the wharf, the old man gravely disregarded the reproachful looks of the passengers and crew when he discovered his tobacco pouch had merely worked around from the front of his girdle to the back.

Here in Kumamoto he liked to go walking, but if he went very far, he generally became lost. It was useless to ask questions, for he could not understand the Kyushu dialect. Sometimes he found his way home by looking at the distant mountain peaks, but on foggy days he was denied even this uncertain guide. On such occasions he solved the riddle by going to the nearest shop and sitting there until someone came looking for him. When everyone at home gathered around to hear the history of his latest calamity, he wasted few words, but his account was earnest and graphic.

Although Hearn's home was now 'a populous little world,' the household routine remained built around his needs as the bread-winner; and traditional etiquette prevented confusion. At six each morning, Setsuko wakened him with the conventional samurai salutation, and he pulled the never-extinguished *hibachi* over to the thick pad of coloured comforters which made up his floor-bed. There he sat smoking while the servants came in to prostrate themselves and wish him good morning. In other rooms of the house the little lamps were being lighted in the family shrines, and prayers were being said before the ancestral tablets. Already Setsuko's father and grandfather were out in the garden saluting the sun, clapping their hands and muttering their Shinto prayers.

At seven his breakfast was brought to his room, and Setsuko served him. Though she later had to be present at the family

breakfast, he always insisted that she eat a little with him. When he was ready to dress she again waited on him, handing him each garment in the proper order and seeing that all needed articles were in his pockets. At first he had objected to this ceremony, but when he saw she was hurt by being denied the privilege of helping him, he had submitted to the ancient custom.

At seven-thirty he was ready to leave for the campus, and he lit his morning cigar as he went to the entrance hall. There the entire household was gathered to bid him good-bye, the servants standing outside the door. Beginning with the aged grandfather, he said '*sayonara*' to each member of the little assembly according to rank. Then he kissed Setsuko's hand (the only imported custom observed), climbed into his jinrikisha, and rolled away.

This year all his classes were morning assignments, and by noon he was back home. The *kurumaya* called out as he approached the gate, and by the time Hearn reached the front door his household was reassembled to welcome his return. He always wore Western clothing in public, and after Setsuko helped him into his native attire, he went to his study, where his smoking equipment stood waiting by his floor-cushion. His pipe-racks held many curious native pipes, but his favourite bore the inscription, 'Tonight of last year.' His mail was laid out on his desk, and bringing it over to his cushion, he chose and filled one of the long, slender pipes before opening his letters. Three or four deep puffs and the pipe was put back in its rack; but sometimes he was still reading his letters when his dinner tray was brought in. Chamberlain, Hendrick, and Nishida were his only regular correspondents at the moment, but enough letters were exchanged with other friends in Japan and abroad to make the Kumamoto post-office marvel at the bulk of the foreign *sensei's* mail.

Percival Lowell 'commuted between Boston and Tokyo,' and through Chamberlain he and Hearn had become correspondents. Lowell was now in Japan, and when one of his letters failed to arrive; it created a crisis of sorts.

Hearn sent young Masayoshi to the post-office to inquire after the missing letter, but the post-office was wordily non-co-operative.

What was the small boy's name?

Kumagae Masayoshi.

Did he live with the *sensei?*

Yes, he did.

Of course he spoke English?

No, he didn't.

But he wasn't of Kumamoto. Didn't he come from the West?

No, he came from the islands of Izumo.

Ah! — Izumo people were very queer!

But the letter?

Hadn't the *sensei* received a telegram last night?

Yes, it was about the letter that hadn't come.

And hadn't the *sensei* received letters this very day?

Yes, he had.

Of course he had! Kumamoto knew, because Kumamoto counted his letters, and each day there were exceedingly many to take to the *sensei's* house!

But about the letter?

The letter? — When had it been sent?

A long time ago. Sixteen days ago!

Then the reason the *sensei* didn't see his letter was very simple. The letter hadn't *come* to Kumamoto! If it had come to Kumamoto, it would have been delivered immediately! It would be very difficult for a letter to come to Kumamoto and *not* be delivered immediately! But since the *sensei's* letter hadn't come, it hadn't been delivered. Therefore, the not-seeing of the letter was very easy to understand. The little boy from Izumo must go back and explain this to the *sensei!*

After Masayoshi scurried home and told Hearn and his perturbed household all that had been said, Hearn next sent him with a telegram to be despatched to Lowell.

But the telegraph man disputed the address. 'Rokumei-

kwan' was not enough! To send a telegram to Rokumeikwan was like sending a telegram to Japan — to the whole Orient — to all of this vale of tears! The directions must say more!

Completely demoralized by this second defeat, Hearn abandoned the project and wrote to Chamberlain for a more detailed address.

Little Masayoshi had become quite useful about the house, but these two bootless errands were among the last he performed. Although he was an honest and intelligent child, he had developed a trace of malignancy during the winter which gave the Hearn family the impression that he was changing into a small devil. When he began composing taunting songs which he sang in shrill defiance, there was nothing to do but send him back to his people. This was done as soon as the summer holidays began, and Hearn had to admit that 'my little boy turned out badly.'

The household was now reduced to ten members, and at mealtimes Hearn was always served first. Until his tray was taken back to the kitchen, the rest of the family did not assemble. There was a tacit understanding, however, that while they ate they were not to be needlessly disturbed; and Hearn neither called the servants nor entered that part of the house if he could avoid it. On the rare occasions when he ate with the family, he took his place according to rank. Setsuko's grandfather occupied the place of honour and was served first. Then came her father, her mother, Hearn, Setsuko, and the Buddhist student.

This same ranking was observed in choosing places to sit when the family gathered in a circle to hear the *Asahi Shimbun* read after supper. Sometimes the newspaper did not arrive, and then if the weather was bad, stories were told and games played, in which the maids joined. Otherwise some of the household might go out calling, attend the theatre, or enjoy an hour or so of Japanese 'shopping.' Though money was painstakingly guarded by everyone but Hearn, an hour's wandering through little lamplit shops often resulted in an infinitesimal purchase. If it was some odd or pretty trinket,

it was brought home triumphantly and the family would reassemble in a circle to examine and admire it.

Sometimes Hearn accompanied Setsuko through the shops, and he tried to keep her away from displays of American and European wares. When she saw a piece of foreign cloth she liked, he always persuaded her that Japanese material was 'twice as pretty and durable,' even though he could not always find a piece of native cloth to prove his point. And sometimes he had an evening caller, whom he received in the guest-room while the rest of the family remained out of sight. But usually after the paper was read, he went to his study; and later on he could hear the lamps being lighted in the family shrines and prayers being murmured to ancestors and the gods.

The household did not retire until he gave the signal, and if he became so absorbed that he forgot the time, Setsuko would come to his study and ask if he was not working too hard. Then the maids would spread the beds in the various rooms and replenish the men's *hibachi* in case they should want to smoke in the night. After good nights were said, the lights were blown out and the house became silent, the little lamps in the shrines left to burn themselves out. Hearn often continued reading in bed, or by substituting a pencil for a pen he went on with his writing.

When the proofs of his 'Glimpses' began arriving in ten-day instalments, he sent certain pages to Tokyo for any comments Chamberlain might care to make. As a result of his twenty years' residence in Japan, Chamberlain suggested a few minor changes which Hearn gratefully made; but when he objected to his friend's generous use of Japanese words, Hearn stoutly defended his position. Words were like people. Though one might not be able to understand a stranger, one was often compellingly impressed by his exotic appearance and foreign air. That he was unintelligible made him not a whit less interesting. To the contrary, he was interesting *because* he was unintelligible!

He agreed that readers might not feel as he did about words.

They could not be expected to know that he thought the letter 'A' was blush-crimson and the letter 'E' pale blue, that 'KH' wore a beard and turban and 'X' was a mature Greek with wrinkles. But ——

'Because people cannot see the colour of words, the tints of words, the secret ghostly motions of words: —

'Because they cannot hear the whispering of words, the rustling of the procession of letters, the dream-flutes and dream-drums which are thinly and weirdly played by words: —

'Because they cannot perceive the pouting of words, the frowning and fuming of words, the weeping, the raging and racketing and rioting of words: —

'Because they are insensible to the phosphorescing of words, the fragrance of words, the noisesomeness of words, the tenderness or hardness, the dryness or juiciness of words, — the interchange of values in the gold, the silver, the brass and the copper of words: —

'Is that any reason why we should not try to make them hear, to make them see, to make them feel?'

Although Chamberlain's literary style was severe and scholarly, the philologist readily acknowledged the magic of words. But, he pointed out, they had to be words one understood at least in part — like the delicate French Creole in Hearn's West Indian books. Because of its meaning, 'mist' in English was beautifully musical; but 'mist' in German, identically pronounced, had no sound at all. Because of its meaning, it *smelled!* And when, as with most exotic words — including Japanese — there was total ignorance of the euphonic rules, their phonetic significance was lost. 'C' in one context might be the culminating point of a wail of agony while in another it would be a bearer of joy and gladness. A single, individual note was nothing in itself. One had to know the scale of the language.

Hearn was 'hard hit,' but he could not agree that the subject was as simple as Chamberlain made it appear. It went a little further, flowed over into indefinable lands of yet un-

known extent. Had Chamberlain ever jumped out of bed to write down a wonderful poem or sentence composed during sleep? He himself frequently had, and the result was often very strange. He was confronted with words that had never existed in any language! And what about that marvellous, unintelligible phrase of Loti's in 'Roman d'un Spahi': '*Anabilis Fobil; — faramata hi*'?

In the end, though, he went down before Chamberlain's scientific precision; and he promised to be more careful of Japanese words in the future. Whereupon the philologist confessed himself no strict doctrinaire as a reformer. Pig-headed, perhaps, and obstinate; but more like the old woman who liked 'that blessed word Mesopotamia' because it was just familiar enough and sounded well! And under no circumstances was Hearn to alter one jot or title in his proof-sheets, for 'you can manage words as though they were fairies and you were their king.'

Since coming to Japan, Hearn had started a second library, composed of classic and modern works rather than the exotic collector's items in the library he considered lost to George Gould. Now, during lulls between strenuous periods of correcting proof, he indulged in considerable reading, or, lacking the books, 're-reading from memory.' To make his style more flexible he re-read or 'mentally reviewed' a number of authors including Boswell, Tennyson, Byron, Scott, Molière, Carlyle ('no sweet pill to swallow'), Wordsworth, Milton, and Shelley. He also re-read Coulanges' 'La Cité Antique' to study again the parallels between the ancient Indo-Aryan and Japanese races. And with the idea of a future volume of Japanese short stories in mind, he reviewed the best Russian, Scandinavian, and French short-story writers. Of these he liked the Russians best — with the exception of Dostoievsky. 'Crime and Punishment' (preferably in the French) he thought the most powerful emotional novel of modern times — crucifying to read, but penetrating the deepest fibres of the heart. But all he asked was that his worst enemies be forced to read some of Dostoievsky's short stories.

He was intrigued by the nervous power of Heine's work and felt that, aside from verbal art and poetic fancy, that power lay in the German writer's skill in playing comedy against pathos. 'He amuses, caresses, brings tears; then with a lightning flash of sarcasm he illuminates the bitter gulfs. . . . I don't think the Elizabethan writers knew this art; they had to introduce fools and mad people to offset tragedy.'

Although Chamberlain's youth had been spent in France, he had never been particularly interested in French literature, and his inquiries now led Hearn into a recapitulation of his beloved romantic school. In the process he revised some of his values, the years and the tempering effect of the Orient having exerted an unacknowledged influence.

There was, naturally, only one Gautier, he wrote to Chamberlain. The real head of the romantic movement. In plain truth 'Mlle. de Maupin' sang the praises of not only natural but unnatural lust; but no one could be wrong in admiring Gautier's short stories. Especially 'Arria Marcella,' which expressed all nineteenth-century longing for the lost past, the dead gods, and the dead paganism. And Gautier's poetry remained a glorious revelation, with 'Emaux et Camées' the 'most perfect verse that was ever made in this world.' (Never, Chamberlain wrote back after reading the book, could he sufficiently thank Hearn for telling him of it.)

On the other hand, Hearn found Pierre Loti was not bearing up so well. He still excelled all other living writers in exotic subjects; but his work had grown morbid of late. When he was young, he had seemed to look into Nature's whole splendid burning soul. But now the light and the colour had faded and he appeared to be no more than a little affected modern Frenchman with nothing left but blasés nerves. For that matter, the emotional life of all Latin races, even their most exquisite sensations, seemed to lie in their nerves. And most Frenchmen appeared to think and write with their nerves, and too much with the pudic nerve. Their nearest approach to soul was an extreme sensual refinement, a vibrant sense of Nature in relation to the body. Admittedly the romantic

movement had rarely gone beyond the senses, and while in the mighty scale of emotional harmonies there were tones which only sensuousness and the love of beauty could make audible, the worship of beauty alone was not enough. The highest form of art had to be aspirational as well — like music, questing into the future.

With the flow of proof-sheets coming in from Boston, Hearn would have had no time for all this literary reviewing and soul-searching if he had undertaken any travelling. But during the summer of 1893 there were no holiday jaunts in search of notes, for beneath the comfortable routine of his home life the anticipation of a momentous event was bringing him strange new sensations. Setsuko was expecting a child in the autumn.

'There is universal joy because of the birth in prospect,' he wrote Ellwood Hendrick, 'and I am accused of not seeming joyful enough. I am not sorry. But I hope my little one will never have to face life in the West, but may always dwell in a Buddhist atmosphere.' He had had some doubts and fears at first, of course, but they were gradually passing away. 'I have only some anxiety for *her:* still, she is so strong that I trust the gods will be kind to us.'

The Koizumis were happy in thinking the child's appearance would be more Japanese than usually resulted from interracial marriages, because Hearn was small and dark. And Hearn told himself a mixture of Japanese and European blood was generally an improvement over native stock if both parents were sturdy. The family's elation made life inside his garden walls a prophylactic against foreboding; but as the crucial date drew nearer, he put aside all thought of an early release from teaching. He now had not only Setsuko but her child to provide for, and he dared take no risk. He would have to save all the money he possibly could, for the child would need the very finest education he could afford!

CHAPTER 25

'WHAT will you do with your little man when he grows up? Army, or Civil Service? Whatever you do, never let him go to America, and lose all his traditions. . . . Nothing seems to me more important now for a little boy than the training of his linguistic faculties, — giving him every encouragement in learning languages by ear — the only natural way.'

Hearn wrote these words to a comparatively new correspondent, his youngest half-sister in Ireland. After his father's death, Alicia and her five daughters had lived in Dublin until Alicia died a few years later. Various members of the Hearn and Posy families had then taken charge of the pretty young orphans.

Two of Charles's daughters were married, and the third, Lilah, had been the first to write to their half-brother after his growing fame disclosed his whereabouts in Japan. She had received no answer to two letters; but eventually Hearn had answered a letter from his youngest half-sister, Mrs.

Buckley Atkinson. He had written affectionately but without enthusiasm, and the correspondence would have ended there if Mrs. Atkinson had not persevered. She had sent him her own picture with a number of family photographs, and he saw that she was a gentle, sweet-faced little woman, blonde and pretty. His other half-sisters were likewise attractive, and he had felt rather proud of such relatives. But on one point he made himself very clear. He wanted *only one sister!* He hadn't room in his heart for more. He was interested in hearing news of them, but little Sis mustn't ask him to write them, or show his letters to everybody. He couldn't diffuse himself very far, and the nasty truth was that if he couldn't have *one* sister, he wanted none at all.

Mrs. Atkinson had answered this letter with tactful understanding, and their occasional letters had developed into an intimate and sympathetic exchange of personal and family news. While Hearn never assumed the initiative, his response was easy and sincere, and they frequently spoke of visiting each other in the near future. 'I would like to see you very much; for you are too tantalizing in your letters and tell me nothing about your inner self,' he wrote one day. 'I want to find out what the angel shut up in your heart is like. No doubt very sweet, but I would like to pull it out, and stroke its wings, and make it chipper a little. As for the little ones, make them love me; for if they see me without previous discipline they will be afraid of my ugly face.'

As an expectant father, Hearn was looking into the future with more personal concern. But his thoughts were at the same time turning backward. Sending his half-sister reminiscences to bridge the gap between their separated childhoods encouraged this tendency, but only coincidentally. For some time he had been finding the present more frequently referring to the past, and occasionally the thought came to him that it might be a good idea to start an autobiography. Perhaps if he could get his childhood memories on paper some day, he could see the whole picture more clearly. But there was no time for that now; and when he

began teaching again in September, his second Japanese book was taking shape.

When he heard that expectant parents sometimes borrowed a baby to keep in their home until their own child was born, he promptly adopted the custom. A neighbour's six-month-old son, named Tortoise, was installed in the household, and he 'studied' him assiduously. No amount of petting could spoil the placid infant, he wrote wonderingly to Chamberlain. He smiled when anyone smiled at him, went to sleep when he was supposed to, and never cried! Hearn suspected that he was a Buddha, and he would not have been surprised if lotus blossoms big as chariot wheels had sprung up through the floor.

Another kimonoed, doll-like neighbour frequently came visiting of her own accord — fourteen-month-old Bamboo. Every time she walked into the house, she bowed gravely to each inhabitant and repeated the latest acquisition to her hesitant vocabulary. If Hearn was in his study, she disregarded all bans and marched in to climb into his lap. Surely, he thought, a Japanese baby girl was the most precious thing in the world!

By the middle of October, he was growing uneasy about Setsuko; and by the end of the month his anxiety had turned into fear. Knowing the chief surgeon at the government garrison, he called on him during the first week of November and asked if he would attend Setsuko. But the physician only laughed reassuringly. If anything serious happened, Hearn was to call him. Otherwise it would be better to leave Mrs. Hearn in the hands of native midwives, for the Japanese had been handling such things in their own way for thousands of years without doctors. Now and then a woman died, of course, but no oftener than when a physician was in attendance.

This did nothing to allay Hearn's fear. And severe storms and earthquakes in Kyushu and destructive floods in Izumo made him more nervous. When he read that a Gulf storm had struck the Louisiana coast, killing over two thousand people

and leaving Grand Isle a barren wasteland, it seemed the autumn of 1893 was a period of storms and calamities all over the world.

On the sixteenth of November, a letter came from Nishida saying he was catching fish in his garden where the chrysanthemums had grown. He also asked for help with some troublesome lines in a poem personifying winter, and Hearn immediately took up his pen to answer. He had torn *cataracts* from the hills: 'cataracts' meant 'waterfalls,' and they were frozen solid, which allowed the giant Winter to break them off. And they clanked at his waist (or girdle) like *manacles*: 'manacles' (from the Latin *manus*, 'hand') were iron fetters for the hands, made in pairs, connected by a chain, and locked with a key. To illustrate his definition, he drew a little pair of manacles. Then he went on to explain Shelley's conception of Winter as a jailer, imprisoning lakes and rivers in ice and commanding the earth to be silent. 'The birds are gone,' he wrote, building up the atmosphere for Nishida. 'The insects are dead.'

Just then someone tapped on his study door, and his mother-in-law came in. Setsu's time had arrived, she said; and Hearn dropped his pen.

He hurried to Setsuko's room to sit down by her bed and reassure her; but as her suffering intensified, he himself became distraught with pity and fear. And anxiety for his child welled up through his helpless distraction over his wife. 'Come into the world with good eyes,' he said, over and over. 'Come into the world gently! — Be healthy! — Have good eyes!' Through his unborn child he was pleading with Destiny, in frantic, broken Japanese.

Toward midnight two old women arrived to assist Setsuko's mother, and when they came into the room he hated them. In the confusion of preparations his helpless fear increased, and he leaned over Setsuko to say: 'It will be best for me to go back to my work now.' Then he left the room, and to get farther away, he went out to the chilly garden-house.

But he could do no writing or reading. Across the garden

the paper *shoji* of the house glowed softly through the darkness, and he thought how sacred and terrible maternity was. According to theology, a pure young woman was a freshly created being, moulded by an imaginary God. According to materialism, she was a perfect female body, brought into existence by material laws and destined to live and perish like a plant. And according to evolutional philosophy, she was countless myriads of millions of dead in one life-manifestation. Since the beginning of time all life and humanity had been working in one line against evil and death, and this beautiful, good young woman was the end-product. But her duty was to continue the infinite work of the dead, and the man who married her assumed an awful responsibility both to the dead and the unborn. To the dead, lest he mar their work; and to the future, lest he plant in that bosom a life incapable of continuing the progress of the past. For a little while 'the kind, dull veil that Nature keeps during most of a life stretched between it and such extraordinary glimpses of the Unknown' was drawn aside, and the world went dark when he thought of the possibility that men could be cruel to women who bore their children.

Presently he would write these thoughts to Ellwood Hendrick and Chamberlain, but now they were running through his mind as he stared across the garden in apprehensive suspense.

Suddenly, about one o'clock, he was electrified by a shrill, thin cry; and he had the strange feeling of being double. It was a tender, ghostly sensation that left him trembling and confused; and he wondered if he was experiencing an echo of all the sensations fathers of the past had felt at similar times.

While he was trying to muster enough strength to go up to the house, Setsuko's grandfather came rushing out. He was waving both fists high above his head, and the sleeves of his kimono fell back almost to his shoulders. '*Hellum! — Hellum!*' he shouted. '*Great treasure-child is born!*' When he reached the garden-house and came into the circle of lamplight, Hearn saw tears of joy in his eyes. And through a whirl

of emotions he heard him say Setsuko had given birth to a son.

Together they hurried back to the house, and when Hearn entered Setsuko's room and looked at his son, he was too breathless to speak. *The most strangely beautiful creature on earth lay before him!*

The next instant he shattered the tense calm of his household by hugging the two old midwives.

He did not bother to go to bed that night; and next morning he added a postscript to his letter to Nishida, sending him the first announcement of his son's birth. He was a very strong boy, he said (remembering native reticence concerning family affairs) and had some of his mother's features and some of his father's. Setsuko was well enough to send kind words and say how happy they were over Nishida's improved health. The child had dark hair and eyes.

During the forenoon he had doctors come to examine the baby, and when they were gone he wrote a long-deferred letter to Ellwood Hendrick, going into much greater detail and confessing the strain he had endured. The child had inherited his nose, he said, and his eyes were large and black. But he looked more Japanese than foreign. The physicians said he was faultlessly formed and his bones promised that he would become very tall. 'The little man will wear sandals and dress like a Japanese, and become a good little Buddhist if he lives long enough. He will not have to go to church, and listen to stupid sermons, and be perpetually tormented by absurd conventions.'

Professor Chamberlain was also informed of the new resident in Kumamoto, and in answer to his congratulations Hearn wrote back: 'This little being needs my whole life, time, strength, care — everything I can give before going to the *hakaba;* — I shall hardly be able to freight and supply the ship for its voyage. No more life-ships shall be launched! — I am rather proud, however, of this one, and not much afraid of the future therefor.'

The plump, round-faced infant was named Kazuo, and for

the next few months the life of the Hearn ménage revolved closely about 'Kaji,' or 'Kajiwo.' A nurse was added to the household staff, and Hearn wondered how she, the two maids, Setsuko, her parents, and her grandfather could all find some way to busy themselves day and night with one child. But if he mentioned it, he was asked to help; and that he scarcely had time to do. So he good-naturedly confessed himself 'greatly fallen into oblivion' and was content with playing the rôle of a fond spectator.

Although he had not dared hope it, Kazuo was as smilingly placid as the borrowed Tortoise had been; and he had him photographed before he was two months old. It was foolish, he acknowledged, when he sent a picture to his sister, for Kaji's appearance was changing every day and already he had looked like five different people. He promised to have the Hearn nose and eyebrows, but he had Oriental eyes. 'I have called him Leopold Kazuo Hearn — for European use and custom. Kazuo, in Japanese, signifies "First of the Excellent." I have not registered him under that name, however; because by law if I register my wife or son in the Consulate both become English citizens, and lose the right to hold any property, or do any business in Japan, or even live in the interior without a passport.'

For some time Hearn had been corresponding with W. B. Mason, Chamberlain's guide-book collaborator and a Tokyo college instructor, who was married to a Japanese woman and had two adolescent sons. Mason and Chamberlain discussed the infant Kazuo like two conscientious godfathers, and they sent their resultant ideas and conclusions westward to Kumamoto. It was highly important, they felt, to protect children from the fear of darkness; and in this Hearn heartily concurred. After relating some of the terrors of his own childhood, he said they had vanished within a few years, although he still believed in ghosts.

'I believe in ghosts, though I disbelieve in souls. I believe in ghosts because there are no ghosts now in the modern world. And the difference between a world full of ghosts and

another kind of world shows us what ghosts mean — and the gods. . . . What made the aspirational in life? Ghosts. Some were called Gods, some Demons, some Angels; — they changed the world for man; they gave him courage and purpose and the awe of Nature that slowly changed into love; — they filled all things with a sense and motion of invisible life, — they made both terror and beauty. Now there are no ghosts, no angels and demons and gods: all are dead. The world of electricity, steam, mathematics, is blank and cold and void. No man can even write about it. Who can find a speck of romance in it?'

His two friends in eastern Japan also wondered what he had decided to do about his son's citizenship. Very likely he would some day resume his world travels, and then what status would be best for Kazuo?

He probably ought to travel a *little*, for literary material, he wrote back; but the important thing to consider was death. He was much older than he wanted to be, and if he died, English citizenship would be worse than useless to his family. Setsuko was only a sweet-hearted country girl who would never feel at home in the Europeanized life of the open ports, and none of his people knew anything about business. They could easily be deprived of anything they might have.

'Leaving the moral question aside altogether — though it is a stronger one than any — there comes the consideration of the facts, thus: The Japanese are still the best people in the world to live among; — therefore, why wish ever to live elsewhere? No one will, or ever could, love me any more than those about me now love me; — and that is the most precious consideration in life aside from the mere capacity to live. The ugly questions are death and the lack of employment. The latter is quite possible. The former is important. In either event, it were better that mother and son were able to live in the interior, and own their own homestead, and have a little revenue, and take care of each other until better times.'

A wave of reaction against foreigners was sweeping across Japan as she completed her 1894 conquest of Korea, and sometimes, when Hearn went through unfamiliar sections of Kumamoto, he could hear a hiss of hatred. He took no personal offence at such demonstrations because he deemed them only a vague national awakening to the dangers of Occidental influences. But they added to a sense of insecurity which had lately come over him. Many foreign teachers were being dismissed from government employ, and he feared his own contract might not be renewed. Impersonally he would approve the abolition of English studies, since he felt their indiscriminate, topsy-turvy teaching was becoming a large factor in national demoralization. And personally he could not complain of such an eventuality, for the gods of Japan had been good to him. But he still had to think of his family. It would be next to impossible to support so many people outside of Japan, even if they could be happy in some other country.

Kumamoto he would be happy to leave whenever he could find a good teaching post in some other Japanese school. A year ago he had been sure his fellow teachers hated him for no known reason, and only Setsuko's arguments had persuaded him to lay aside a letter he had written asking for assignment to some other school. For a time things had gone better, and it had seemed she and Nishida were right in saying the trouble lay in his inability to understand Kyushu people. But now he could again feel a silent, conniving antagonism among his colleagues — especially those with Christian or missionary connections. But he was receiving good pay and he dared not resign until he could find an equally good income elsewhere. Meanwhile it was not pleasant to think all doors might soon be closed to him.

Kazuo's eyes were now turning blue, and his hair was golden-brown and curly. This gave his father another reason to be anxious about the future. Would the child's possible foreign appearance cause him trouble with his schoolmates? The question often bothered him as he carried

the baby about the garden on his shoulder or sat contemplating him while he slept. Yet what did he mean by 'foreign' appearance? Foreign from which viewpoint — East or West?

Kaji would be given native training in everything but education, for his education must equip him to fend for himself and his mother in a rapidly changing world. It was still too soon to make specific plans, but sometimes he dreamed he would 'take him to Italy to drown him with music, and take him to France to learn something about life.' But probably it would be best for him to have some scientific courses in America. This was an age of specialism and one couldn't begin too soon to cultivate a single aim and talent in children. And as soon as Kazuo began talking, he was going to give him English lessons. He would need that, whatever he did!

For the present, Hearn could 'set him going in life' only by supplying his infant needs, and this he did lavishly. All Japanese babies wore miniature replicas of adult kimonos, and Kazuo's kimonos were not made of cotton but of silk. They were covered with pictures of tortoises, storks, pine trees, and other symbols of such blessings as prosperity, longevity, and steadfastness. And he fairly shocked Setsuko with the number of toys he brought home.

He also ordered a baby carriage from Yokohama, and the awe its first appearance created in the neighbourhood continued for weeks. The foreign *sensei* had become the most important person in the vicinity, and on festival days the natives came to dance in the court before his house. All the doings of his household were noted, and when his son was wheeled down the street in his gleaming carriage, it was a special event. Usually a string of jouncing toy animals trailed along behind the carriage, and very quickly two or three mothers and children would be bringing up the rear of the little parade. If the nurse stopped for a moment, the women would patter up to stare at the carriage while their children stood hypnotized by the string of little animals. Eventually they learned to bend down and carefully turn the head of a

woolly sheep or a lifelike cow, and then everyone would exclaim over a surprising bleat or a brief deep moo.

Hearn's government contract was renewed each March, but this year April and May went by with no word from the college director. Another English-language teacher, he was firmly convinced, was trying to obtain his position. After his first few months in Kumamoto, he had grown quite satisfied with his students, but he had been viewing his teaching colleagues with uneasy suspicion for nearly three years, and suddenly he could stand no more. One day in June he abruptly dismissed a class, went home, and wrote a letter of resignation. When it was finished, he realized he could not afford such ruthless satisfaction, and he tore it to bits and compromised by making an unprecedented call on Sakurai, the college headmaster. With the greatest possible restraint, and speaking French, since Sakurai understood no English, he confessed his three years of lonely unhappiness and mentioned one carefully unnamed teacher from whom he was sure all the trouble emanated. Sakurai heard him through politely and then explained his failure to receive a new contract was only an oversight due to his having been so long on the teaching staff. It would be taken care of immediately. As for his discomfort among his colleagues — they had certainly not been courteous, and even at their best Japanese people were cold. But Hearn-San was generally liked, and Sakurai was his well-wisher. If anything disagreeable occurred, he was to tell the headmaster quite frankly, and he would do what he could to correct it. He gave Hearn sufficient courage to face the remaining three weeks of school; but he came away without committing himself to teach any longer.

This year, again, Setsuko would be unable to go vacationing. In early April they had taken Kazuo on a four-day pilgrimage to Kompira, and he had behaved magnificently — capturing the hearts (and gifts) of all fellow-travellers with his universal friendliness and merry little laugh. (He had seemed to pass for a Japanese very well; and some people had even taken Hearn for a Eurasian.) But Kazuo's grandmother had

insisted on carrying him most of the time, and she had fallen while ascending the temple steps, twisting quickly to protect the baby on her back and receiving an ugly gash on her cheek which was to leave a permanent scar. Kazuo had not even been bruised, but Hearn was uneasy until they had him safely at home again. And now he was at the most troublesome stage — very heavy, always hungry, and full of mischief, justifying much of the attention his father had previously thought wasted upon him. Setsuko preferred to keep him at home during the hot months; and Hearn decided it would be a good time to look after a few long-neglected business matters in Yokohama and Tokyo.

He had been so long in the interior with no Occidental friends, and here in Kumamoto with no masculine companionship at all, that he thirsted for the open ports and someone of his own language and thought-patterns to talk with. Earlier he had been tempted to run off by himself to the mulatto Carey's little waterfront hotel, with its salty atmosphere of sailors and sealers and masters of small craft. It would be healthy and refreshing for him. He liked rough men who didn't get too drunk, and he got along with them first-rate. But now in July he had an opportunity for something even better. Mason and his family were in Yokohama for the summer, and though Chamberlain was leaving for the mountains he urged his little friend to stay at his house while in the capital. The servants would be there to make him comfortable. Though he hated to leave Kazuo, everything pointed to the wisdom of giving himself a treat; and off he went. A little frightened.

The week-long journey by train and boat took him out of virtual seclusion for the first time in four years, and the first Occidental he spoke to was a world-wandering engineer with whom he was immediately at home. The rough, square fellow seemed a demi-deity, and Hearn felt himself about to worship Western gods! At Kobe he began to feel he was in a world of giants, and the farther east he went the more huge and forceful and dignified everything seemed. Was this the

result of the new civilization he had been decrying from his solitude? What a joy it was to feel the Occident again and talk with Americans and Europeans whose race-soul touched his own! His isolated life in the interior seemed by contrast so dull and lonely that he felt like a prisoner released after years of servitude! But in the midst of his elation he suddenly closed his mind to such thoughts. 'For I saw my home, — and the lights of its household Gods, — and my boy reaching out his little hands to me, — and all the simple charm and love of Old Japan. And the fairy-world seized my soul again, very softly and sweetly, — as a child might catch a butterfly.'

In Yokohama he saw so many huge, blond Englishmen with berserker eyebrows and hawklike noses that it appeared he had landed by mistake in Scandinavia. And when he met Mason, he felt he had been intimately acquainted with him forever. Despite his long, silent years, his conversation had lost none of its magic; and the red-bearded, green-eyed Mason was fascinated by this little 'emperor in the realm of words,' this 'giant of thought expression.' He was also astonished by Hearn's memory, for if a desired book was not within reach, Hearn would offhandedly quote long passages to illustrate some point in their discussion. They had gay family gatherings in Mason's house; they spent blissful hours on sun-filled beaches; and Mason introduced him to Nobushige Amenomori, an accomplished writer in both Japanese and English, who offered to assemble some Buddhist material he was needing. Amenomori had the most profound mind Hearn had found among the Japanese, and time would strengthen his conviction that he was 'the cream of his race at its intellectual best.'

Illness prevented Nishida from meeting him in Tokyo as they had planned, but otherwise nothing happened to mar his happiness in the capital. Chamberlain's domestic factotum, Toda, was his personal servant and guide; Chamberlain's dog sat beside him at mealtimes and whimpered outside his door when he overslept in the mornings; and Chamberlain's library

shelves were richly stocked with philological treasures to be examined. His business negotiations went off as smoothly as they had in Yokohama, and he left two Japanese fairy-tales with Hasegawa, the leading native publisher. Toda helped him purchase toys for Kazuo and writing supplies and books, and since eight of the twelve papers for his book-in-progress were already finished, he could revel in this brief holiday with a clear conscience. Each day he wrote a long letter to Chamberlain, and before returning to Kyushu he spent a memorable day with him up in his mountain retreat.

As soon as he arrived home he examined Kazuo's new teeth, heaped toys around him, and distributed gifts to all his household. Then he packed two boxes of books to be sent back to Mason and Chamberlain. In the Tokyo box he also put two Creole prints and a handful of Creole pamphlets, having noticed Chamberlain had bound a little Creole grammar he had given him shortly after arriving in Japan.

Despite the stimulating pleasures of his eastern visit, it was good to be inside his own garden walls again. But he had scarcely arrived when Kumamoto began trembling with earthquakes. One night a violent shock broke some of the walls of the house and everyone fled to the garden. There they stayed until morning, counting thirty-four additional shocks during the long dark hours of huddling in the bamboo.

There was other excitement, too, for the papers were carrying the imperial declaration of war on China. All the military forces of the nation were in motion, and within a few days troops were pouring into Kumamoto, whence special trains were speeding them northward. The streets were filled with white uniforms and rumbling artillery, and in the temple courtyards priests were addressing the regiments and performing the ceremonies of consecration. And Hearn wondered sadly how many of his students were already on their way to the fevers of China's rice-fields, being drawn into the gathering cyclones of death.

CHAPTER

26

Anti-foreign feeling was now increasing, and with the war emptying the national treasury, the future of all government-paid employees looked dark. Hearn began his fourth year of Kumamoto teaching feeling so insecure that he seemed only to be acting out a pantomime. The thought that he might have to return to America began nibbling at the back of his mind, and in one of his 'indigo' moods he wrote Ellwood Hendrick: 'If I ever must go to America, I hope I can keep out of New York. The great nightmare of it always dwells with me, — moos at me in the night, especially in the time of earthquakes. Of London I should be much less afraid. . . . You have heard of the Japanese facile victories by land and sea. I should not be surprised to hear of them winning every engagement, and capturing Peking. But what the end will be for the country, who can say? The whole thing is the last huge effort of the race for national independence. Under the steady torturing pressure of our industrialized

civilization, — being robbed every year by unjust treaties, — Japan has determined to show her military power to the world by attacking her old teacher, China. . . . It is an ugly business, this war. It may leave Japan absolutely independent, as in the days of Ieyasu. But will that be best for her? I am no longer sure. The people are still good. The upper classes are becoming corrupt. The old courtesy, the old faith, the old kindness are vanishing like snow in the sun.'

Along with the majority of Western people, Hearn could see no germ of world menace in the international policies of the Japanese government. In his estimation Meiji Japan — small, new, and overshadowed by great world powers struggling for empire — was fighting to stay alive. He saw her threatened, not only by the military might of China and Russia, but by the financial might of England and America; and he thought it fortunate that long centuries of cruel feudalism and the ineradicable loyalty fostered by Shinto had enabled her to turn medieval materials into a modern fighting machine with which to defend herself.

But his sympathy with New Japan's international position did not soften his personal antagonism nor make his own situation more acceptable. Within two weeks his sense of insecurity and intangible persecution brought the definite decision to make a change. After his house was broken into, he wrote Chamberlain that with earthquakes, robbers, and thunderstorms Kumamoto had become his idea of a prison in the bottom of hell. He would be glad to work anywhere else for half his present salary if he could only have fifty per cent more peace of mind! And part of the desired peace of mind, he had come to think, could be obtained by working for white men instead of modernized Japanese. He was tired of trying to detect the government's educational policies, and he was tired of shadow-boxing with coldly polite college authorities and instructors.

His weariness had duly communicated itself to his household, and now everybody was tired of Kumamoto. The great-grandfather thought they should return to Matsue;

and when he was reminded that Izumo winters were too severe for Hellum he compromised by announcing he would go back alone. And he began to pack. When nothing would swerve him an Izumo relative who had been temporarily living with the Hearns decided to accompany him; and the two men joyfully returned to their native province. Another distant relative was also enjoying Hearn's hospitality, but he elected to stay on for the next move.

With his 'Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan' to be off the press in a few days, and the last essay for his second Japanese book on its way to Houghton, Mifflin and Company, Hearn now put his writing aside. He had no heart to plan another book, and he wondered if his first impressions of Japan would have been more accurate if he had looked at her with hatred instead of love.

He told Sakurai he was giving up teaching because of his health; and when it became known that he was seeking other work, Robert Young, of the *Kobe Chronicle*, offered him a position as editorial writer. The salary would be only one hundred dollars a month; but both he and Setsuko liked Kobe, an attractive open port on the Inland Sea only fifty miles from Buddhist Kyoto and reasonably near Yokohama by rail. The *Chronicle* was an English radical paper with cultural overtones, and he would be allowed to write whatever he wished. He accepted the offer without much debating, but he protected himself by anticipating misery. Still, any sort of change would be a relief! After the Prophet had lain on his left side for three hundred and ninety days to bear the iniquity of the house of Israel, he was glad to lie three hundred and ninety days on his right side to bear the calamity of the house of Judah!

During the second week of October, 1894, the Hearns arrived in Kobe; and the Youngs were at the station to welcome them. Robert Young was a youthful, black-bearded Scot and his wife a small, freshly complexioned Englishwoman — both of whom Hearn liked at the first handshake. They helped Setsuko find a house whose second-story balcony

looked down a street of little shops to the bay, while above the garden in the rear the hills beyond Kobe loomed up across the rooftops. Within two weeks Hearn's household was comfortably settled, and though he thought the house rather nondescript — native downstairs but foreign above — it did not bother him. Kobe was a beautiful little city, and he was already planning to build Setsuko a fine home before hot weather arrived. At last he could have Western companionship, and his *Chronicle* position promised to be the most pleasant he had ever had.

Mr. and Mrs. Young had hitherto been the entire editorial staff, and having been surrounded by native women for five years, Hearn at first consistently spoke to Mrs. Young in Japanese. 'Yes, of course!' he said, 'I'm sorry!' when she finally reminded him that she was English; and both of them were vastly relieved, for his Japanese was still laboured and dialectic. He and Robert Young were in accord on all important issues, and on minor questions his employer was deferentially silent.

Hearn wasted no literary effort on his Kobe readers, but there were many things he wished to say, and he said them effectively even though his pen was less barbed than it had been in Cincinnati and New Orleans. His first editorial dealt with the wily practices of *kurumaya* in their dealings with foreign travellers. During the same week he discussed the need for better government pay to postal and telegraph employees and commented on the streetwalkers permitted in the open ports — 'pathetic Japanese mockeries of those despairing phantoms that haunt the nights of London or New York.' 'Pathetic' because even among the lowest there still lingered a certain innate modesty.

Within the month he editorialized on the race-problem in America, the current law which prohibited a Japanese woman married to a foreigner from owning or inheriting property, and numerous other questions of national and international significance. One result of the new passport system, he wrote, would be the greater ease with which foreign writers could

visit and study Japan; and 'eventually it is to be hoped that she will feel more kindly to those who do not believe that military power is wholly admirable merely because it is necessary to national self-preservation, and who find, like Sir Edwin Arnold, the supreme charm of Japan in those courtesies and graces and arts which made beautiful her centuries of peace.' In 'National Individuality' he told of the heroic, self-abnegating sacrifices the Japanese masses were making for the war effort, and concluded: 'Whatever might be said of personal individuality in the race, we have now startling evidence of the enormous strength of the national individuality.' And in 'The European Future' he wrote of modern world commerce and prophesied a commercially unified Occident. 'The whole warp and woof of European trade is more closely interwoven. . . . The steady tendency in the West is toward one vast industrial federation, — a gigantic commercial republic with united nations for united states.'

Keeping in step with the triumphant progress of the Sino-Japanese War, he wrote early in the winter of the problems the victor must face. Could Japan control a China in anarchy? It was highly doubtful. This did not necessarily mean Japan should not insist upon marching her armies to Peking, but she should do all in her power to prevent plunging China into the horrors of a civil war. And three days later he cautioned that peace was not yet assured, even though military victories had established Japan's greatness and exposed the weaknesses of China. There was still the Korean question, a formidable one. Were China in a more advanced state the problem might solve itself more easily, but for generations her whole machinery of government had been so disorganized that it would refuse to obey the levers which should manage it. Even in defeat it would continue to function in directions which could threaten international peace.

During the winter his editorials included 'Japanese Educational Policy,' 'Earthquakes and National Character,' 'The Labour Problem in America,' 'Japanese Emigration to the West Indies,' 'The Curse of Money,' 'Mediaeval Superstitions in

Journalism,' 'The Decline of Foreign Influence,' 'The Question of Male and Female Equality,' 'The New Index Expurgatorius,' 'Are Englishmen Angels?' and 'Courage in Modern Warfare.'

He and the Youngs formed a busy, enthusiastic triumvirate in the *Chronicle* offices, and while he contributed no literary gems to the little paper, he helped out in any way he could. As soon as he arrived, he had sent a year's free subscription to Nishida so his friend could follow his writings ('I write all the editorials — the leading articles of the paper: so whenever you read one of them you may be sure I am talking to you'), and he invited Nishida to send Izumo news now and then if anything important happened. But only if it pleased or amused him to do so — under no circumstances was he to go to any trouble!

Since foreigners even in the open ports were now more or less on sufferance, he could not too openly inveigh against Japanese modernism. But Christian missionaries were a natural enemy he could turn upon, and his newspaper writings made him publicly abhorred in missionary circles. Intellectually he was proud of this enmity, yet he was finding less personal satisfaction in being condemned by the Church. There was not only the sense of persecution, but in lonely moments something akin to sadness. Privately he was ready to confess that he was rabidly and perhaps unjustifiably opposed to Christian dogma because of childhood experiences. Nonetheless he had no intention of ceasing his war on Christian orthodoxy, and in Japan the missionaries were its dogmatic standard-bearers, chipping away at the centuries-old faith of the people.

He was touchingly pleased when the Youngs admired and 'petted' Setsuko, and though she gradually retreated to her domestic sphere, he fell into the habit of dropping in at the Youngs' house for Sunday dinner. He even accepted a few dinner invitations when other guests were present. But his years of seclusion had made him less adaptable to the give-and-take of general conversation, and frequently he became so

engrossed in what he was saying that he was forced to make a visible effort to re-establish the identity of his listeners. And once, when a guest disagreed with his interpretation of emperor-worship, he shrugged his shoulders and left both the table and the house.

When 'Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan' arrived in Kobe, he found its two volumes full of faults and flaws; but they reflected his honest convictions at the time of writing and he was philosophical over having later been forced to change some of them. 'Out of the East' was the title he had chosen for his second book ('the simpler the title, and the vaguer — in my case — the better') and he expected it to be a more creditable piece of work.

His 'Glimpses' was essentially a traveller's book, but like his West Indian volume a traveller's book such as only Lafcadio Hearn could have written. The reader was taken to hidden places and introduced unforgettably to the life of the masses. He saw beauty and colour through the eyes of a poet and learned of traditions and superstitions through the sympathy of a mystic. Much of it was no more than good journalism, but one fine passage was never too far from another and the entire work was animated by a sensitivity as spiritual as it was sensuous. In keeping it 'thoroughly sympathetic' he had excluded certain things he would have had to condemn; but it corresponded to the general mood of Western enthusiasm for the Orient, and the notices were highly favourable. An English edition had also been published, but the British critics were more restrained. One of them felt, if all Hearn's impressions were correct, the poet's dream of a Golden Age had truly been realized in the Far East. This, with due courtesy, he was inclined to doubt.

With the coming of cold weather, Hearn's eye had begun to trouble him; but this was forgotten when Kazuo developed a severe cold. The one-year-old had never been ill, and the household held its breath until he recovered. He was now trying to walk and talk, and the women were training him with 'angel patience.' Each morning and evening he was

brought in to kneel and bow before his father; and Hearn had known a tremulous moment when he first looked down upon the little kimonoed figure dutifully prostrated before him.

By the end of December the winter cold was so seriously affecting his eye that he had to reduce his newspaper work to one article a day. 'It now seems to me that time is the most precious of all things conceivable,' he wrote to Ellwood Hendrick. 'The best part of my life has been wasted in wrong directions and I shall have to work like thunder till I die, to make up for it.'

The next day the pain in his eye became excruciating, and he suddenly collapsed. Doctor Papellier, a German oculist living near-by, was called to attend him. The physician found his eye so seriously afflicted by neuritis that there was danger the retina would be destroyed, and he ordered him to stay in bed in a darkened room. The oculist had long been an admirer of his writings, and as a German naval surgeon he had translated 'Chita' into German for a Nuremberg paper. This, and Hearn's spontaneous respect for medical men, made the physician a welcome caller, and he frequently stopped by to chat during the long three weeks Hearn lay in darkness.

His eye was always stronger in hot weather, and to torment himself he dreamed he was back in the tropics. Back in the tropics with a magic formula against the paralyzing lethargy of the Southern sun! He dwelt with satisfaction on the success his 'Glimpses' was having; and it was good to think of the printers at work on 'Out of the East,' which he had dedicated to Nishida 'in dear remembrance of Izumo days.' But lying inert, in darkness, day after day, was bitter and frightening medicine.

His sight cleared as the last of January grew warmer, but a stubborn dark spot remained in the centre of the field of vision for some time longer. Doctor Papellier lectured him about smoking too much; and he said he would have to find a cook to prepare his Western meals. The food being brought in from restaurants was not properly prepared. Furthermore —

and no arguments! — he must discontinue either his news-work or his more serious writing. He could no longer bend that ailing eye over a desk both day and night.

He had prepared himself for this ultimatum, and after writing occasional editorials for a few more weeks, he reluctantly severed his connections with the *Chronicle*. Essays for his third Japanese book were shaping up from his notes and he would need all his eye-strength for them.

Makino, the current vice-minister of education, and Doctor Toyama, president of the Imperial University in Tokyo, wrote Chamberlain of the high esteem entertained for Hearn in educational circles. Japan welcomed men who would bring her the world's respectful attention, and shortly Hearn was offered a teaching post in Kagoshima and another in Sendai. But he could not make up his mind. How long would Makino be vice-minister, and how long would there be any money in the educational treasury? And if he took his family such a distance, how long would it be before some clique schemed to force him out in favour of a man they could pay the cheaper native salary?

At the same time Page Baker sent him an urgent invitation to return to the *Times-Democrat* staff, saying he would have to work only two hours a day and could easily do that in his own rooms. Would he keep the gate open a little longer till he could see how things shaped out? Hearn wrote back. To leave Japan just now would be like tearing himself in two; and the nervous strain might destroy his ability to write anything at all.

In March, 'Out of the East' was published in America and a little later in England. 'Chiefly reverie,' Hearn described it; and while critical comment was more widespread on both sides of the Atlantic, the scholarly authorities did not care for his Buddhist views. He was not, they said, at his best as a metaphysician. The fact was that in studying Buddhism he was unconsciously taking only what he wanted, but he readily admitted himself no Buddhist scholar. 'When one has lived alone five years in a Buddhist atmosphere,' he wrote

Henry Watkin, 'one naturally becomes penetrated by the thoughts that hover in it; my whole thinking, I must acknowledge, has now been changed, in spite of my long studies of Spencer and Schopenhauer. I do not mean that I am a Buddhist, but I mean that the inherited ancestral feelings about the universe — the Occidental ideas every Englishman has — have been totally transformed. There is yet no fixity, however: the changes continue, — and I really do not know how I shall feel about the universe later on.'

But while the philosophical essays in 'Out of the East' revealed an inadequate knowledge of Buddhism, Chamberlain declared 'The Eternal Feminine' to be quite the finest thing ever written on Japan, and the entire book delightful and seductive albeit 'O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue.' No Occidental could speak with greater authority than Basil Hall Chamberlain, and he underscored the statement that with the 'Glimpses' this second book formed 'the most valuable study ever made of Japanese life and character.'

Together with this, Hearn's finest literary traits informed 'The Dream of a Summer Day,' 'The Red Bridal,' 'Yuko,' and 'A Wish Fulfilled.' He had been justified in feeling his second Japanese offering possessed greater artistic integrity, for his style was simpler and more uniform, and the detailed cataloguing of the enthusiastic sightseer was gone. He was still not sure of the specific form he wished his writings to take; and he would never be sure of it. But he had now unwittingly evolved the design all but the final one of his Japanese books would follow. A collection of haunting legends, essays, sketches, reminiscences, reconstructed short stories — thoughts and feelings and fragments of life. A poet's unpatterned report.

With warmer weather, his eye improved; and he spent more time over the manuscript of his third book. His royalties were adding up to a respectable total, and he decided to stay in Kobe a while longer and try his luck at living by his 'literary pen.' There was much Buddhist material in Kyoto he wanted, and he and Setsuko could go back and forth quite

easily. They could even take Kazuo with them during the summer. Perhaps later he might try teaching philosophy, or go to Manila to gather more travel notes.

But Kobe's nearness to Kyoto was the only advantage the little city any longer held for him, and he discarded all thought of building a home there. European contacts had soon lost their appeal, and he was 'taking infinite pains to stay away from the foreign clubs.' He was also trying to avoid the modernized natives of the open port, with their carpets, dirty shoes, absurd fashions, gossip, and wickedly expensive living. The taller, sophisticated Kobe women jarred on his nerves, and petty officials, with native civility and morality rubbed off, seemed meaner and more savage than the worst American roughs. Even in Kumamoto it had not seemed so sad a thing when street urchins shouted 'Foreigner!' after him.

Presently a photograph came from New Orleans, and when the sharp diabolical features of Page Baker looked out at him, a wave of homesickness swept everything away. All the colours, shadows, sounds, and scents of the Crescent City surged over him nerve-real, but as if from another world. How long ago had he sat in Page's office listening to him read a 'Fantastic,' or talked with him over a glass of something at a little marble-topped table? Ah, the memories of all sorts of things forever passed away! And the ghosts! What was the name of that city editor, the splendid Creole who loved poetry and music and used to recite Owen Meredith in a caressing voice that seemed to come up out of a well? Whatever his name, he dreamed of him last night — sitting in a big chair in the old office, telling him something most interesting and important. Yet somehow he kept avoiding the point, and finally Hearn interrupted to say: 'I can't understand — you're dead — is there ——' and with that the light went out of the editor's eyes and in Kobe Hearn 'woke up in the dark and wondered.'

When Kazuo was a year and a half old, Hearn gave him his first English lessons, but the two languages confused and

puzzled him, and little or nothing was accomplished. Even so, whenever he was taken for a walk, he called out '*Hei, Papa-San!*' to every foreigner he saw; and when the postman handed him the mail he could tell which letters were addressed in English and which in Japanese. The mail was his father's lifeline to the outside world, and he brought it to his study with all ceremony.

Sometimes, after the tiny figure had pattered in with the foreign letters in one hand and the Japanese in the other, Hearn would sit by his *hibachi* with the unopened mail in his lap, anxiously pondering the future of his torment and his pride. All would be well if the boy could remain in the atmosphere of old-fashioned Japan, with its quiet gardens and household shrines and mossy old Buddhas. But his eyes were blue, and his hair was brightening, brightening every day. And his soul was more English than Japanese! All too soon his formal education would have to be started. Yet no father should put his son in a foreign school and then go away and leave him!

'I have two souls now, which is troublesome,' he wrote to Watkin. 'For his every word and cry stirs strange ripples in my own life, and the freedom of being responsible only for oneself is over forever for me. Whether this be for the worse or the better in the eternal order of things, the Gods must decide. . . . I have become fat, and disinclined for violent exercise. In other words, I'm getting down the shady side of the hill, — and the horizon before me is already darkening, and the winds blowing out of it, cold.'

There were so many things he had to do, and so many problems to be solved for Kazuo and Setsuko! And for himself, too. He now dreamed of going back to Matsue some day to buy the *samurai* house they had loved there. He wanted Setsu to settle in Matsue, he wrote Nishida. That would be best for her and the boy. And now Japan passed new inter-racial marriage laws by which his marriage would no longer be legal, and though it might militate against his earning power should he ever go back into government

employ, he decided at last to become a Japanese national.

He had first to be adopted into Setsuko's family and assume the name 'Koizumi,' and he let Setsuko's parents choose his personal name. After grave consideration and momentous conferences, they decided on 'Yakumo,' which meant 'many clouds.' It appeared in the opening lines of the oldest known Japanese poem and was a poetic alternative for 'Izumo.' It would remind him that hereafter he belonged to the Province of the Gods.

Setsuko had to make the application for adoption, and after this was done, an official came to the house and asked endless, personal questions. Next, Setsuko had to go down to a government office and answer the same endless questions. And then official silence descended, and they resigned themselves to a long wait.

Since he had stopped writing for the *Chronicle*, Hearn was no longer reading foreign newspapers; and his interest in current Japanese affairs was restricted to the war with China. After its conclusion in April, 1895, many of the returning troops disembarked at Kobe, and one evening Hearn took his wife and son down to the bay to witness one such triumphant arrival. Setsuko held Kazuo in her lap while Hearn stood up in the jinrikisha peering through a small telescope as the tired, dirty soldiers came marching by, each leading a tired, lean horse. On and on the young troopers came, in a tattered, quiet file of proud victory; and the natives cheered and waved and wept. It seemed an endless procession, coming from nowhere and going nowhere; and Hearn anxiously scanned each unshaven face hoping to see the familiar features of some boy he had taught in Matsue or Kumamoto.

But the last troopship had scarcely unloaded its cargo of exhausted men and beasts before Asiatic cholera broke out in Kobe. The death-rate mounted terrifyingly, and smoke drifted down over the city from the funeral pyres in the hills. Again, as in Saint Pierre, Hearn watched from his balcony as plague victims were carried away from neighbouring houses. But Oriental Kobe kept its grief hidden, and the life of the

street was unchanged. The plaintive whistle of the blind shampooer continued. The vendors cried their wares as usual. The private watchman made his customary rounds. And the children went on with their play. All, that is, but the favourite of the neighbourhood — the special little bright-haired child in a pictured silk kimono. Until the epidemic passed, Kazuo was kept behind desperately closed doors, the Hearn household too fearful even to mention its fears save in prayers to the gods.

'Kokoro,' meaning 'heart,' was to be the title of Hearn's third Japanese book, dedicated to Amenomori, and during the summer he shuttled back and forth between Kobe and Kyoto as he worked on its final chapters. But he allowed himself no real holiday, and when the manuscript was sent off to America, his nerves and eye were exhausted, and his spirits low. Would he ever be able to strike the public fancy? Would his books ever sell? Chamberlain paid him another flying visit, and reminded him that he was already the Occidental king of Japan. What more could he want? And again, as in Kumamoto, he was gone before Hearn could say half that he wished to. So he indulged in 'phantom talk' with a phantom professor, across a real table — which he touched to make sure.

In December the Imperial University in Tokyo offered him a teaching post in the Literature College; but he replied without enthusiasm, laying down many provisos. Only the most generous concessions could induce him to associate with the cagey, ruthless New Japanese in their frock coats and loud ties! Within less than a year his royalties had been almost two thousand dollars in Japanese money, and they might be twice that amount for the coming year. He could afford to be independent a little longer.

During the first days of 1896, the naturalization authorities came to life; and in February a notice arrived from Tokyo saying Lafcadio Hearn was now Yakumo Koizumi and legally married by the new law. Five years of discouraging conferences and bickerings with British consuls and native of-

ficials was now ended, and Hearn wished Nishida to be the first to hear the glad tidings. But when the notice arrived he was too ill to send him word. All writing had to be suspended for a number of weeks while he fought off a lung infection. The doctor also found symptoms of hardening of the arteries and heart trouble; but if this made any impression on Hearn, or if he knew, he never spoke of it. It was his eye and his lungs that concerned him, and he was very slow in regaining his strength. There were weeks at a time when he saw no one outside his family circle. When he was unable to write, he buried himself in philosophical studies, finding 'worlds of inspiration in them — new perceptions of commonplace fact.'

'Kokoro' was published in March in both America and England, and the notices were uniformly favourable. The *Revue des Deux Mondes* printed a long article on the author; German criticism was highly laudatory; and English periodicals gave him more space than previously. But his greatest satisfaction came when Nishida sent his compliments and said he was gaining a deeper understanding of the Japanese people.

Evidently, however, an irrelevant flash of despondency struck him during these days. He wrote his half-sister a misleading and lugubrious letter about his literary outlook and wondered if she — only perhaps — could be 'the friend at court' to help him get more attention from the leading English periodicals. (For a long time he had felt it more important to gain notice in England than in America.)

Mrs. Atkinson was always careful to say nothing her eccentric brother could misinterpret, but this time her answer in some way offended him, and when she opened the next letter from Japan, it contained only the empty envelope of her own last letter. She could think of nothing she had said or left unsaid which could have angered him, but her repeated pleas for an explanation went unanswered.

Hearn was still weak and nervous from his February illness; and he was writing fewer letters as preoccupation with his

work began shutting out the world. But this was not the first or last intimate friendship he abruptly ended, and sometimes no reason could be found to extenuate his action. A few months earlier he had thrown an interesting light on these broken friendships in a letter to Ellwood Hendrick.

'It has often occurred to me,' he wrote, 'to ask whether you think other men feel as I do about some things — you yourself, for example. Work with me is a pain — no pleasure till it is done. It is not voluntary; it is not agreeable. It is forced by necessity. The necessity is a curious one. The mind, in my case, eats itself when unemployed. Reading, you might suggest, would employ it. No: my thoughts wander, and the gnawing goes on just the same. What kind of gnawing? Vexation and anger and imaginings and recollections of unpleasant things said or done. *Unless somebody does or says something horribly mean to me, I can't do certain kinds of work,* — the tiresome kinds, that compel a great deal of thinking. The exact force of the hurt I can measure at the time of receiving it: "This will be over in six months"; "This I shall have to fight for two years"; "This will be remembered longer." When I begin to think about the matter afterwards, then I rush to work. I write page after page of vagaries, metaphysical, emotional, romantic, — throw them aside. Then the next day I go to work rewriting them. I rewrite and rewrite them till they begin to define and arrange themselves into a whole, — and the result is an essay; and the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* writes, "It is a veritable illumination," — and no mortal man knows why, or how it was written, not even myself, — or what it cost to write it. Pain is therefore to me of exceeding value betimes; and everybody who does me a wrong indirectly does me a right. I wonder if anybody else works on this plan. The benefit of it is that a *habit* is forming, — a habit of studying and thinking in a way I should otherwise have been too lazy-minded to do. But whenever I begin to forget one burn, new caustic from some unexpected quarter is poured into my brain: then the new pain forces other work. It strikes me as being possibly

a peculiar morbid condition. If it is, I trust that some day the power will come to do something really extraordinary — I mean very unique. What is the good of having a morbid sensitive spot, if it cannot be utilized to some purpose worth achieving?'

Doctor Toyama, of the Imperial University in Tokyo, had now obtained the consent of the Diet to engage Hearn for the chair of English Literature and English Language under the conditions he had stated, and finally Hearn agreed to accept the position if he would be granted the regular foreign salary despite his being now a naturalized citizen. He was forty-six years old, and each new attack of illness was harder to throw off. He must make all the money he could while his strength and sight lasted. Kazuo must have a good education and be left with enough money to take care of the family as the eldest son.

As the eldest son: for that, now, was how it was going to be. Setsuko was expecting another child.

There would also be two other children; but the last three would be 'all Japanese' and the path ahead of them clear. It was his first-born, his Kajiwo with the blue eyes and the English hair, who would continue to receive his anguished attention. Even now the child was losing his infant chubbiness and was not as strong as his father would have liked. He also displayed a sensitivity which boded no good for him. Physical pain he bore well enough, but a mere look, a careless word, a moment of unconscious indifference was 'fire to his little soul.'

In May a letter came from Cincinnati, and an answer went back immediately. 'Dear Old Dad: How nice to get so dear a letter from you! I know the cost to you of writing it, and my dear old father must not imagine that I do not understand why he cannot write oftener. With his little grey boy it is much the same now: he finds it hard to write letters, and he has very few correspondents. Why, indeed, should he have many? . . . I have two or three dear friends in this world: is that not enough? — you being oldest and dearest. . . . You

ask about my boy. I can best respond by sending his latest photo, — nearly three years old now. I only pray the Gods will spare me till he is eighteen or twenty. . . . To have the future of others to make — to feel the responsibilities — certainly changes the face of life. I am always frightened, of course; but I work and hope. That is the best, is it not?'

This letter brought no reply, for Henry Watkin at seventy-two was ailing and beleaguered. But the old printer put the letter away with the other notes, cards, and letters which spanned the twenty-six years of his friendship with the 'Raven.' When he finally lost his long struggle against financial disaster, he took the packet of cherished messages with him to the Old Men's Home.

During the summer, while Toyama urgently negotiated with the Diet, Hearn and his family travelled to egg-banning Mionoseki for a long holiday at his favourite Izumo resort. Soon after their arrival he tried to introduce Kazuo to the pleasures of swimming, but he did it too abruptly, and when Kazuo was safely back in his mother's arms he spurned his father's apologies. 'Go away!' he cried angrily. 'Don't come back!' Within a week's time he allowed his grandmother to lead him back into the water, and Hearn reported to Ellwood Hendrick: 'It requires great patience to treat children Japanese-style, — by leaving them *almost* free to follow their natural impulses, and coaxing courage by little and little.'

During the forepart of their holiday, jovial Tamura, a Matsue middle-school instructor, was one of their party and kept everyone merry with his rollicking antics. And later Nishida joined them. Through July and August Hearn spent most of his time in the water, and he became leaner and stronger and 'burnt all over in all colours.' When Toyama wrote that the obstacle of his Japanese citizenship had now been circumvented and he would receive the foreign salary of four hundred dollars a month, the prospect of teaching in Tokyo did not seem so formidable, and Hearn decided he could ill afford to reject such a large salary. Setsuko was delighted

to think of living in the capital, but over their dinner trays Hearn told both her and Nishida that he had no intention of staying there very long. Within two or three years he could probably move back to Matsue to spend the rest of his life, travelling during the cold months and spending the summers with Nishida. Nishida nodded approval and began thinking of Tokyo friends who could help him get established in the capital. Chamberlain was in Europe and would not be back until the end of the year.

Before leaving Izumo, the Hearn family spent a few days in Matsue, and while Kazuo's great-grandfather trailed him triumphantly about the town, buying him little cakes and displaying him to multitudinous relatives, Hearn and Nishida had a few last days together. When the visitors started back eastward, Nishida went down to the wharf to see them off, and though the sun was hot and the boat long-delayed in leaving, he stayed to wave good-bye. From Kobe Hearn wrote back:

'. . . I felt unhappy at the Ohashi, because you waited so long, and I had no power to coax you to go home. I can still see you sitting there so kindly and patiently, — in the great heat of that afternoon. Write soon, — if only a line in Japanese, — to tell us how you are. Kaji-chan remembers you, and sends his little greeting to Nishida-San no Oji-San. We all hope to have another summer with you next year.

'Ever faithfully, with warmest regards of all,

'Lafcadio Hearn.'

Then, as though troubled by prevision, he added a postscript:

'I still see you sitting at the wharf to watch us go. I think I shall always see you there.'

CHAPTER 27

FACULTY members of the Imperial University were provided living-quarters near the campus; but Hearn wanted to live as far away as practicable, and he took his family to Tokyo early enough to help Setsuko find a house. In the course of their search they discovered the sprawling, hilly capital was more like a province than a city, with closely built metropolitan areas and stretches of indescribable squalor flanked by peaceful settlements of miniature farms. It was a city of immense green silences, tumultuous railroad and factory districts, military barracks and dusty parade grounds, rice-fields and bamboo-groves, and square miles of little shops that burned down every year or so. Unlaid water-pipes impeded traffic on the principal thoroughfares; and in the autumn rains the streets melted, water-pipes sank, frogs croaked deafeningly, and ditches filled with muddy water for unwary citizens to tumble into.

'See?' Hearn told Setsuko. 'You thought Tokyo would

look like the pictures Hiroshige painted, but it's only a *jigoku*!'

It was no 'hell' to Setsuko, however, and her happiness was unclouded by her husband's declaration that he would sign only the shortest possible contract.

In one of the outlying districts they looked at a temple-like dwelling in a spacious old garden, and Hearn straightway wanted to rent it. There was a strange atmosphere about the place which delighted him. But it must be haunted by ogres, Setsuko shuddered. She could not endure it! And for months afterward Hearn spoke of the weird old place with dreamy regret.

The house they finally rented was in the district of Ushigome, almost at the end of Tokyo and one hour by jinrikisha from the university. It was a ten-room native house the carpenters were only then completing, and it was Setsuko's considered choice. To Hearn it was a bald, utilitarian structure with no delicacies, no chromatic contrasts, no surprises of any kind. The garden was small enough to be dismissed as no garden at all. But he conceded there were compensations. The house stood on a high hill affording a pleasant view, and there was a large field in the rear where Kazuo could play. Beyond the field an ancient Buddhist temple stood in a dense woods on a higher slope.

After they had moved into the house, Hearn and Setsuko walked across the field to the Kobudera hill, where a gentle old priest named Tatara showed them around the temple and its extensive, ragged grounds. The property embraced a garden, a graveyard, and many acres of open meadow besides the forest of huge old pines and tangled undergrowth. The old priest urged Hearn to visit the temple and its grounds whenever the gate was open, and thereafter they often walked over in the evenings. Before long Hearn was spending so much time at Kobudera that his household knew where to look for him if he could not be found in his study or the garden.

Upon reporting to the university, he found another ancient

Buddhist temple on the campus, but this one was locked and deserted. There was a beautiful lake in the campus garden, and imposing architectural relics of feudalism surrounded one huge modern building whose pinnacles and gables were surmounted by crosses. Doctor Toyama turned out to be 'a man of the world,' but very friendly and considerate. 'He seems to understand me very well,' Hearn wrote to Nishida; and he made no protest when he was asked to sign a three-year contract.

There had been a slight shift in assignments and he was now to give all of his time to English literature. His courses were very poorly planned, but he was allowed complete freedom in rearranging his classes and selecting the material to be studied.

Among his students were boys he had taught in Matsue and Kumamoto, and he glowed with pleasure as they gathered around him in happy welcome. Otani, who had delivered the middle-school pupils' farewell address, was entering the Literature College under a cruel financial handicap, and by paying him to collect and translate material for his researches Hearn insured his bed and food for his entire three-year university course. Ochiai, who had been writing him for advice and encouragement ever since he left Izumo, was studying medicine; but he too enrolled for further instruction under his former teacher. Tanabe, another Matsue favourite, was likewise enrolled in one of his classes; and these loyal admirers wrote down verbatim every lecture they attended. Later other ambitious students took up this self-appointed task, and since Hearn's phenomenal memory allowed him to lecture from the barest skeleton notes their devoted labours furnished the only record of his teachings. Keeping in mind his foreign tongue, he spoke slowly and distinctly; and he carefully gave each punctuation mark and spelled out any unfamiliar name or exceptionally difficult word. Although he never taught over twelve hours a week, such conscientious delivery would have grown unbearably tedious had he not possessed the instinctive patience of a natural instructor.

As a minority group among the native teachers, the foreign professors kept somewhat together; and at first Hearn spent his free time on the campus with them. There was the professor of French Literature, a Jesuit from Lyons; the American professor of Law, enormously self-sufficient but with a rough goodness about him; the Russian professor of Philosophy, soft and cold — almost snowy — from Heidelberg; the German professor of Sanscrit and Philology, from Leipzig; and the professor of English Literature, 'from the devil knows where.'

As a Spencerian enthusiast Hearn stood alone among his associates; but all the foreign teachers had one vital common bond. Politics and anti-foreign sentiment left them 'reposing upon the safety valves of a steam-boiler — much cracked, with many of the rivets loose, — and the engineers studying how to be out of the way when the great whang-bang comes around.' In the interim they were drawing large salaries and preparing for the possible disaster ahead.

Hearn sensed this tension hanging over the entire foreign element in the capital. Everyone seemed to be afraid of everyone else, and afraid to discuss anything but irrelevant matters. Foreigners huddled together at parties and public gatherings and talked loudly about nothing at all — like people trying to drive ghosts away. If someone accidentally made a factual observation there was an instantaneous scattering, as if dynamite had gone off.

'This is panic, pure and simple,' Hearn wrote to Ellwood Hendrick. 'But there is some reason for it — considering the class of minds. We are all in Japan living over earthquakes. Nothing is stable. All Japanese officialdom is perpetually in flux, — nothing but the throne is even temporarily fixed; and the direction of the currents depends much upon force of intrigue. They shift, like currents in the sea, off a coast of tides. But the side currents penetrate everywhere, and *clapotent* all comers, and swirl round the writing-stool of the smallest clerk, — whose pen trembles with continual fear for his wife's and babies' rice. . . In the Orient intrigue has been

cultivated as an art for ages, and it has been cultivated as an art in every country, no doubt. But the result of the adoption of constitutional government by a race accustomed to autocracy and caste enabled intrigue to spread like a ferment, in new forms, through every condition of society, — and almost into every household. It has become an infinite net — unbreakable, because as elastic as air, though strong enough to upset ministers as readily as to oust clerks.'

And Hearn? Well — he was a flea in a washbowl, and his safest course was to lie quietly and await the coming of events!

On the campus the first big event was a December visit by the Emperor. And it resulted in nothing more than Hearn losing a skirmish with his wife.

As soon as he had arrived in Tokyo, he had bought a Prince Albert coat to please Setsuko. Because he was now a university professor. But he had done it against his better judgment and with no intention of ever wearing it. He had even told Doctor Toyama of his dislike for formal dress before signing his contract, and Doctor Toyama had agreed that he need not appear on occasions when formal attire was mandatory. Frock coats and swallowtail coats and silk hats and plug hats were barbarous, he had instructed Setsuko while he was being measured for his coat. A Prince Albert coat would never do! He was having it made. Yes. But he would never wear it. Never!

But when Setsuko heard that the Emperor was to visit the Imperial University, she grew firm. She was very sorry to do this thing; but it had to be. Consequently the little one-eyed professor of English Literature donned a frock coat 'and a thing which inspired the Mohammedan curse "May God put a *Hat* on you!" ' and stood with his colleagues in sleet and snow to bow twice before His Majesty. He saw only the Emperor's feet and heard his deep, commanding voice; and since overcoats were forbidden, he and everyone else got chilled to the marrow.

After the ceremony he bounced and slithered back home

in his jinrikisha, his high hat alternately tumbling down over his eyes and sliding off the back of his head; and as soon as he got into the house, he again went over the matter with Setsuko. Frock coats and silk hats were not beautiful! Why should he be obliged to catch pneumonia merely for the privilege of bowing before His Majesty? There was a reason for all things, but there was *no* reason for a plug hat!

Setsuko hurried him into his comfortable native clothes and tried to hush him. If a robber were on the roof and heard him, even so bad a man as that would be angry!

Hearn learned to smile over his horror of formal dress, but he wore his frock coat no more than three times, and then only after making difficulties. The sleet which marked its first appearance was unusual for Tokyo, the winters being generally damp but only mildly cold. This year the heavy autumn rains continued far into the winter and many sections of Tokyo were seas of mud with the ditches awaiting the water-pipes yawning ever more menacingly. But Hearn's uncomfortable distance from the university had its advantage. Doctor Toyama was the only man on the campus he cared for as a personal friend, and the others would not bother him by calling until the two and one-half miles between Ushigome and the campus were more passable.

During the opening weeks of the school term he had attended one or two small dinners and a few social gatherings. And later on, during these years, some visiting author might lure him to the Tokyo Club, where on one occasion he held his private audience breathless for three hours and inspired the tribute: 'He talked in beauty as easily as the bird sings. His speech was cloth-of-gold, brocade, the blue of tropical skies.' But such excursions into the outer world were to grow increasingly rare, for not only his temperament and writing but now also the preparation of his university lectures made seclusion desirable. To the best of his ability he must present the whole picture and the substance of English literature to young men who listened with Oriental ears and Oriental minds, and to concentrate on that responsi-

bility he must be free from petty intrusions and annoyances.

Setsuko gave birth to her second son — dark, almond-eyed Iwao — during the last weeks of 1896; and Hearn had little peace of mind until the physician pronounced her fully recovered from her accouchement. Hereafter her health was doubly precious, something to be protected and held in trust for the children. 'No matter what happens, you must always take care of your health, Mama-San. You don't belong to yourself any more. You belong to the children. They'll need you for many, many years!'

The expanding interests of his home life cushioned Hearn from loneliness; and the peaceful quiet of Kobudera's mossy old graveyard and dense, primitive woods was to solace his dislike for Tokyo. But at times long letters to Ellwood Hendrick could not quench a yearning for more immediate Western companionship. Professor Chamberlain was now back in Tokyo and would have been an ideal answer to his need; but now he, too, had joined the circle of disinherited friends. For six years their correspondence had served Hearn as an intellectual outlet, such as his letters to Henry Krehbiel had been in earlier years. But something had happened, and though Chamberlain made two or three attempts to effect a reconciliation, he had been met by cold politeness and then silence.

Without naming the cause of their estrangement, Chamberlain later wrote of Hearn's broken friendships: 'Lafcadio's dropping of his friends seemed to me to have its roots in that very quality which made the chief charm of his works. I mean his idealism. Friends, when he first made them, were for him more than mere mortal men, they stood endowed with every perfection. . . . But he was not emotional merely; another side of his mind had the keen insight of a man of science. Thus he soon came to see that his idols had clay feet, and — being so purely subjective in his judgments — he was indignant with them for having, as he thought, deceived him. Add to this that the rigid character of his philo-

sophical opinions made him perforce despise, as intellectual weaklings, all those who did not share them, or shared them only in a lukewarm manner, — and his disillusionment with a series of friends in whom he had once thought to find intellectual sympathy is seen to have been inevitable. . . . Thus it was hardly possible for him to retain old ties of friendship except with a few men whom he met on the plane of everyday life apart from the higher intellectual interests. Lafcadio himself was a greater sufferer from all this than anyone else; for he possessed the affectionate disposition of a child, and suffered poignantly when sympathy was withdrawn, or — what amounted to the same — when he himself withdrew it. He was much to be pitied — always wishing to love, and discovering each time that his love had been misplaced.'

This equalled Henry Alden's magnanimity. But it should be added that Hearn did not always find his affections 'misplaced.' While many of the ties with his earlier years were now gone, not all of them had been deliberately broken. The erosion of time and distance and the negligence of others in writing had likewise played their inevitable rôle. Death, too, had intervened; and now it intervened again.

Early in 1897 one of Nishida's friends called at Ushigome, bringing a crackled porcelain tea-set and the good news that Nishida was recovering from his latest attack of illness. The man reminded Hearn of another Izumo man he had met six years ago, and he wrote back to Nishida: 'I can't just now remember when — at Matsue — a man came into the classroom to watch my teaching. He came from some little island. I have quite forgotten the name. He looked a little like Mr. Takahashi; — but there was something different in his face, — a little sad, perhaps. When the class was over, he came to me and said something very good and kind, and pressed my hand and went away to his island. It is a queer thing that experiences of this kind are often among the most vivid of one's life — though they are so short. I have often dreamed of that man. Often and often. And the dream is always the same. He is the director of a beautiful little

school in a very large garden, surrounded by high white walls. I go into that garden by an iron gate. It is always summer. I teach for that man; and everything is gentle and earnest and pleasant and beautiful, just as it used to be in Matsue — and he always repeats the nice things he said long ago. If I can ever find that school, with the white walls and the iron gate, — I shall want to teach there, even if the salary be only the nice things said at the end of the class. But I fear the school is made of mist, and that teacher and pupils are only ghosts. Or perhaps it is in *Hōrai*.'

This is the end of Hearn's recorded correspondence with Nishida, and it may well have been the last letter he wrote him, for shortly afterward he received word that his most loved Japanese friend was dead. Nishida had wakened one night, called out, 'Mother, have you heard from my friend? Is his son well?' and dropped off into his last sleep.

During these same months one of Setsuko's schoolmates died — 'all embroidery and soul' — and Hearn wrote of these bereavements to Ellwood Hendrick:

'Imagine beings who never, in their lives, did anything which was not — I will not say "right," that is commonplace — any single thing which was not *beautiful!* Should I write this the world would, of course, call me a liar, as it has become accustomed to do. But I could not now even write of them except to you — the wounds are raw.

'I am thinking about the Velvet Souls in general, and all ever known by me in particular. Almost in every place where I lived long, it was given me to meet a velvet soul or two — presences (male or female mattered nothing) which with a word or look wrapped all your being round in a softness and warmth of emotional caress inexpressible. "Velvet" isn't a good word. The effect is more like the bath of tropical light and warmth to the body of a sick voyager from lands of consumption and rheumatism. . . . I have found such souls also in Japan — but only Japanese souls. But they are melting into the night.'

It was so difficult to remember Nishida was gone that one

day he hurried excitedly down a Tokyo street upon glimpsing a man who resembled him.

When summer came, he had no desire to go back to Izumo for his holiday; and the jolly Tamura, now teaching on the coast southwest of Tokyo, persuaded him to look for a good vacationing spot in that vicinity. So Hearn, Setsuko, their two sons, and a nurse set off in jinrikishas, the *kurumaya* in gleaming white coats and trousers and Kazuo safely ensconced in his father's lap.

There were too many foreigners and modern Japanese in the southern resorts, and Hearn finally chose the primitive little fishing-village of Yaidzu. Its beach was covered with pebbles, but the water was clear and cool and the waves rolled strong against the terraced breakwater. After an unpleasant incident at the inn, Tamura found them quarters with Yamaguchi Otokichi, the village fishmonger; and all was well.

Otokichi was a thin man burned black by sun and wind, and his long creased face was pulled upward by comically slanting eyebrows. He and his family lived in rooms behind his fish shop, and the upper four rooms, which Hearn rented, were almost as odorous as the shop itself. Also, there were fleas and mosquitoes with which to contend in the low-ceilinged rooms. But Otokichi was an honest, friendly man; his wife cooked plain, wholesome food for their summer guests; and the children played nicely with Kazuo. A large window overlooking the sea extended nearly the length of the long upstairs sitting-room.

Hearn laid aside his pen and Western clothes and for the next few weeks he relaxed completely. He took long walks into the countryside, basked in the sun, and swam far out from shore to the quieter waters of the bay. The Japanese used only their arms in swimming and kept their heads down, and when the fishermen saw Hearn tirelessly churning through the water, head up and using both arms and legs, all fifteen hundred of them solemnly agreed *Sensei-Sama* was surely born from the sea. They marvelled the more when he

laid himself on the water and most comfortably floated.' His three-and-one-half-year-old son likewise watched with respectful admiration; but he still remembered the previous summer and would not let his father come near in the water. This year it was the cheerful, kindly Otokichi who watched over his happy splashings.

The parents of one of Hearn's most promising university students, a young cadet named Fujisaki, were the leading citizens of Yaidzu; and frequently Fujisaki called on Hearn in the evenings or sat with him in the breezy sunshine on the breakwater. Far to the east Fujiyama loomed dimly in the sky, and before the Hearns went back to Tokyo teacher and student had arranged a little holiday of their own — a climb to Fuji's summit before the opening of school.

The prospect of this mild adventure made Hearn's return to Tokyo a little less repugnant, but he so disliked the capital that he felt its very atmosphere was affecting his writing. It would be far better, he told Setsuko, to move to the country and have more peace of mind even with a greatly reduced salary. See how happy they'd been in Yaidzu! But Setsuko, from the depths of her wifely wisdom, replied that he would have no peace of mind until he was a Buddha. If he would only be patient a few more years, they would be financially independent and could live wherever they liked. Mama-San was right, he ruefully conceded, but with earthquakes shaking the capital, he *still* wished he was anywhere at all but where he was!

To scale Fujiyama and return required two days, and Setsuko and her two little sons waited in an inn at the foot of the mountain while her husband and his young friend ascended into the clouds. They covered the lower slopes on horseback, and when they dismounted, Hearn bought the conventional pilgrim's garb — a tall staff, straw cape, and huge mushroom hat which converted him into a big-nosed, crooked-eyed little ogre. The climb itself was monotonous hard work; but, as a result of his Yaidzu swimming, he made the strenuous ascent with little more trouble than the

broad-shouldered Fujisaki experienced, and the view from the top was well worth his effort. He came back down with a little roll of sacred papers, a few pieces of lava, and a sheaf of notes in his pocket. Before the inn his wife was waiting to welcome him, Iwao on one arm and Kazuo clinging to her hand. The little group laughed merrily upon seeing him in his pilgrim's cape and hat, and though Kazuo was disappointed that no toys came out of his pocket, he told himself the staff would surely be his as soon as they got back home.

This year there was less work ahead of Hearn when the university reopened, for his classes were well organized and his courses mapped out. Three hours a week he lectured on the history of English literature, five hours a week were given to poetry and textual readings, and miscellaneous themes and individual writers were dealt with during the remaining four hours. After exchanging greetings with his class, he would lay a list of names and dates on the desk before him, unwrap a bundle of books from their purple *furoshiki*, and begin his lecture. His face tilted down sideways over the desk whenever he read; and if a verse structure was irregular, he would go to the blackboard and diagram the line arrangement. Often, too, he would draw an illustration on the board if some foreign object or scene did not lend itself readily to verbal description. And when his sketch was particularly effective, a faint, shy smile would flit across his face as he went back to his desk. Otherwise his lecture went on without interruption, the sentences flowing from his lips 'like the music of running water.' Sometimes his raptly attentive listeners seemed 'actually leaning out from the bar of Heaven beside the Blessed Damozel.'

He suspected he had been given this post to free him from financial worries while he worked on his Japanese writings. But he did not realize that the psycho-intellectual translation he employed in preparing his lectures was making him more sensitive to the Oriental point of view. Sometimes it amounted to a virtual adoption of Eastern characteristics and thought-processes. Houghton, Mifflin and Company

now published his 'Gleanings in Buddha-Fields,' and some of the critics spoke of his 'mental metamorphosis.'

More than any of his preceding books, the 'Gleanings' impressed reviewers with the highly individualized charm of his writings. But as the notices began pouring in he was too engrossed in his next book to give them more than passing attention. 'Exotics and Retrospectives' was nearing completion, and he had expended more effort on it than on any previous offering. 'Retrospectives' appeared in the title because part of the material had been drawn from his West Indian reminiscences; and the first paper of the book was an impressionistic account of his Fujiyama climb. In its essays he was demonstrating a cherished theory, the analogy between evolutional psychology and 'certain teachings of Eastern faith,' by balancing Buddhist doctrines on preexistence with the fear of darkness, the sensations of dreams, and the mystery of music. In terms of both Eastern and Western thought he was discussing the thrill of a touch, the pain created by certain shades of red, and the pleasure occasioned by blue; and while establishing a relationship between beauty and inherited memory, he was uncovering explanations for the sadness beauty evokes.

Some of the English critics were regretting the Buddhist mysticism 'wherein we have lost our poet,' but letters from readers asking for 'more of those touchingly beautiful Japanese tales' forestalled that threatening possibility. Through the magic of his story-telling he was giving a measure of immortality to the old-world charm so rapidly fading from the current scene. But it was difficult to find the sort of plots he wanted, and after rewriting a story seven or eight times he would frequently put it away for a year or so until a companion-piece presented itself. He was also reviving and crystallizing ancient, half-forgotten legends, and through Setsuko's diligent searchings in old bookshops his library eventually contained some four hundred volumes of old myths and ghost stories.

Although he remained on friendly terms with his teaching

colleagues, he was now drawing his seclusion more closely about him even on the campus. When the weather permitted, he spent his leisure time in the university garden, strolling or resting by the lake. Neither instructors nor students felt free to disturb his meditations there.

In Kumamoto, circumstances had forced seclusion upon him; and ill health had encouraged it in Kobe. Everywhere but in Matsue foreignism was another determining agent. But now he was deliberately seeking a cloistered life, and the greater peace it gave him was being reflected in his writings. One passage in the 'Gleanings,' however, bespoke a spiritual unrest no slackening of emotional turmoil could quiet.

'I have souls wanting to soar in air, and souls wanting to swim in water (sea-water, I think), and souls wanting to live in woods or on mountain tops. I have souls longing for the tumult of great cities, and souls longing to dwell in tropical solitude; — souls, also, in various stages of naked savagery; — souls demanding nomad freedom without tribute; — souls conservative, delicate, loyal to empire and to feudal tradition, and souls that are Nihilists, deserving Siberia; — sleepless souls, hating inaction, and hermit souls, dwelling in such meditative isolation that only at intervals of years can I feel them moving about; — souls that have faith in fetishes; — polytheistic souls; — souls proclaiming Islam; — and souls mediaeval, loving cloister-shadow and incense and glimmer of tapers and the awful altitude of Gothic glooms. . . . Generations of generations I am, aeons of aeons! Countless times the concourse now making me has been scattered, and mixed with other scatterings. Of what concern, then, the next disintegration? Perhaps, after trillions of ages of burning in different dynasties of suns, the very best of me may come together again.'

CHAPTER 28

In November of 1897, Paymaster Mitchell McDonald navigated the muddy streets of Tokyo to the big house on the bluff in Ushigome. Promoted to the rank of captain and restationed at Yokohama for the next three years, he had come up to the capital at the first opportunity. He noticed more grey at Hearn's temples and in his mustache, and the soft folds of his kimono suggested a stockier figure, getting round-shouldered. But he was not aging as rapidly as his letters had said, and he was still quick and agile.

The naval officer's girth had undeniably expanded; but he was the same handsome man of seven years earlier, and to Hearn only bigger and stronger than ever. After he was proudly introduced to Hearn's family (and the children as proudly displayed), he was taken to the study and seated in the chair by Hearn's desk — the only chair in the house. His portly anatomy was not adaptable to comfort on a floor-cushion, but next time he came, Hearn promised there'd be a *rocking-chair* installed in the study for his private use!

Thus began a prolonged invasion of Hearn's seclusion which he joyfully welcomed and spasmodically fought against. There were innumerable letters and weekend visits between Tokyo and Yokohama, and in warm weather gay excursions to near-by seaside resorts. If Hearn wrote McDonald in a state of depression, a telegram of sympathy and encouragement came back the next day. If he mentioned not feeling well, the naval officer asked him to wire at once if he got worse. And when McDonald had trouble with his back, it took both a letter and a wire to convince his little one-eyed friend that there was no need for alarm. Hearn now had an Ellwood Hendrick on both sides of the world, and he responded to Captain McDonald as though sensing this was the last intimate friendship he would form.

During the New Year holidays he spent three days in Yokohama, 'the most pleasurable pilgrimage of forty-seven years.' There were excellent meals in the foreign clubs and the Grand Hotel, with talk lasting far into the night and cigars and select liquors in attendance. McDonald included Amenomori at one of these dinners, and another time he invited Doctor C. H. Hall, an American naval surgeon who won the honour-guest's unqualified approval. The weekend orgy also included a trek to Omori; and before McDonald took his guest to the Tokyo train, he tucked a few bottles of fine wine into his bag. These supplied reminiscent sipping for a number of weeks; but it was over the first bottle that Hearn weighed the effects of this unusual foray into worldly living.

McDonald wanted to pull him out of his shell as often as possible, and he could not deny he liked being out of it. On the whole, he felt toned up, full of energy and ambition; and that much of it was good. It helped to offset the morbidity of his complete lack of self-confidence. But McDonald's high opinion of his literary ability might give him too good an opinion of himself, and no writer could afford that! (What, for instance, could you do with a man who compared you with Loti? How could you keep from eternally disap-

pointing him if you couldn't make him accept you as a tenth-rate author until the literary world had duly fixed your humble place?) The great danger, though, was that such excursions outside his own realm would result in a thumping good case of the blue devils. After seeing such men as McDonald and Doctor Hall, he was beset by a foolish wish to get back to the world which had produced them. Back to America. And he couldn't afford that feeling very often. He had too many little butterfly lives to love and take care of. So — back to work!

While he was finishing the last paper for 'Exotics and Retrospectives,' he received a bulging envelope from Houghton, Mifflin and Company. He was now sufficiently known to be attracting the attention of literary gossip-writers, and they were finding their curiosity well rewarded. His idiosyncrasies made good copy, and now and then a tantalizing new anecdote of his American years reached New York. In the newsmongers' published squibs innuendo skilfully fell short of libel where such a precaution was indicated, and as yet their gossip had not reached an objectionable stage. But after watching this unsought publicity for some time, Houghton Mifflin had finally written out an official biographical sketch, thinking to dignify the growing interest in Hearn's personality. This they had now sent on to him to reject or correct as he saw fit, but saying they would be glad to have it published with his approval. They had enclosed a few newspaper clippings to show the drift of comment.

After glancing through the letter, Hearn read the news clippings with rising irritation. But before he had finished the eighteen or twenty pages of the proposed biographical sketch, he was beside himself. It was nothing more than a beastly, uncalled-for violation of privacy — an exposé of his personal weaknesses and eccentricities!

Remarkably enough, he restrained himself from writing his publishers a furious letter, and for two seething days he deferred action. Then in a sudden flare of righteous vengeance he 'corrected' Houghton Mifflin's copy as thoroughly as copy

was ever corrected, and for a few fine seconds the fire in his study stove blazed higher.

'Take no further action until you confer with me,' Captain McDonald wrote back from Yokohama when Hearn told him what he had done; and the conference was duly held. As a result, Houghton, Mifflin and Company were cast into the discard, and another Boston firm, Little, Brown and Company, bought out 'Exotics and Retrospectives.'

Taking a deep interest in his friend's financial welfare, which was to culminate in his appointment as literary executor after Hearn's death, the naval officer now began studying the esoterics of an author's share in the sale of his books. And while he investigated the royalties paid by American and English publishers, he sent Hearn the prospectus of a business enterprise he himself was joining and asked if he would like to invest in it.

Hearn's 'Hard Times' adventure came back to him so forcefully that he cancelled a weekend visit to Yokohama, delayed answering McDonald's letter, and lapsed into stygian gloom.

When a wire urged him to make an immediate decision, he wrote back: 'The mere idea of business is a horror, a nightmare, a torture unspeakable. The moment I think about business, I wish that I had never been born. I can assure you truthfully that I would rather burn a five-hundred-dollar bill than invest it, — because, having burned it, I could forget all about it, and trust myself to the mercy of the gods. Even if I had Jay Gould behind me, to pull me up every time I fell, I should not have anything to do with business. Even to have to write you this letter makes me wish that all business in the world could be instantly destroyed.'

Instead of the expected rebuke, McDonald's reply was only 'the kindest of kind letters,' and Hearn was further impressed by the paymaster's business sagacity. *He* could do things! — 'Well, I should like you to be as rich as you could be made rich, without having to worry. But as for *me!* — the greatest favour you can ever do me is to take off my hands even the business I have — contracts, and the like, — so that I need

never again remember them. Besides, if I were dead, you are the one I should want to be profiting by my labours. Then every time you set your jaw square, and made them "fork over," my ghost would squeak and chipper for delight.'

In February he read of the battleship *Maine* being blown up at Havana, and he cringed upon remembering McDonald had once served on the *Maine*. As American naval forces began gathering in the Pacific and Captain McDonald's name frequently appeared in the Tokyo papers, his anxiety almost outstripped the news. If his naval friend had to get killed for his country, he would like to be in the conning tower at the same time! Dying was probably a very good thing indeed, and as much to be desired for oneself as dreaded for one's friends. Of course with so many dependents, he himself could not afford to be killed; but the very fact that he wouldn't mind would likely be adequate protection.

In March, during his spring vacation, he went down to Yokohama, wishing to be with McDonald all he could in these uncertain months. As usual a little round of festivities had been arranged for his pleasure. When it was time to leave, the weather turned bitingly cold and he huddled back in a corner of the carriage as they started for the station. When McDonald saw him shivering, he took off his own coat and wrapped it around him, but not without Hearn's violent protests. What would he do if McDonald caught pneumonia and died? Big men succumbed to illness very quickly!

The next morning, in Tokyo, he looked up at Elizabeth Bisland's picture hanging from the ceiling and fervently thanked her for having written the note which eight years ago led him to Mitchell McDonald.

As the Spanish-American War gained momentum, he was inclined to be sanguine over its outcome. Manila wouldn't be a mouthful if the American Navy was ordered to gobble it, and perhaps this quarrel would stir the American people to build a good-sized navy in short order. With so much coastline to defend, they were placed at a big disadvantage with most European powers. But he still worried over the pos-

sibility that McDonald would be ordered into combat. And he was also anxious about Setsuko. Her health had always been excellent, but now her strength was 'ebbing away,' although the doctors could find nothing particularly wrong. To add to his troubles, the spring of 1898 was disagreeably cold, and he was unable to write one single inspired line.

Some time ago he had worked out a theory concerning sensations which he believed was a new key to their explanation. He had started writing down fragmentary memories to prove his point, hoping it would result in a book called 'Thoughts about Feelings'; but now he had come up against a stone wall. The material had to be drawn from his own experience, and looking back over his life he could remember nothing agreeable but a few experiences in New Orleans and his two years in the West Indies. A few studies of his earliest memories were already finished and laid away, but except for flashes of pain or terror the past was almost a blank. To base a work on uniformly dark and unhappy memories would prove nothing but that he had had an unfortunate life! The two little chapters now completed might be all he'd ever get written.

Had he been able to complete the proposed book, it would have been a unique piece of psychological autobiography; but his pessimism, unfortunately, was not unwarranted. Now he put the project aside, along with the idea of a book of short stories, and started a new volume to be called 'In Ghostly Japan.' And as he worked, the clouds began to lift.

By June, Setsuko was strong again; there was no longer any danger that McDonald would be ordered to the war zone; the proofs of 'Exotics and Retrospectives' were coming in from Boston; and six essays and sketches were completed for the new book. Hearn felt his entire household needed relaxation this year, and Tamura again helped plan their joint holiday. This time they chose Kugenuma, a fashionable seaside resort too crowded with modernized Japanese to please Hearn, but near enough for his people to get back and forth without trouble.

A student was again part of his household, an indispensable part in Tokyo, for petty crime was rampant, and along with their other duties the students acted as private policemen. After Hearn, Setsuko, and the children had been at the shore for a time, the student brought the grandparents to join them; and when the other servants in turn had had a brief holiday, O-Yone, the kitchenmaid, came down for the last few days.

O-Yone was 'a strange and unfortunate woman,' who had gone with the Hearns from Matsue to Kumamoto, loyally bent on consoling her mistress as they ventured forth into the unknown world, but clinging to her, instead, in bewildered fright. Since then she had married three times, lost two husbands and all seven of her children through death, and was now back in the household, resigned to her sorrows and living in a harmless twilight of mental derangement. Although she was reasonably helpful about the kitchen, few people but Hearn would have given her shelter, for she was not only 'queer' but preternaturally ugly. Somewhere not far enough back in her ancestry barbarian blood had crept into her Izumo veins, moulding her features to awaken the interest of an anthropologist. Her lips were thick, her nose flat, and her small eyes were set in high, deep sockets under a strangely protruding forehead. Sometimes Hearn would look at her intently and mutter to Setsuko: 'What a *peculiar* skull-owner!'

Thinking four-and-one-half-year-old Kazuo should do more than splash peacefully at the edge of the water, Hearn tried to teach him to swim at Kugenuma. But again he was too impatient and abrupt, forgetting his lesson at Mionoseki; and whenever he proposed to take his elder son into the water, the child fled screaming to Tamura. Hoisting him up on his shoulder, Tamura would gallop off down the beach, singing at the top of his voice while Hearn shook his head in dismay. He was seriously disturbed over Kazuo's fear of the water, and a little ashamed. Iwao was not yet two, but he was so exuberantly unafraid that he must constantly be watched lest he drown himself in delight. With one son too fearful of the

water and the other not fearful enough, he could see work ahead of him through the coming summers. But then — have children and discover new Americas!

His parents-in-law were now feeble enough to cause him added concern when bathing; but O-Yone gave him more anxiety in the water than the rest of his household combined. Although she could not swim, she one day escaped restraining hands and walked straight ahead toward deep water. When Hearn reached her, she mumbled, 'The sea is very interesting, *Sensei!*' and tore loose from his grasp to flounder on. The water was up to her neck before he succeeded in stopping her, and he was so weak from fright he barely had strength to force her back to the shore. As Setsuko led her away, the panting, trembling life-saver sat down on the sand with his menfolk solicitously gathered around him. When he was able to speak, he looked up and grinned ruefully: 'I almost committed a lovers' double-suicide with that foolish woman!'

It was a vast relief to get his household safely home again; and in celebration he went on a brief outing with McDonald and Amenomori. This time he returned with delightful memories — 'little dreams of gold' — to brighten the dark, work-filled days of the coming winter.

As a professor of the Imperial University, he received scores of invitations which would have been obligatory for anyone but the recognized recluse of the campus. And the majority of literary travellers asked for his address as soon as they arrived in Tokyo. But since he had never allowed a telephone to be installed in the house, most of these distractions fell harmlessly in his wastebasket. On days when there was 'danger of callers,' he slipped out through the garden and went up to Kobudera to visit with Tatara or roam about the temple grounds until dusk. To avoid being seen when he entered or left the house, he was now using the back entrance.

Wanting to finish 'In Ghostly Japan' by the end of the year, he even discouraged McDonald's blandishments. — Yes, a day or so at the Grand Hotel was good for him now and

then; but because his good naval friend was the Angel of the Lord, he would have him enter, like Daniel, into the lions' den of society with its conventions and obligations and time wasted on forms and vanities! Well, he'd probably weaken and come down before long, but he couldn't say just when.

In October there were examinations at the university, and 'Ghostly Japan' was in the trying, crucial stage of being rounded off. It might take a month to finish it, and it might take four. While he was tense with work, McDonald made another effort to get him down to Yokohama. Or would Hearn like him to run up to Tokyo? Surely he could afford a little relaxation by now!

Hearn's patience broke, and he took his pen in hand. 'I am going to ask you simply *not* to come and see your friend, and *not* to ask him to come and see you, *for at least three months more*. I know this seems horrid — but such are the only conditions upon which literary work is possible, when combined with the duties of a professor of literature. I don't want to see, or hear, or feel anything outside of my work till the book is done, — and I therefore have the impudent assurance to ask you to help me stand by my wheel. Of course it would be pleasant to do otherwise; but I can't even think of pleasant things and do decent work at the same time. Please think of a helmsman, offshore, and the ship in rough weather, with breakers in sight. Hate to send you this letter — but I think you will sympathize with me in spite of it.'

He told Setsuko what he had written, and she begged him to wait a day or so before sending the letter, saying he was turning into a savage. But he called a servant to mail it immediately and then went back to his desk, not sure whether he felt relieved or alarmed.

When Mitchell McDonald read the letter, he shook his head and smiled. — Poor Hearn!

Three months? he wrote back. Must he stay in hiding that long? He was like a little crab, backing deeper and deeper into his hole whenever anyone tried to dig him out! But of course he wouldn't disturb him until the book was done.

He understood perfectly. And he wouldn't even write again, if letters distracted him.

To the contrary, Hearn hastened to answer, McDonald couldn't possibly write too many letters! Yes indeed, he was like a little crab. Only yesterday three enemies had dug at his hole, but he had zigzagged away.

During his period of strict isolation he faithfully maintained communications with Yokohama; and he found time to explain many things to the naval officer. For instance — no one could read proof for an author, for the author had to see that the copy was not *like* the original manuscript, but *different*. It was the finishing touches, the final adjustments which could be added only after a man saw his work in print which made the work uniquely and artistically his own. 'Have you ever found a friend who could fit your hat comfortably on your own head? Of course not. It can't be done.'

He also felt that McDonald, being a bachelor and a naval officer, didn't understand his somewhat critical position. Here it was in a nutshell.

First: civilized society had to oppose certain people in self-defence — in order that any new ideas introduced into accepted thinking would not be the products of weaklings. But the hard fact was that to society talent in itself meant nothing. And society was his natural enemy.

Second, and for obvious reasons, the Church was his enemy. Not any one church, but all denominations supporting missionaries and opposing free thinking.

And third: the English Press and the American Press were against him. Yes, they printed laudatory notices of his books, but that meant little. Publishers generally influenced the tone of the notices because praise increased the sale of books.

Now McDonald might say: 'Who does this little mite think he is? The cynosure of the world?'

Not at all. He was simply pretty much in the position of a man who had once been in prison, or a prostitute who had once been on the street. Such little people weren't important;

but Society, the Press, and the Church kept them in their holes. These institutions worked blindly, like machinery devoted to keeping a surface smooth by flattening out the slightest projection. Diamond or dung made no difference. But if the obstruction proved *too* hard, it was lifted out of the way and left in peace. And that was his own one hope — to create something solid enough to win the ultimate reward of not being crushed.

'In Ghostly Japan' was finished in December, on schedule, and when McDonald suffered a foot injury, Hearn hurried down to Yokohama. He himself was still limping from weeks of trouble with a sprained ankle, and after their three-month separation the two men talked for ten hours without interruption, having their meals brought to the invalid's chair.

Some of the talk centred on the newly completed manuscript and what publisher should be entrusted with it; and McDonald explored all aspects of the question. Hearn followed along earnestly until he became so confused and depressed that he shunted the discussion over to something simpler. He could not decide whether to dedicate the book to Elizabeth Bisland or to Mrs. Alice Behrens, one of McDonald's friends who had given him material for one of the stories. But even this problem was not carried to a definite solution, for after his long confinement Hearn had a hundred more exciting things to talk about. He went back to Tokyo feeling that McDonald grew dearer each time he talked with him, and he ardently wished they could be together for months at a time. But if one had plum pudding every day, there'd be indigestion and no work done!

Two precipitous acts brought the month and the year to a close in the study at Number 21 Tomihisa-cho, Ushigome.

Usually Hearn spent a whole day packing and wrapping a manuscript for its long voyage back to America. But after a day or so of pondering McDonald's ideas and suggestions about marketing 'Ghostly Japan,' he was on the verge of insanity, and no clearer as to which publisher to choose. Dis-

counts, money profits, illustrators, publishers playing into each other's hands —— He even began torturing himself by thinking he should go over the whole manuscript again to give it another polishing.

Good *Lord!!*

The result was a whirlwind of action. Within fifteen minutes the manuscript was packed, wrapped, labelled, addressed in various languages to Little, Brown and Company and started eastward by registered mail — dedicated to Mrs. Behrens, but entrusted largely to the gods. And as he watched a servant dash down the hill with the bundle under his arm, he felt like a man liberated from prison into the perfumed warmth of a perfect spring day.

One more matter was tormenting him; and while he was still in the mood for summary action he also took care of that.

Most of his satisfaction in 'Ghostly Japan' lay in one of its legends, which he had rewritten eight or ten times to achieve the exact effect he wanted. As told to him by Ernest Fenollosa, of Tokyo, the story was called 'A Mountain of Skulls,' and he was sure it would be a very long time before he found another such tale.

Doctor Toyama had introduced Fenollosa to him during the previous spring, writing on his calling card: '. . . I shall be very obliged to you if you will let him know when he may have the privilege of calling on you without becoming an intruder.' And since then Hearn had enjoyed more pleasant hours in the Fenollosa house than in any other foreign house in the capital.

The Spanish-American Fenollosa was highly qualified to furnish him with intellectual companionship, having been a stout advocate of Herbert Spencer during his many years as professor of Philosophy at the Imperial University. Becoming a Buddhist, he had turned from teaching to a study of Oriental art and a crusade to rescue ancient Japanese art works which the revolution had swept aside as rubbish. Various government honours had culminated in his selection as Commissioner of Fine Arts for the Japanese Empire.

But McDonald was supplying Hearn with all the intimate companionship he could afford, and many of the Fenollosas' friendly gestures had for one reason or another failed to come full circle. Recently they had invited him to their home for a New Year's gathering, and this time they had included Kazuo in their invitation. Hearn was deeply grateful for the 'Mountain of Skulls,' but the Fenollosas' kindness in asking him to bring Kazuo to their house made him realize something decisive had to be done about their encroaching friendliness. The letter he now sat down and wrote accomplished this with more grace than might have been expected.

'My Dear Professor, — I have been meditating, and after the meditation I came to the conclusion not to visit your charming new home again — not at least before the year 1900. I suppose that I am a beast and an ape; but I nevertheless hope to make you understand.

'The situation makes me think of Béranger's burthen, — *Vive nos amis les ennemis!* My friends are much more dangerous than my enemies. These latter — with infinite subtlety — spin webs to keep me out of places where I hate to go, — and tell stories of me to people whom it would be vanity and vexation to meet; — and they help me so much by their unconscious aid that I almost love them. They help me to maintain the isolation indispensable to quiet regularity of work, and the solitude which is absolutely essential to thinking upon such subjects as I am now engaged on. Blessed be my enemies, and forever honoured all them that hate me!

'But my friends! — ah! my friends! They speak so beautifully of my work; they *believe* in it; they say they want more of it, — and yet they would destroy it! They do not know what it costs, — and they would break the wings and scatter the feather-dust, even as the child that only wanted to caress the butterfly. And they speak of communion and converse and sympathy and friendship, — all of which are indeed precious things to others, but mortally deadly to me, — representing the breaking-up of habits of industry, and the sin of disobedience to the Holy Ghost, — against whom sin

shall not be forgiven, — either in this life or in the life to come.

'. . . Alas! I can afford friends only on paper, — I can occasionally write, — I can get letters that give me joy; but visiting is out of the possible. I must not even *think* about other people's kind words and kind faces, but work, — work, — work, — while the Scythe is sharpening within vision. . . .

'When a day passes in which I have not written — much is my torment. Enjoyment is not for me, — excepting in the completion of work. But I have not been the loser by my visits to you both — did I not get that wonderful story? And so I have given you more time than any other person or persons in Tokyo. But now — through the seasons — I must again disappear. Perhaps *le jeu ne vaudra pas la chandelle;* nevertheless I have some faith as to ultimate results.

'Faithfully, with every most grateful and kindly sentiment,

'Lafcadio Hearn.'

CHAPTER

29

WITH his affairs now in good order, Hearn returned to Yokohama to spend the 1899 New Year holidays with his incapacitated naval friend. While he was there, McDonald was notified that his period of foreign service had been shortened and he was to return to America at the end of the year. He had twelve more months in Yokohama, but Hearn went back to rainy 'tristful' Tokyo telling himself that life wasn't anything like McDonald and Doctor Hall made it appear. The imperial and sinfully splendid dinners, the whiskey and cigars, the wonderful chats till well past ghost-time, the multitudinous little kindnesses (all observed and stored up) — these had nothing to do with the world of iron facts and granite necessities. They were only part of a happy dream!

Trips between Tokyo and Yokohama now became even more frequent, and McDonald redoubled his efforts to improve Hearn's finances before leaving Japan. He was convinced that more fiction would increase both Hearn's reputa-

tion and his royalties, and Hearn was quite willing to write more stories if he could find the ideas or embryo plots from which to spin them. But they had to be *found:* he could not create them.

McDonald also suggested that his university lectures be collected in book-form; but here Hearn quickly disagreed. He would first have to write out the lectures and then polish and repolish them for publication. And even then what would he have? They were suitable for the Imperial University, but elsewhere their worth would be insignificant. *Scores* of men could do the same work incomparably better!

Scores of men in the future were to feel differently about this, and it is possible that Hearn's modesty robbed him of one of the greatest satisfactions he could have known. For when his lectures were posthumously published, they were hailed as one of the most fascinating estimates of English literature ever presented. In substance they were 'criticism unmatched in English unless we return to the best of Coleridge,' one American authority declared. In England they were pronounced not only the best available English literature books for young people, but essays which would drive mature readers 'straight to the authors of whom he speaks.'

Fundamentally this widely dynamic appeal was born of Hearn's desire to make the knowledge of English literature a moving, personal experience for his swart young men. In establishing a bond between Eastern and Western minds, he chose the spiritual and imaginative interpretation as superior to analytical intellectualism. Whether he discussed prosody, Wycliffe's translation of the Vulgate Bible into Middle English, the successive schools of Elizabethan drama, or Froude's independence of judgment and mastery of pure English, the attention of his listeners was instantly challenged and richly rewarded.

Milton, he told his students, wrote the most perfect sonnets in the English language, but he frankly confessed they would gain little from studying him at that time. But Shakespeare they could not study too much. Nobody could

study Shakespeare too much. His friend Ben Jonson was 'the first of the literary kings,' but in Jonson's plays 'the characters do not arouse your liking: they make you laugh, but not happily: they interest you only as you might be interested by a quarrel in the street between people about whom you do not care.' William Blake's time 'was a period almost without real poetry . . . and in the great bare desert of its literature, Blake blossoms like a strange wild flower of unfamiliar colour and yet more unfamiliar perfume.' And 'when the Satanic School began to speak . . . everybody stopped even trying to read the Lake Poets, and Sir Walter Scott himself was obliged as early as 1814 to stop writing poetry. Byron had begun to sing his cynical and splendid song.'

No, he assured McDonald, it would be folly to publish his lectures. Being able to instruct Japanese students (or even, possibly, Western literary students) did not mean he was a literary critic. Fiction — yes. If only he could find the right plots! But he was definitely no real scholar of English literature, and his lectures weren't worth collecting.

Seeing no other way to increase his income, McDonald now pressed him again to put part of his savings in a reliable investment; and presently Hearn was astonished and delighted to find himself 'a bloated bondholder.' But he was not moved to go down for a stockholders' meeting, telling McDonald to make out a form and he would vote everything he wanted just as he wanted it.

During these same weeks another legal paper arrived for his signature, a new teaching contract with the Imperial University; but this he was not so willing to sign. 'In the three years we've lived here,' he told Setsuko, 'you've seen everything in Tokyo. Now can't we go back to Matsue?' But Setsuko thought it was not yet time for that. They had a large family to provide for, and he was receiving more money than he'd be paid in any other school. Wouldn't it be better to wait a few more years? The stern fact was that it would be better, and after a few days of pointless hesitation, he signed the new contract — this time for four years.

To solace himself he returned to Yaidzu for his holiday this summer; and he was so happy to get back to the primitive little fishing village that he went swimming in the black, phosphorescent waters the night he arrived. Otokichi set a lighted paper-lantern on the beach to guide him back to the smoothest landing-spot and then returned to the shop to help Setsuko with the children.

Next morning, however, Hearn's joy was dimmed when he found the natives of the surrounding countryside were observing a major festival in Yaidzu. Normally he would have welcomed such an event, but McDonald had promised to come down for a few days if he could find him a comfortable room, and alas — there were no such rooms unoccupied! He'd insist that McDonald stay with him at Otokichi's, he wrote back to Yokohama, for Setsuko had brought some flea-powder along. But he was afraid his fastidious friend wouldn't enjoy the fish-odours from the shop below. And the hotel was so filled with modernized devils and liars that he wouldn't think of letting him stay there. He knew a widow, a good old soul with the best of little grandsons, who could give him a room — but, of course, there'd be fleas. And the iceman offered a breezy, cool room; although there'd be fleas there, too. But damn it all! what was a nice clean flea to a man who wasn't afraid of torpedoes and twelve-inch shells? The swimming was glorious, and fleas — multitudes, mountains, and *mountain-ranges* of fleas — were a necessary part of existence anywhere in Japan outside of the Grand Hotel!

'By all the gods! you've *got* to make the acquaintance of some fleas!' he wound up. 'Just think how many unpleasant acquaintances *I* run away from! Yet I have Buddha's patience with fleas. At this moment a beautiful, shining, plump, gathered-up-for-a-jump flea is walking over my hand.'

But his eloquence came to naught. Hastily declining to become acquainted with his fleas, McDonald cancelled the pleasures of Yaidzu swimming from his vacation schedule.

Setsuko was expecting her third child within a few months, and to give her more rest, her parents had been left at home

and Hearn spent much of his time entertaining his sons. He took them on visits to hidden little shrines in the neighbourhood, helped them explore the shoreline for unusual shells and pebbles, built sand-castles for them, and taught them how to catch crabs. Fearless, happy-go-lucky little Iwao was still too daring in the water; but with Otokichi beside him, Kazuo gradually grew braver, and within a few weeks he could swim a short distance.

Hearn could now speak Japanese well enough to assume the rôle of family story-teller, and in the evenings Otokichi's family joined his own in a breathless circle around him. Under the spell of his genius their imperturbability fell away, and they rolled back on the floor in mirth, stifled their sobs, or sat tense and staring as his stories came to life before them. After the children were put to bed, he went down to the bench in front of the fish shop, where a group of natives gathered to talk with *Sensei-Sama*.

Also, he began teaching English to Kazuo this summer. The child was almost six years old and the task of preparing him for schooling abroad had to be started. A certain time each day was set aside for his lesson, and as the reluctant little pupil climbed Otokichi's stairs, he felt he'd rather be thrown into the sea! English twisted his tongue, and was so ugly and hard to pronounce he could hardly make it sound like words at all!

While they remained in Yaidzu he sat on a cushion beside his father and his lessons were comfortably informal. But all this was changed when they returned to Tokyo. The very next day his mother took him to the study and he was taught how to stand — heels together, toes out, chin up, and shoulders straighter than straight. All soldiers stood like that while they were being instructed, his father told him. Then he handed him a large picture-book and began an hour's drill on the alphabet. 'A' for Ass, 'B' for Bear, and so on to the unreachable end. His father opened his mouth to let him see how he moved his tongue, and if Kazuo fidgeted about as he tried to reproduce the sounds, he was

quickly brought back to a more soldierly posture. Later that afternoon, his mother took him back to the study, and he arrived there half-crying, thinking more English lay ahead. But his father only wished to show him the sunset from the study windows, and shame as well as the western glow dyed his young face red.

When an especially magnificent sunset called for the entire family's enjoyment, Setsuko often had trouble finding her sons quickly enough. If the colours had faded by the time she rushed the children into the room, Hearn would lament: 'It's gone now! You're too late. I'm so sorry for you!'

Small Iwao went along for the sunsets because he could not readily avoid it; but he was far too lively to be a true student of Nature, and Hearn summoned his older son when he found anything of interest during his walks in the garden. 'Quick, Kaji! Hurry!' he would call; and Kazuo would leave his play and run to watch a procession of ants, an insect working out of its cocoon, or a toad catching mosquitoes. Frequently, with his personal affairs in mind, he was not overly appreciative of the explanations his father offered as they viewed these phenomena together. But they always ended with a kiss and an apology for interrupting his play. And when his father took him walking in the temple grounds, it was he who spied out exciting things to examine. A cluster of new bamboo-sprouts, a butterfly poised on a flower-petal, a fallen bird-nest, or a dead cicada. Any of these would instantly bring his father's magnifying glass from his girdle, and the young discoverer would feel very fine. There was also the possibility that he would be taken into the temple, and then the kind old priest might pat his head and give him little cakes!

Although in Japan the very young were trained with infinite patience, corporal punishment was not spared when a boy's more serious training began. Iwao received most of the spankings in the Hearn household, while Kazuo was so seldom unruly that someone usually apologized for him when he misbehaved. Nevertheless, he did not escape a painful

transition into early boyhood, for his English lessons became the bane of his childhood and a mild form of uncalled-for torture.

Realizing the lions and tigers were overpowering his pupil's dim interest in the 'L's' and the 'T's,' Hearn discarded the alphabet book after the first two or three lessons and thereafter drew each letter with a brush on a blank sheet of paper. When he started teaching him to write, he had a little slant-topped desk built which came to Kazuo's chest and allowed him to stand without bending his head when he wrote or drew pictures. Bending the head, Hearn believed, increased the strain on the eyes, and when his own eye ached, he often lay down on his bed and held his book above him. Hereafter Kazuo's desk stood beside his own in the study, with McDonald's rocker in its special place across the room.

Teaching one small Kazuo, he quickly discovered, was harder than teaching hundreds of university students; and the harder it was, the more relentlessly time seemed to threaten him. Neither Sundays nor holidays were permitted to interfere with the English lessons, and when Kazuo was slow in applying himself, he urged him on. 'Please hurry, Kaji! Papa-San won't live long enough to teach you everything you should know, so study hard and learn quickly!'

His straining anxiety made him easily exasperated, and when Kazuo repeatedly mispronounced a word, he would correct him in a veritable crescendo of shouts. Since his voice was normally soft and gentle, the child only became more confused and ashamed, and he would answer in barely audible tones. Shaking his shoulder, Hearn would cry out: 'Are you a mosquito or a boy with a big voice when you're playing outside?' He was very surely a boy with a big voice, and a leader among the neighbourhood children; but his courage was gone when his father's blind eye gleamed like a great silver fish-eye while loud, angry words came out from between his crooked, tobacco-stained teeth. No one came to intercede for Kazuo during his tussles with English, and soon he learned

to raise his arm to ward off a stinging slap or a cuff on the ear. Often his tear-stained face had to be washed three or four times during a single lesson, and both he and his father would be exhausted when the day's ordeal was ended.

Hearn was not always so irascible, however, and when Kazuo graduated to textbooks, he was allowed considerable freedom in choosing his daily assignments. At times he was not above taking advantage of this privilege, and when he outwitted his taskmaster, he was usually permitted to enjoy his small triumph. 'My little son is cunning, but he must have a few victories,' Hearn would chuckle as he kissed his cheek. And no matter how stormy the daily session might be, the pupil-teacher relationship remained a thing apart from the growing attachment of son to father. Though Kazuo's Japanese blood and training were an obscure barrier between them, his devotion to his father bore the seed of a secret spiritual response which was to blossom into poignant adoration and flaming loyalty.

To assist in caring for the children there were now two students in the household — tall, thin, *samurai* Niimi who was more respected as tutor and guardian; and fat, good-natured, bushy-haired Aki whom the neighbourhood children preferred when mock battles were being planned and staged in the field behind the house. Aki also came into his own during the marching and singing games after supper, for he could sing all the current war-songs, while Niimi had trouble with his Adam's apple and was usually loudly off key. Hearn learned to sing some of the marching songs, in thin, piping tones and pronouncing each syllable with childlike care. In the midst of some spirited chorus, he would frequently interrupt his tremulous efforts with: 'Niimi, please modulate your voice a bit more. It upsets the harmony.' Whereupon Niimi would subside into a rumbling undertone while Aki's leadership grew even more clarion as the younger members of the household resumed their kimonoed march.

Setsuko's mother was now making many of the children's clothes besides doing all of Hearn's Western cooking, and her

son-in-law glowed with pleasure when even McDonald praised her roasts and steaks. But he was growing anxious about his father-in-law, who was aging rapidly, and he decided the old man needed more exercise. He himself went walking every day, but when he invited his father-in-law to join him, he was often a nuisance — presenting him with a flower he had quickly plucked from a private garden or insisting that *Sensei* was tired and then darting into a tea-house, where he dawdled over his tea and cakes until there was no time left for walking.

Archery seemed the best solution, for the old man's *samurai* training had made him an expert with the powerful Japanese bow. He accordingly set up a target against the temple hill, and the students and *kurumaya* joined him in friendly contests in the late afternoon. He had started teaching Hearn how to shoot in Kumamoto, and he too took up the sport again, poor eye or no. He improved enough to win the old man's praise, although his stance and technique made him shudder. Hearn would look at the target through his little telescope, then jam it back in his girdle, hastily take aim, and release the arrow. It always went straight toward the target, but usually fell short of its goal.

Kazuo's self-appointed task was to race across the field to retrieve the arrows; and he had a minimum of patience with his grandfather's slow and deliberate aim, being eager for his father again to take the bow. This eventually closed down the shooting-range, for one day he sped out too quickly and his grandfather's long, sharp arrow whizzed through his hair while everyone shouted in terror. His scalp, miraculously, was not even scratched; but for several seconds his father held him tight in his trembling arms. His grandfather hid his bow and arrows and would never shoot again.

In the latter part of 1899, Setsuko's third son, Kiyoshi, was born. During the same weeks 'In Ghostly Japan' was published in Boston, and Hearn had his next book almost ready for the publishers. Industry was the keynote of the house on the Ushigome hill, and as December advanced, Hearn viewed

McDonald's imminent departure with frankly confessed mixed feelings. Lately his best-loved friend had been stirring up a whole swarm of annoyances, he told him. Take that damnable pest of a woman in Yokohama, with her silly praise and lies and pestiferous letters! She sometimes made him wish he'd never written a single book or stepped inside the Grand Hotel! If he was to do his best work, he had to live only in his thoughts and the close circle of his private life. He needed solitude and obscurity, not all the horrible disadvantages of being known! Naturally there was a great deal of intellectual and spiritual loneliness in such a life, and in some ways it was like a living death. But he couldn't afford to think of that!

Nonetheless, he did think about it. And he conjured up a paradise wherein Captain McDonald was forever stationed in Yokohama and came up each weekend without expecting his visits to be returned.

Finally the day came when McDonald's voice boomed in the entrance hall for the last time as he arrived laden down with farewell gifts for the entire family. His huge, smartly uniformed figure seemed to fill the whole study as he sat in his rocker and jovially greeted each child brought in to pay his respects while Hearn looked on from his floor-cushion, excited, and happy, and sad. And after he left, his picture and the photograph of Elizabeth Bisland looked down on Hearn as he returned to his cushion and sat thinking and smoking. Cavite, and then across the Pacific to San Francisco. How soon should he take Kazuo on that same voyage to America? Or should he take him to England? Or would he live long enough to take him anywhere except back to Yaidzu when summer came!

In January, the manuscript of 'Shadowings' was sent to Boston. The forepart was given over to six strange little legends, followed by two essays and seven 'fantasies.' Among the fantasies were 'Gothic Horror' and 'Nightmare-Touch,' mystic meditations on the weird sensations of his childhood. One of them, probably 'Nightmare-Touch,' had been origi-

nally written for his proposed 'Thoughts about Feelings,' which he no longer dreamed of finishing.

He was now convinced that his books alone would never provide for his family's future and Kazuo's education, and he was resigned to teaching as long as he was able. But his real work — his holy work — was his writing; and his style was now ready for the idea or plot which would let him do a truly fine piece of work. Sometimes he could feel it gathering and growing at the back of his mind — a portentous trembling, a pervasive longing so powerful that it seemed on the verge of fulfilling itself.

The summer of 1900 was another blessed interlude of Yaidzu sun and sea. Otokichi, as usual, had made him a new pair of sandals to wear down to the water. And when he emerged from his swim, Otokichi was waiting with a towel to dry his back and exclaim over the crimson glow of his skin. Again he spent long, happy hours with his two oldest sons; and when they returned from a walk, his sleeves were heavy with their booty of pebbles and shells.

This year, too, Kazuo did very well with his swimming; for he had heard Captain McDonald say no one should undertake an ocean voyage without being an excellent swimmer. He expected many fine things to happen when he went abroad for his education, and he had no wish to drown on the way! Before leaving Yaidzu, Hearn subjected him to a gruelling test by having him swim beside him far out into the bay, where astonished fishermen welcomed them as apparitions. When they finally reached shore again, the young boy could scarcely move his arms or legs. But his father's praise was like music.

To keep the sea with him, Hearn took some shells back to Tokyo; and when he was tired or his writing went badly, he would pick one up from his desk and 'listen to the waves.' A large conch shell was also a desk ornament, but Setsuko had brought this one back from a pilgrimage to Enoshima and it served a quite different purpose. When blown into, it produced such a raucous, amusing sound that Hearn enjoyed using it as a signal when his *hibachi* needed fresh coals.

Setsuko worried lest its loud '*Poo — WOO!*' would convince the neighbours her husband 'had gone crazy, as was already suspected,' and she tried to keep his *hibachi* well tended. But sometimes he blew on his shell from sheer love of fun, and when she or a maid came rushing in with the urn of glowing charcoal, he would be waiting to bow his empty thanks with elaborate gravity.

He was now going down to Yokohama only when business demanded or he needed another wide-brimmed black felt hat. If he had to remain overnight, he had dinner with Amenomori or the American consul, Bledloe, whom he had met through McDonald. But usually Amenomori came up to Tokyo when the two friends wished to visit; and once the Japanese author had a memorable experience.

Hearn's bed was now made up in his study and left waiting throughout the day in case he cared to rest, and one night Amenomori heard him coughing long past midnight. Thinking he might be ill, Amenomori went to inquire if there was anything he could do. But when he pushed the door open a few inches, Hearn was so lost in his work he failed to notice him. Sheets of finely written manuscript were strewn over his desk, and his pen continued moving across the page beneath his nose. As he lifted his head to dip his pen in the inkwell, the lamp shone full on his face, and Amenomori was stunned by his changed appearance. His features stood out as sharp and white as if chiselled in stone, and all his vitality seemed concentrated in his one dark, bulging eye. For a long moment Amenomori stood where he was, staring at the hunched figure writing on and on in the circle of lamplight. Then he tiptoed back down the hall, feeling as though he had inadvertently blundered into a sanctuary. 'Within that man,' he later wrote, 'there burned something pure as the vestal fire, and in that flame dwelt a mind that called forth life and poetry out of the dust.'

In the early autumn 'Shadowings' reached Japan, dedicated to McDonald with the words: 'My Dear Mitchell, — Herein I have made some attempt to satisfy your wish for "a few

more queer stories from the Japanese." Please accept the book as another token of the writer's affection.'

During the winter Hearn finished 'A Japanese Miscellany,' dedicated to Elizabeth Bisland, while the literary gossips in America were saying he must have disappeared from the earth — sending forth his books from some planet removed from the paths of man. Life was now leaving him in peace to teach and write and search for what he hoped would be his masterpiece. But his muse must not be too reluctant. And Kazuo, 'my Benjamin,' must learn his English quickly. Quickly.

'I can't live many more years,' he would tell Setsuko when she thought he was working too hard. 'There's no time to waste. I have to earn all the money I can!'

If he caught the slightest cold, all the household prayed to the gods while his wife immediately sent for the doctor. But she did not let his premonition of death disturb her, thinking it but another of the strange ideas that came to him in the dream-world where it was his nature to live. He shouldn't say such things, she told him. It only made his family sad. And wouldn't he be especially careful in front of Kazuo? The child was now old enough to grieve when he talked that way. It was all very foolish, and he must forget about it and be happy!

CHAPTER 30

WHEN Hearn's researches embraced scholarly subjects, he turned to such recognized authorities as Amenomori for expert translations. But for less recondite material he continued to engage university students to translate the Japanese texts after Otani graduated. Their efficiency later received high praise from native bilingual authorities, for despite Hearn's superficial knowledge of Japanese (he never learned to read Chinese ideographs), his own high standards of scholarship spurred his young assistants to their best efforts. 'You ought to know, for example,' he had once written to Otani, 'that *Nyorai* means "one whose coming is like that of those who came before him" (a Buddha), and should be translated by the Sanscrit Tathâgata: — that *ryō-nyo* refers to the beautiful story in the Hokkekyo (Saddharma-Pundarika): that the *Kegon-kyō* is the Avatamsaka Sutra for Western scholars: that *sotoba* is from the Sanscrit stûpa: that *namu* may be rendered "Hail to": and a few common facts of that kind.'

But now much of the space in Hearn's books was being given over to a haunting resurrection of weird tales of the supernatural, and in this phase of his work Setsuko was his invaluable assistant. 'My treasures,' he called the volumes of ghost-stories she diligently collected; and at first she read the tales aloud to him. But the interlocutor author stood too much in the way, and he soon discarded that method in favour of hearing her relate the stories in her own words.

Usually she came to him after the children were put to bed, and with the lamp turned appropriately low they sat down on their floor-cushions to consider what she had found. If he liked the plot of her story, she told it to him in detail; and his rapt attention inspired her to outdo herself. When she related some particularly gruesome or unearthly legend, his sharp, sensitive features tightened and paled, and his dark 'cyclops eye' stared ominously. Neither she nor her sons could overcome a slight inner shock when his Western features were animated by strong emotion, and now in the dim light his face frightened her almost as much as her stories did. The quiet house seemed haunted by both seen and unseen ghosts, and when she went to sleep, she frequently had terrifying dreams. If she told him about them he said: 'Such things aren't good for your health. We'll have to stop our stories for a while.' But like a child she was fascinated by her own fear, and before long she would bring him another ghostly legend.

Sometimes he would have her repeat a word or phrase several times while he searched for an English equivalent to reflect both tone and meaning. And there were always innumerable questions.

'Do you think on such a night O-Katsu's *geta* could have been heard on the road between the frozen rice-fields?'

'How would you describe that sound? — Say it just as it would sound to you.'

'*Yurei Daki*. Just what does that mean to you?'

The story of O-Katsu became the first of nine little legends ('curios of strange beliefs') he included in 'Kotto,' the book

on which he was now working. He was also writing 'sundry cobwebs' of non-fiction for the book, and one of them indicated that Setsuko was not the only one in the house whose sleep was sometimes disturbed.

'Black, chill, and still, — so black, so still, that I touch myself to find out whether I have yet a body. Then I grope about me to make sure that I am not under the earth, — buried forever beyond the reach of light and sound. . . . A clock strikes three! I shall see the sun again!

'Once again, at least. Possibly several thousand times. But there will come a night never to be broken by any dawn, — a stillness never to be broken by any sound.

'This is certain. As certain as the fact that I exist.

'Nothing else is equally certain. Reason deludes; feeling deludes; all the senses delude. But there is no delusion whatever in the certain knowledge of that night to come.

'Doubt the reality of substance, the reality of ghosts, the faiths of men, the gods; — doubt right and wrong, friendship and love, the existence of beauty, the existence of horror; — there will always remain one thing impossible to doubt, — one infinite blind black certainty.'

During these same months he was collecting *hokku* and snatches of old songs celebrating the popularity of fireflies. Upon occasion he jestingly composed *hokku* of his own. Or, if a short poem especially appealed to him, he set it to a wavering little tune which he sang to himself as he walked the study-floor or paced the hall courting an elusive phrase or a half-formed thought. But sometimes his meditative pacing was too tormented for singing, and then he might suddenly cry out as though possessed of an evil spirit. At such times Kazuo or Setsuko would run to him, calling: 'Papa-San! Papa-San! Wake up from your nightmare!' Whereupon he would return to his surroundings and thank them apologetically.

One day in the latter part of 1901, he and Setsuko were walking through the Kobudera temple grounds when he saw three majestic old cedars lying on the ground, freshly felled.

Crying out in pain and anger, he walked over to the three fallen giants and would not be consoled even though Setsuko explained that the temple was probably in serious need of money. Those trees had required centuries to grow from seedlings, and now they were gone, and nothing could bring them back! If only Tatara had asked him for money, he would have given it gladly!

But as he turned away and walked home in silence, he knew that saving three trees would not save the whole forest. If poverty had come to Kobudera, more trees would be cut down, and more. The expanding city would creep up the sacred hill as it was creeping up other temple heights, until flimsy little houses and shops reached the very walls of the temple garden. And then for more revenue the graves would be moved and the last bit of holy ground given over to modern streets and water-mains!

Presently Tatara was made an archbishop and transferred to Asakusa; and a younger priest took charge of the ancient temple. Every few days Hearn could hear gigantic trees crashing to earth on the temple hill, and the profanation of the tangled old forest made him so wretched, he no longer visited the temple. He became so unhappy that at last Setsuko suggested they leave Ushigome and build a home of their own.

'Do we have enough money?' he asked; and when she said yes, he was elated.

'That's fine! We'll build a house somewhere in the Oki Islands! I've wanted to live there ever since we first visited them! To be a lighthouse keeper would be wonderful!'

But his wife refused to live in such barbaric surroundings, and of course her whimsical husband knew it would never do. Money — money — money! He must teach to make money, and no one wanted to be taught on the Oki Islands!

'Very well, then,' he compromised. 'We'll go back to Matsue.' Think of the *geta* pattering over the Ohashi Bridge, and the beautiful sunsets over the lake! And they could visit Nishida's garden, and carry offerings to his grave!

Although she was not enthusiastic about the idea, having

too many unhappy memories of her youth, Setsuko went back to Matsue with him during the New Year holidays to look for a house or a plot of ground upon which they could build. But she found nothing that pleased her; and realizing that she would never be contented in her native province, Hearn urged her no further. When they returned to Tokyo, he told her to find a place she liked in the outskirts of the city. He asked only that it be in a purely Japanese neighbourhood and have a nice garden and a warm room with a western view for his study. Her own wishes were to be followed in all other details, for the house would belong to her.

In near-by Okubo, a district noted for its azaleas, Setsuko found a small estate which pleased her, and she took Hearn to look at the property. It was in a secluded, Japanese neighbourhood and it boasted a bamboo grove and many fine old trees as well as an attractive garden. Wide eaves skirted the many-gabled roof of the one-story house, and carpenters had told her that extra rooms could easily be added. She showed him where his study could be built, with the guest-room beside it, and where her private sitting-room would be added; and he gave his approval to all of her plans. It would make them a very comfortable home, and he was sure they'd all be happy there. But Setsu must take care of the alterations and moving, for he had to go ahead with his own work.

After consulting carpenters, painters, supply firms, and her favourite fortune-teller, she spent hours every day watching the workmen carry out her plans. She asked Hearn to witness the ceremonial roof-raising on the new wing, and though he objected on both general and specific grounds, he persuaded himself to attend when she told him his absence would seem very strange to their guests. Standing in the background, with Kazuo beside him, he watched the proceedings through his little telescope; and when he got back home he duly recorded his notes. This was a quaint vignette of native folklore he had never before happened upon!

He did not go to the new property again until the family moved to Okubo in March; and then he found everything to

his liking. With the exception of the stove and the glass *shoji* in his study, all features of the house were Japanese; and though it was more pretentious than he thought necessary, Setsuko had done everything in excellent taste. The walls were grey, the padded floor-mats a light cream colour, and the scent of early plum blossoms drifted through the rooms from the garden.

Not long after this, Captain McDonald returned to Yokohama, and his rocking-chair was joyfully installed in the new study. For the next two or three years he was to be in and out of Japan, but since he was not sure how long his present stay would last, the two men wished to be together as much as they could. But Hearn ruled out any visits to Yokohama. 'I've no time for autograph-hunters,' he declared. 'I'm safe here, for very few people know where I am, and you must do the travelling.'

During the past two years he had aged greatly, and McDonald was so uneasy about him that he readily agreed. Each Sunday while he remained in Yokohama he came up to Tokyo and stayed until evening; and in celebration Hearn shortened Kazuo's English lesson that day. If the naval officer arrived before it was finished, he rocked and listened approvingly, and however it went he complimented Kazuo when it was finished. 'You're doing very well, young man,' he'd say. 'Just keep on studying hard and we'll all be proud of you!'

Secretly McDonald was Kazuo's hero, and the eight-year-old was not yet too big to sit on his knee if invited. Generally he perched there a moment after his lesson, and he smiled in happy contentment upon being praised — hoping his white *tabi* were peeping out from under his dark blue kimono the way his father liked to see them. Most children wore dark *tabi* at home, but Hearn had ruled his sons should always wear white.

After Kazuo had left the study, McDonald would say: 'You shouldn't scold the child so much, Lafcadio. American boys his age aren't nearly as advanced as he is!' And Hearn

would answer: 'I know. But I have to teach him as quickly as I can!'

Usually McDonald ridiculed such remarks, but sometimes his banter executed a *volte-face* and in melodrama's best tradition he would proclaim: 'Have no fear! *I'm* standing by! — *McDonald* is at hand!' This always won its laugh; but Hearn knew his friend was not speaking idle words. When he himself no longer stood behind Kazuo, there'd still be someone the lad could turn to.

Two months after moving to Okubo, Hearn read the tragic news from Martinique. On the eighth of May, Saint Pierre had been totally destroyed by one sudden, mighty eruption of Mont Pelée. From the cloud-veiled peak of the lovely mountain a tremendous lethal blast of steam and hot gases had roared down her steep slopes directly onto the city. Over thirty thousand lives had been snuffed out, and the stone walls of the little lemon-coloured houses had collapsed like cardboard. After a few deafening, disintegrating moments, the island had dropped back into a vacuum of silence; and from one of the city's highest cliffs a white marble Virgin looked down on the ruins through the dust of her crumbled cathedral walls.

Dazed by the shocking news, and only half-believing, Hearn re-read the last letter he had received from Saint Pierre. A spray of arborescent fern, labelled 'From the sunny garden,' fell out of the envelope.

So his earthly paradise was gone; and all its people! The flowing grace, the childlike sympathy, the soft courtesies, the self-sacrificing devotion that had once saved his life — all vanished in one searing breath from La Belle Pelée! The monstrously beheaded palms towering jaggedly into the bright blue sky, the gardens withered, the fountains dead, and thousands of crumpled bodies in the ghastly shambles of shadowy little homes and shops! Nothing left but stillness and death and the silver ripple of mountain streams running down the broken streets to the tangled wreckage in the harbour!

Cyrillia, little Victoire and Mimi, and small Jean to whom he had been sending Oriental stamps — had there been time for even one quick cry to their *Bon-Dié?* And how had it been for Leopold Arnoux, one of the Velvet Souls?

One by one memories came back across the years as the letter and the dried sprig of fern lay forgotten in his lap. It was a dark hour, and a dark day, for the jewel that had studded the hem of Pelée's trailing green robe was a heap of rubble tumbling down into the sea. . . .

And it remained a dark day when he emerged from his coma and wearily faced the facts. His paradise was gone. Wiped off the face of the earth. And yet how long was it since he had dared hope of ever returning to the West Indies? What had happened to that bright plan — that lovely dream which had sustained him so long? Unconsciously he had come to accept what he had as paradise enough! As the years went by, one learned to relinquish dreams, and hopes, and shining improbabilities!

Back in America Ellwood Hendrick also read the first news of the Martinique holocaust. Married now, and busy with a growing family and professional career, he had not written to Japan for a year or so; but remembering what Saint Pierre had meant to Hearn, he sent him two clippings in a long-deferred letter.

'. . . Japan is changing rapidly, as you can imagine,' Hearn wrote back, 'and the changes are not beautiful. I try to keep within fragments of the old atmosphere — that linger here and there, like those bands of morning-coloured mist which you have seen spanning old Japanese pictures. Within these wreaths of the lifting mirage all is Fairy-land still; and my home will always have its atmosphere of thousands of years ago. But in the raw light outside, the changings are ugly and sad.

'Ever faithfully,

'Y. Koizumi'

He was now taking long walks through Okubo and neigh-

bouring districts, and sometimes the ugliness of transitional Japan broke through his meditations as he pursued his myopic way. One day a young ruffian stopped him and threateningly asked his nationality, trailing him home in disbelief when he told him his Japanese name. Another time three drunken labourers accosted him with taunts and jeers; but this time Kazuo was with him, to be protected, and one of his tormentors lay kicking in the dust after he had whirled on him with a ferocity Kazuo never forgot.

On still another day, a train would have run over him if a blue-clad mother with a baby on her back had not screamed a warning. After that Kazuo always accompanied him if he went far from home. 'You are my eyes, Kaji,' he told him. 'Whenever you see anything unusual, you must tell me so I can look at it too.' A little shrine hidden in a woods, a small stone Buddha or Jizo, a peculiar species of grass, a strange votive offering — young Kazuo watched for anything that might interest him.

Hearn continued to accept anti-foreignism as inevitable, but now a variant of that sentiment began causing him personal anxiety. At the university there was a spreading feeling that, since he was a Japanese citizen, he should be paid no more than native instructors received. This feeling had appeared before, and died down; but each time it became manifest, the voices against him were louder. And his good friend Doctor Toyama was now dead. His second teaching contract would expire the following spring, in March, 1903; and while he did not think the university authorities would actually dismiss him, he feared his salary might be so radically reduced that he would have to seek other employment. On the other hand, if he was retained at his present salary, he was now entitled to a nine-month sabbatical leave with pay. One way or another, after the current school year was ended, he would for a time be free of his university duties; and he began wondering how he could turn this to the best practical advantage for his family.

For Setsu and the two younger boys money was the impor-

tant thing. With that protection life would give them no more than the usual problems. But introspective, sensitive Kazuo was the one whose mixed blood could be his undoing. Tragically — triumphantly — part-English, he would need special education if he was to face the world and save himself. And that education would have to be founded on a good working knowledge of the English language. The child was unquestionably learning English as quickly as any tutor could teach it to him — if only he could speak it more distinctly! Nor could any school in Tokyo teach him more quickly. But there *was* a way he could learn more rapidly, and that was by living in an English-speaking country for a little while!

Within a few weeks he had definitely decided to take Kazuo abroad the following year; and since England's 'awful orderliness' repelled him, he decided upon America. Elizabeth Bisland had married some years earlier, and their correspondence had languished, chiefly because Hearn was never satisfied with the letters he wrote her and 'posted' them in the fire. But if he went to America he would have to find some kind of employment there, and he now wrote both to Ellwood Hendrick and Elizabeth. He didn't think he was qualified to teach in an American university, and since his eyes were about burned out, he supposed an editorial position on a monthly or weekly magazine would be the best. And he would prefer the west coast, or the South. He was afraid to expose Kazuo to a New York winter. Perhaps Fairy Queen Elizabeth could touch with her wand the very thing to answer his needs. Or maybe Hendrick could put a spoke in his wheel.

The first of August he took Kazuo and the student Aki to Yaidzu for a month, with Setsuko and his two younger sons joining them later. Each summer a new generation of small children trailed after him for a day or two, and Otokichi could not shoo them away until their curiosity was satisfied. But otherwise, whether it was Yaidzu's first family, the Fujisakis, or the rice-shop man, everyone welcomed him back

as an old friend. Each year there seemed to be a larger crop of new babies to be shown him, but the primitive fishing-village displayed no other changes.

This summer one peaceful, uneventful day followed another. When the vacationists were not swimming, they studied spidery red crabs playing in the narrow paths of a reedy swamp, walked to a neighbouring village for tea and cakes, or went into the countryside to visit a small shrine or statue. If the shrine stood on the bank of a little stream, or dragonflies darted about the statue, that was an added pleasure. Kazuo's English lessons continued, but his prowess in swimming offset his linguistic shortcomings.

Before they left Yaidzu, Hearn received a letter from Elizabeth Bisland; and when he got back to Tokyo one came from Ellwood Hendrick. Both had answered immediately, and both promised all possible assistance and asked if he wished to leave Japan right away.

No, he wrote back, any time within a year or fifteen months would be soon enough. Even if he was forced out of the university, he would feel quite easy for a year. All of his people were taken care of now, and he was not without means. If he had only himself to consider, twenty dollars a month anywhere in America would be all right, for he no longer had any personal wants. But whatever position he accepted, he couldn't be separated from his boy for even twenty-four hours. That was a handicap, of course, but if anything happened to Kazuo, the sun would go out.

'Every year there are born some millions of boys cleverer, stronger, handsomer than mine. I may be quite a fool in my estimate of him. I do not find him very clever, quick, or anything of that sort. Perhaps there will prove to be "nothing in him." I cannot tell. All that I am quite sure of is that he naturally likes what is delicate, clean, refined, and kindly, — and that he naturally shrinks from whatever is coarse or selfish. So that he *might* learn easily "the things that are most excellent" — and most useless — in the schooling of civilization. Anyhow, I must do all I can to feed the

tiny light, and give it a chance to prove what it is worth. It is ME, in another birth — with renewed forces given by a strange and charming blood from the Period of the Gods. I must not risk the blowing out of the little lamp.'

CHAPTER

31

DURING the autumn months, Hearn was busy proof-reading 'Kotto' and writing the ghost-stories for 'Kwaidan'; and in November a letter came from Elizabeth Bisland. She had interested President Schurmann, of Cornell University, in a series of lectures on Japan; and she was certain other employment could be found before the Cornell lectures were completed. She now wanted Hearn to outline a lecture-course if he was willing to accept the engagement. Ithaca winters were severe, she admitted, but there'd be no trouble in keeping Kazuo warm.

Captain McDonald had left Japan during the summer, and after thinking in circles for almost a week — elated but plagued by a sense of total inadequacy — Hearn wrote back: 'O fairy! — what have you dared to say? I am quite sure that I do *not* know anything about Japanese art, or literature, or ethnology, or politics, or history. . . . But perhaps you know *what* I know better than I myself know, — or perhaps you can give me to eat a Fairy Apple of Knowledge.'

He had lived in the Orient long enough to realize that he knew nothing at all about Japan, he continued. But if President Schurmann could make good use of him, he would be happy to accept the offer. He could attempt a series of lectures dealing with psychological, religious, social, and artistic impressions which might set minds dreaming or darkling in new directions. But he couldn't put himself forward as an authority on any special Japanese topic. The value of his lectures would depend upon suggestiveness rather than any crystallization of facts.

After this letter was mailed, he began outlining his proposed lectures, for if Cornell engaged him he would leave Japan the following summer, and he wanted his lectures written out verbatim. It was no small responsibility to go back to the Occident as an interpreter of Japan!

Lately his hours on the campus had become a daily test of endurance, for he was not feeling well, and the cold, damp weather was keeping him in the teachers' lounge during his free time. The presence of one inimical professor could poison all the air, and there was more than one Japanese instructor bringing pressure to bear against him. His most intimate friend in Tokyo was Professor Ume, a faculty member; but he no longer had a personal advocate among the university or government officials. Anti-foreign sentiment and the miasma of chronic intrigue lent his personal enemies malevolently vast and intangible proportions. The situation invited an incident, real or imagined, and as his nerves stretched tight, some such misfortune became inevitable.

His aversion to meeting strangers was so well known that no one was introduced to him unless his permission had first been obtained. Nor were visitors ever allowed to enter his classrooms. But one midwinter day while he was lecturing, a foreigner opened the door and entered with no more ceremony than a slight nod and a smile.

Hearn's low voice broke off as if he had suddenly been choked; and his students turned in amazement to look at the daring intruder. In the shocked silence of the room the

stranger walked up to Hearn's desk and introduced himself as an English traveller who had long admired his writings. And if Mr. Hearn didn't mind, he'd like to hear him address his Japanese students.

Pale and trembling, Hearn did mind — in every fibre of his being. Quite likely the presumptuous traveller had found his classroom without applying to the university officials, thereby escaping the ban which guarded Hearn's privacy. But Hearn did not interpret it that way. The outrageous intrusion had been deliberately engineered by those who were trying to force him out of the university with their damnable intrigues! And at last they had succeeded! He could endure no more!

As soon as he got home, ill with the violence of his anger, he sat down to write his letter of resignation.

Setsuko at times could display a temper of her own, and during the past two or three years she had occasionally become hysterical when something seriously provoked her. But this time she knew that her husband's rage had swept him beyond her influence, and she frantically ran to her mother. The old lady, however, loyally defended her son-in-law. '*Sensei* is in trouble,' she counselled, 'and we must all pray for Tenjin-Sama to help him.'

Whatever the powers of the god of learning, Hearn needed no help in writing his resignation, and he sent a servant to mail it at once. It was evidently couched in terms that made its acceptance spontaneous, for it was forthwith announced that he was no longer a member of the faculty.

The loss of the Imperial University's most famous foreign professor brought quick repercussions. The Tokyo papers carried controversial accounts of the incident, and Hearn's students indignantly protested his 'dismissal.' 'We must all be as determined as the Forty-Seven Ronin!' they angrily told each other.

Professor Ume and other friendly colleagues came to the house to console Hearn and see if the breach could be mended. But they found him unable to discuss the matter calmly.

He was too distraught to know whether he was ill or only mentally tortured, but indignation and a maddening sense of persecution tore at his nerves. Relief came only when he walked until he was exhausted, and the weather was so disagreeable that he seldom let Kazuo or Setsuko accompany him.

One cold, windy day while he was walking alone, his chest was suddenly torn by pain and his mouth filled with blood. When he got back to the house, the *kurumaya* was sent running for Doctor Kizawa. The family physician found him in an advanced stage of bronchitis critically aggravated by a general physical collapse. The hemorrhage had come from a ruptured blood vessel in his throat.

For a week his recovery was problematic; and in a semi-conscious stupor he was tormented by all manner of fears. Had Death at last caught up with him? Could he make himself live until summer when Setsuko was expecting another child? Would that child never know a father? And what, oh *what* about Kazuo?

There was that glorious book of Loti's, too. The Frenchman had finally redeemed himself by writing 'L'Inde sans les Anglais,' and now he might never get to read it!

After the crisis was past, he was not allowed to talk for two weeks; and as he lay on his floor-bed, his thoughts turned anxiously toward America. Why hadn't a letter come from the States? Doctor Kizawa said it would be months before he was strong again; but he'd have to go to America as soon as he could. As long as the government was controlled by the politico-religious combination which had driven him out, he couldn't hold a position anywhere in Japan!

Setsuko and Niimi were tutoring Kazuo in Japanese subjects, and a few months earlier Hearn had added arithmetic and geography to his English lessons. These he dared not neglect too long, and when he was strong enough to be propped up in his pillows, he had Kazuo bring his books to his bedside. Too much time had already been lost!

Within a few days a letter came from Elizabeth Bisland, and

his heart was pounding as he opened it. President Schurmann, she said, was satisfied with the kind of lectures he had proposed and was planning to offer him twenty-five hundred dollars for the series.

'It was a shock to receive your beautiful letter,' he wrote back, 'because I had waited so long and anxiously, — fearing that the last gleam of hope in my Eastern horizon had been extinguished. It would be of no use whatever to tell you half my doubts and fears — they made the coming of your letter an almost terrible event.'

He told her then of being 'treated very cruelly by the Japanese government and forced out of the service,' and of matters being made worse by his illness. His throat might make lecturing impossible, but he'd have to find some kind of work in America as soon as he was strong again. Probably he could come in the autumn. But he no longer planned to take Kazuo abroad until he saw how things would work out. The risk was simply too great. For the present everything was all right, and while he was recuperating, he'd continue working on his lectures. Then if he could deliver them, he'd have something more worth while. 'You cannot imagine how hungry and thirsty I have become to see you again, — or how much afraid I feel at times that I may not see you.'

Doctor Kizawa now said he might write an hour or two each day, and as he worked on his lectures, they began falling into a definite pattern. An interpretation of modern Japan in the light of her religious past. After leaving Matsue his interest had shifted from Shinto to Buddhism, but he now turned back to Shinto as the purest expression of the racial soul. As the project took shape, he grew more sure of himself; and his theories and conclusions were in accord with Herbert Spencer's evolutional teachings.

During the past two months, his university students and some of the Tokyo newspapers had continued their agitation for his reinstatement in the Imperial University. When his second teaching contract expired in March, the government took note of this agitation by offering him a new contract.

He would, however, have to accept a drastic salary reduction. And he would not be granted the sabbatical leave to which his six and a half years of service entitled him. On these two issues he refused to yield ground; and the government was equally inflexible. He thereupon returned the contract unsigned, and he and the Imperial University of Tokyo had no further correspondence.

That he had been entitled to a foreign salary, being a Japanese national, was at the best a moot question — as he himself had long ago admitted. But there were people both in Japan and abroad who felt he had been grossly mistreated by the Japanese government. Friends wrote him from England, Denmark, Sweden, and Russia; and someone in Italy sent him a two-column article from the French *Aurore* titled 'Ingratitude Nationale.' Although he protested against the praise that rallied around him, he thought the government deserved the rebuke it was receiving. Sooner or later, he said, it would surely wake up to the fact that it had been unfair to him.

But all this was smoke drifting off an empty battlefield, and in the midst of it he received a letter from Cornell University. President Schurmann was grieved to inform him that arrangements for his lectures would have to be cancelled. It had been discovered that the university funds were too seriously depleted by a typhoid epidemic the previous summer to permit any but routine expenditures for some time to come.

As yet Hearn was only strong enough to walk about his study, and plans for going to America were now further complicated. Public lecturing would be too strenuous, and while he would prefer university work of some kind, he doubted whether he was really qualified. Perhaps his best chance lay in journalism, an engagement to write signed or unsigned articles two or three times a week. That would help him weather the storm until a political reaction might let him return to Japan.

Though he held no resentment against Cornell, he was beginning to think inimical forces were working against him in America as well as Japan. 'I have material evidence,' he

wrote Elizabeth Bisland, 'that certain religious combinations want to prevent my chances in America; if you can help me to something journalistic, I imagine it were better to let the matter remain unknown for the time being.'

He asked her not to be disturbed by the Cornell action; but his militantly loyal friend frankly termed it a breach of contract. She and Ellwood Hendrick straightway began searching for other employment for him, and during the next few months there was promising correspondence with Leland Stanford University, Johns Hopkins, Lowell Institute, and Vassar. Captain McDonald also wrote encouraging letters to Tokyo, promising to find a way to increase Hearn's income and saying that next time he left Japan perhaps Hearn could go with him. For the time being, he assured him, he was safe and sound; and he mustn't worry.

Hearn apologized to his friends for being such a nuisance, and he sent them whatever brightening reports he could. By July he had finished 'Kwaidan' and sent it off, and most of his 'rejected addresses' were written out in rough draft. If he had no opportunity to deliver them at a university, he planned to publish them as a book after spending perhaps a year more in polishing them. They would present Japan in broad outline against the background of her ancient Shinto faith; and his confidence in them was growing.

He was now thinking that if he went to America, the following spring would be the best time. He wanted to stay at home until his fourth child got through the first crucial months of life. He also wanted to be as strong as possible before he undertook the voyage, for he had already been given a warning that his body no longer belonged to him. And he wanted to be sure he could make enough money to warrant the trip.

'I dream of old ugly things,' he wrote to Elizabeth Bisland, '— things that happened long ago. I am alone in an American city; and I have only ten cents in my pocket, — and to send off a letter that I must send will take three cents. That leaves me seven cents for the day's food. Now, I am not hard

up, by any means: I can wait another six months in Japan without anxiety. But the horror of being without employ in an American city appals me — because I remember.'

When Setsuko gave birth to her child, it was this time a daughter Hearn's mother-in-law laid in his arms. But the tenderness he felt was more sad than happy. This last small blossom would have to be tended by others. At fifty-three he was too old and weak to accompany her even through her childhood! What money he could leave for her care was the only protection he could hope to give her.

As the weather grew cooler, however, his spirits and health improved, and the novelty of having a baby girl in the house was as great a pleasure for him as the rest of the family. He was now almost recovered from his illness, although its effects were undeniable. His hair was white; his cheeks were sunken; and his shoulders sagged heavily. Long walks were a thing of the past, and strong cigars only a memory. Even his nervous vigour was gone, and a patient '*Shigata ga nai*' ('It can't be helped') took the place of irritated outbursts.

But despite his loss of vitality, he saw no great difficulty about going to America in the spring. His lectures were taking handsome shape, and there was at least a fair chance that he would be asked to deliver them at either Leland Stanford or Vassar. Travel expenses ceased to be a factor when he received, in understandable surprise, a generous letter from Sir William Van Horne, of the Canadian Pacific. As a connoisseur of Oriental art, Van Horne's admiration for his Japanese writings had prompted him to discount the past and offer him round-trip transportation between Japan and Montreal.

Also, there was Elizabeth Bisland's idea of preparing a collection of his early, less-known American writings. In a one-volume 'Juvenilia' he thought of assembling miscellaneous sketches and essays from the *Times-Democrat*, a handful of 'Fantastics,' a few verses, a repolished version of his Gautier translations, and 'Some Chinese Ghosts.'

By the end of 1903 he had sold enough stories and essays to

keep Setsuko's savings intact. He was also receiving small but acceptable royalties from four Japanese fairy-tales the Tokyo publisher Hasegawa had brought out one at a time during the past five years. 'The Boy Who Drew Cats' had appeared first, to be followed by 'The Goblin Spider,' 'The Old Woman Who Lost Her Dumpling,' and 'Chin Chin Kobakama,' the last title having been published the preceding spring. 'Kwaidan' was proof-read and should appear within two or three months. His chief concern now was his eyesight, but in America he could consult specialists about that.

Yet, as he worked on his lectures, they were gradually changing form in his mind. He did not realize it, but the 'addresses for a cultivated American audience' were becoming chapters in a book. Although he continued to speak of going to America, the plan was beginning to shimmer like a mirage. It was good to be working in his own study, cradled in the dainty, simple comforts of his own home, and surrounded by his family.

When Kazuo and Iwao were old enough to be served with their elders, Hearn began eating supper with the rest of the family. Until recently small Kiyoshi had peeped through the sliding screens, but now he, too, was a member of the supper group and only baby Suzuko was absent. Even the household pets assembled for the evening meal. Tama — the cat immortalized in 'Kotto' — confidently took her place by her master. And when the weather was mild, the stray dog which had adopted the Hearns received his share of tidbits in his appointed place outside an open *shoji*. Gaiety and laughter always punctuated the supper hour.

The three boys would come to the study to announce the meal, and usually Hearn laid down his pen and joined their merry procession to the dining-room. But sometimes he was so absorbed in his work that he merely nodded and went on writing. When this happened, six white-socked feet padded back down the hall; and everyone waited in the dining-room until it became apparent that another summons was needed. Setsuko would then go to the study.

'Papa-San, this will never do!' she would scold him. 'Supper's ready, and the children will cry!'

'— Supper?' he would answer vaguely. '— Haven't I had supper yet? That's odd. I thought I had already eaten!' And with an indulgent '*Gomen nasai*' he would follow her to the dining-room.

But even then he often remained lost in thought, mistaking the salt for sugar or eating the bread he had sliced for one of the boys. And again Setsuko would have to jog him. 'Papa-San, won't you *please* wake up from your dreaming? The children are waiting for you to help them!' With that he would emerge from his deep preoccupation and see the food and the faces around him for the first time. 'Haven't my chickens eaten anything yet?' he would ask solicitously. 'Kaji, what has Papa-San forgotten this time?' Bursts of laughter would answer him, and supper would happily gain momentum.

His absent-mindedness was usually no worse than provoking. But Doctor Kizawa had banned his small glass of wine before meals, and unless he was watched he might swallow the wine also, before he remembered. Setsuko always felt easier if she looked in on him before she retired, for one night she had found the study filled with black smoke pouring from the lamp a few inches from his head. He had noticed it no more than he noticed the mosquitoes boring into his arms and neck.

With more time at his disposal, he now tried to add French to Kazuo's lessons, but the ten-year-old could not cope with two foreign languages. He did, however, add the Bible to his studies; and at first Kazuo was deeply puzzled. All books were holy, of course. Even the maids had told him that as far back as he could remember. But why, then, did some people say the Bible was the *only* holy book? That, his father explained, was because those people thought no book but the Bible told what was true. 'It isn't necessary to believe as they do,' he added. 'But everyone should read the Bible at least once.'

The student Niimi was also puzzled. 'You aren't a Christian, *Sensei-San*, so why do you have your first son read that book?' he asked one day as the three of them sat on the floor with the Bible.

'It's the most famous religious book in the world,' Hearn answered. 'Buddha, Confucius, Christ — all three were of their time and place, and though they were different they were the same in spirit. They would have been friends had they known each other.'

In February of 1904, the Russo-Japanese War broke out; and again Hearn's thoughts turned anxiously to his former students. Fujisaki was now a captain in the regular army, and when he was appointed adjutant to Field Marshal Oyama, he came to say good-bye before leaving for the Manchurian Army Headquarters. Before he left the house he handed Hearn his picture — to be placed in the family shrine if he was killed — and until Hearn could trust his voice, he examined the photograph closely. 'Don't worry,' he finally said. 'You'll come back covered with honours! But the Russians are big fellows, so be careful!' Fujisaki's father was also an army officer, and the young captain laughed confidently as he replied: 'Thank you, *Sensei-San!* But the bigger the target, the easier it is to hit!'

Fujisaki would indeed return from the wars, and he and his wife would even occupy a wing of Setsuko's house. But as Hearn looked into his young friend's face, they were saying their final farewell.

Other young men he had taught in Tokyo also came to pay their respects before leaving for the front. Most of them would have preferred to sit on chairs and smoke cigarettes, and they wondered at the old-fashioned ways of their foreign *sensei* as they accepted native pipes and settled down on floor-cushions.

As spring brought sunnier days, Hearn more frequently left his desk for short walks about the neighbourhood. Okubo was later to be known as the garden district of the capital, and it was now alive with workmen digging and planting

and pruning. The quiet little one-eyed man often stopped to watch their meticulous work across a garden hedge; and he was also supervising carefully adjusted improvements in his own garden. One bit of earth, however, required no further changing. One night, when he was 'about as homesick as it is lawful for a Japanese citizen to feel,' he had ordered certain bulbs and plants to assuage his nostalgia; and now there was a hidden patch of alien colour below his study windows. Inside an evergreen border was a little bed of daffodils, blue hyacinths, and primroses. '*Sensei-San's* English garden.'

When he wished to be alone, Hearn went over to the Zoshigaya cemetery and roamed among the graves. Zoshigaya was a public burial-ground a comfortable walking-distance from the house in a quiet neighbourhood of well-kept homes and gardens. He had discovered it shortly after moving to Okubo, and he had triumphantly taken Setsuko and the boys to see the 'lovely place.' But his family did not share his predilection for graveyards, and he had learned to enjoy it alone.

When Kazuo was with him they often walked over to Ochiyai-mura, another favourite haunt. This was a little settlement of microscopic farms with the thatched farmhouses dominated by the tall chimney of a crematory in a near-by copse. Hearn had many acquaintances among the old people of Ochiyai-mura, and usually he sat down to rest and chat in a little garden while Kazuo enjoyed a refreshing drink from the garden well. If there was not a recently laid flagstone or a flaunting string of morning-glories to be admired, he might seek advice for an ailing pomegranate tree he was trying to save in his own garden.

Kazuo enjoyed going to Ochiyai-mura; but sometimes, as they walked back home, he looked anxiously at his father's bent shoulders and the silvery hair showing beneath his wide black hat. When his mother greeted them at the entrance, he would say reproachfully: 'Papa-San said again that he was going to turn into smoke and come out of that tall chimney in the trees!'

Setsuko would reprove her husband for this while she helped him into his kimono. 'You shouldn't say such things, Papa-San! It isn't true, and it makes Kazuo sad.'

'*Gomen — gomen*,' Hearn would reply. 'But I know my own body, and it's really so.'

'What a foolish thing to think! Don't you want to live to see your grandchildren?'

'Yes, little Mama-San. But sometimes it's very hard.'

'It really will be hard if you say such things. You must make up your mind that you're going to live a long time, and then you will.'

'Yes,' Hearn would chuckle softly, 'that's a good idea. I'll ask God to fix it that way. But now I must get some work done before supper.'

If Kazuo heard one of these conversations, he would pray that his father might live for a great many years. At least until he himself was a man. And he was not sure whether he was praying to his mother's gods or to the God of the Christians.

A year ago Iwao had been enrolled in Okubo's public primary school, and each morning he was running across the field in front of the house to get there more quickly. His eagerness was tainted by no academic ambition, but he learned so quickly that he brought home good marks despite his wholehearted attention to extra-curricular activities. With Kazuo receiving all the tutoring his young brain could stand, Hearn now decided to introduce his second son to the English language. A bit more education wouldn't hurt that irrepressible youngster!

This proved to be true, for Iwao laughed as much as Kazuo wept. To the blithe seven-year-old everything was funny. English words were funny. When he forgot a word and picked it out of the air, that was funny. When his father lost patience and pronounced a word in a loud voice, he promptly tossed it back at him as loudly, and that was funniest of all. 'You're a rude boy!' Hearn would declare as he cuffed him sharply.

Slapping did not bother Iwao, but his father's spankings could hurt, and he knew when to run — straight out of the study. 'He's a queer little child,' Hearn would observe as Kazuo disapprovingly watched him fleeing down through the garden.

For a number of months Professor Ume and other native friends had been looking for a position in some privately owned Tokyo school which Hearn could fill without taxing his strength. This spring they found such an opening at Waseda University; and after a group of Waseda officials called to discuss it with him, Hearn accepted the position. Besides the possibilities in America, the University of London had written him about a series of lectures; and Oxford was considering extending him an offer. But Waseda was not hampered by politics, and Professor Tsubouchi, the dean of the College of Literature, had instantly aroused his admiration and liking. His book on Japan was rounding off very well, and Kazuo's education abroad could be deferred a bit longer. Perhaps it would be wiser not to leave home until he felt a little stronger. It might be better for Kazuo, too. He was still too gentle and sensitive.

His decision to resume teaching led to another more radical one. If Kazuo was not to be taken abroad just yet, Setsuko asked, why shouldn't he be put in school? He ought to have a little formal Japanese education. Hearn took longer to decide about this; but at last he agreed. Doctor Kizawa suggested the best private school in Tokyo; but when Hearn learned it was a Roman Catholic school, he declared he'd rather cut Kazuo's head off than send him there. He could attend the public school with Iwao. He might be better prepared for the future if he played with all sorts of children and heard a little rough speech. Iwao's manners were admittedly not of the best lately, but he'd outgrow that; and Kaji was certainly too old now to pick up any rude ways.

When the new school term began in April, father and son went their separate academic ways. Kazuo was delighted to find lessons in a Japanese school were very easy. He was

entered in the fourth grade, but his teachers soon decided that in the autumn he could do fifth-grade work. His English lessons, however, were not discontinued, and he went to his father's study when he got home from school. If Hearn was late returning from Waseda, Kazuo waited outside with his brothers to welcome him. When his jinrikisha rolled in at the garden gate, the three young boys rushed up to hunt through his pockets for little paper-wrapped cakes as he made his way to the door.

As a national authority on native drama, Professor Tsubouchi was awakening Hearn's interest in that field of Japanese culture, and his Waseda associations were happier than any he had known since leaving Matsue. This was fortunate, for each day his writing seemed to tire him more. 'Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation' was the title he had chosen for his book, and it was going to be longer than any he had written since the two-volume 'Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan.'

Mitchell McDonald was back in Japan for two or three months, but neither he nor Setsuko could persuade Hearn to rest from his writing. It wasn't easy, he told them, but the book had to be finished as quickly as possible. Time wouldn't wait.

Something was wrong with his writing arm. Though he said little about it, his heart was likewise bothering him. He noticed this most when he had to punish one of the boys. Even to reprove Kazuo for hunting camellia seeds in the forbidden part of the garden by his study, or to punish small Kiyoshi for dancing on the well-cover, could make him feel weak and miserable. Sometimes he was so short of breath after spanking Iwao that he had to rest a little before he could say: 'Nothing makes me feel more wretched than to punish the children, Mama-San. Each time it shortens my life.'

CHAPTER

32

As Tokyo began sweltering in the hot dry summer of 1904, Hearn finished his socio-religious interpretation of Japan; and early in July he went down to Yaidzu for a long rest. He had not been there for two years, and if anything could restore his vanishing strength, it would be the sun and the sea.

Niimi went with him, and they took Kazuo and Iwao along. Setsuko promised to come down for a few days, but she wished to devote most of the summer to supervising additional improvements on the house. Her mother was getting too old to travel, and Kiyoshi and Suzuko would also be better off at home.

When Hearn went down to the beach, he was dismayed to find he could not combat the waves. At first Otokichi had to stay near him in the water, but as he helped him with his swimming, he prophesied that a little exercise would make his right arm as strong as ever. The faithful fishmonger also

helped Niimi with the boys, for *Sensei-Sama* had become a tired old man who needed sunshine and sea-air and nothing to worry him.

One day Otokichi took his guests to inspect the new breakwater, and as they walked along with their kimono sleeves flapping in the breeze, Hearn noticed a small stone image leaning against the railing of the dyke. Its head and arms were broken off, and a smooth round stone had been balanced on its shoulders. Otokichi explained that it was a Breakwater Jizo, to whom fishermen prayed for safety. But it had been broken while the new breakwater was being built, and having no money for a new image, the villagers were relying on it to continue functioning as it was.

A little headless Jizo was bad enough, but for his Yaidzu friends to have nothing better to pray to was not to be countenanced; and when Hearn got back to the village, he told the natives he would buy them a new wave-preventing image. That night, as he wrote Setsuko to bring down some flea-powder when she came that weekend, he told her he was planning to give Yaidzu a new Jizo and asked if she would like Kazuo's name carved on it.

The villagers began arranging a festival for their new guardian image; but when Setsuko's reply arrived, everything had to be halted. Hearn had failed to convince her that it was not the Jizo who guarded dead children, and both her mother and the priest at the temple had told her it might be very unfortunate to have such an image made.

'. . . Poor Jizo-Sama wept bitterly when it heard of your answer to me,' Hearn wrote back to Tokyo. 'I said to it, "I cannot help it, as Mama-San doubted your real nature, and thinks that you are a graveyard keeper. I know that you are the saviour of seas and sailors." The Jizo is crying even now.' Beneath this he drew a Jizo shedding 'stone tears' and saying: 'I am quieting the waves, preventing floods, that is my duty. I am not the one to protect the spirits of children. But that child's mother misunderstood and prevented my repair. Oh, how sad!'

When Setsuko came down, she laughed at the way Hearn had had the boys' bangs cut short. But she did not relent about the Jizo — Breakwater or not. To make what amends he could, Hearn had Niimi take money to the natives for special offerings to their broken image.

Setsuko went back to Tokyo after she saw her vacationing menfolk were comfortably established; and their days settled down into a pleasant routine. At sunrise Hearn would call out: 'Wake up, sweet chickens! — Down to the beach!' and as they neared the water, they would look for Fujiyama's peak on the brightening horizon. After breakfast the boys were tutored for half an hour, Hearn taking Kazuo and Niimi instructing Iwao. Then everyone went back to the beach. Kazuo was now a very good swimmer, and though Iwao's technique was distinguished by its absence, his energy was wondrous. After luncheon the boys took a nap, and then came another brief session of instruction with the tutors exchanging their pupils. Seashore pastimes, short walks, and gala excursions to neighbouring settlements filled the rest of their time until supper. Hearn's affectionate, reassuring notes to Setsuko reported they were getting tanned, browner, and black. He wrote to 'Lovely little Mama-San' every day.

The long window-sill in their sitting-room was perpetually covered with shells and pebbles, and once during the night Iwao's choice collection of crabs escaped their confinement and prowled about. A little black cat was rescued from death and after a bath she was christened 'Spark' and became the fifth inhabitant of Otokichi's upstairs rooms, with a ball to play with and a bell around her neck to disclose her whereabouts. Kazuo named his favourite boat in her honour, and though she was presently bounding out over the roofs to play with the cat of the rice-shop man, she always returned to sit by Hearn's tray when a meal was served. A special cicada was also adopted; and a fledgling sparrow was nursed back to health.

If Otokichi bought a shark, it was Kazuo who accepted a lesson in comparative anatomy as the fish was cut up for the

village trade. But when the boys were taken to a shooting-gallery as a special treat, Iwao was the one who hit the Russian soldier on the target marked 'Port Arthur.'

Hearn was not swimming as much as in previous years; nor did he go into the water at night. But he had acquired 'a fresh layer of skin by virtue of the salt water,' and he no longer needed the undervests Setsuko had sent him. And as Otokichi had promised, his right arm was not bothering him any more. Occasionally he was tormented by jellyfish while swimming, and without Setsuko's watchfulness the fleas at night were sometimes too much for philosophical acceptance. But the sun and sea were a constant joy, and never had his sons seemed dearer. 'What lovely, innocent, and appealing creatures the children are!' he wrote his wife.

When the proofs of 'Japan' were sent on from Tokyo, he corrected them while the boys were sleeping, and during the third week of August he started them back to America. Since the beginning of hostilities, he had been writing articles on the Russo-Japanese War for Western publications, and he was now having foreign newspapers forwarded to Yaidzu. In the evenings, when he sat on the bench in front of the shop, neighbours and fishermen gathered around to hear his digest of the latest war bulletins.

This year the anxieties and excitements of the outside world were invading the secluded village, for many of the boys Hearn had watched grow into manhood were now fighting in Manchuria. But Yaidzu's atmosphere was still that of Old Japan, and now that the second great war of the New Order was disrupting national life, that atmosphere seemed all the more precious. Yet at times a gulf seemed to separate him from the life around him. He saw it through the glaze of time and could not be sure on which side reality lay. Was this remnant of Old Japan withdrawing into the past, or was it he who was withdrawing? And was he withdrawing into the past or drifting into the future?

After roving two-thirds of the way around the world, he still had found no land and no people who were wholly

his own, and now he was becoming lost even in time. One day he walked up the coast with Kazuo and Niimi to visit a shrine, and on the way Kazuo caught a black dragonfly. As he came running back to show it to his father, Hearn was suddenly stricken by the race-barrier between them and poignantly conscious of his own isolation in the cosmic flow of time. He recorded the incident and laid it away.

'An old, old sea-wall, stretching between boundless levels, green and blue; — on the right only rice-fields, reaching to the sky-line; — on the left only summer-silent sea, where fishing-craft of curious shapes are riding. Everything is steeped in white sun; and I am standing on the wall. Along its broad and grass-grown top a boy is running towards me, — running in sandals of wood, — the sea-breeze blowing aside the long sleeves of his robe as he runs, and baring his slender legs to the knee. Very fast he runs, springing upon his sandals; — and he has in his hands something to show me: a black dragonfly, which he is holding carefully by the wings, lest it should hurt itself struggling. . . . With what sudden incommunicable pang do I watch the gracious little figure leaping in the light, — between those summer silences of field and sea! A delicate boy, with the blended charm of two races. . . . And how softly vivid all things under this milky radiance, — the smiling child-face with lips apart, — the twinkle of the light, quick feet, — the shadows of grasses and of little stones!

'But quickly as he runs, the child will come no nearer to me, — the slim brown hand will never cling to mine. For this light is the light of a Japanese sun that set long years ago. . . . Never, dearest! — never shall we meet, — not even when the stars are dead!

'And yet, — can it be possible that I shall not remember? — that I shall not still see, in other million summers, the same sea-wall under the same white noon, — the same shadows of grasses and of little stones, — the running of the same little sandalled feet that will never, never reach my side?'

He had now accepted his fate — his aloneness; but might he

not keep a few memories with him? Memories of that aloneness?

When the vacationists returned to Tokyo, the carpenters and masons were gone, and Setsuko had the house in order again. But before winter came she planned to alter the garden gate, and one evening Hearn went with her to look at gates in the vicinity. They walked in the direction of the Zoshigaya cemetery, and whenever they saw an interesting gate, they stopped to discuss it in the gathering twilight. When they got back home, Hearn sketched the kind of gate she wanted, with the ideographs of his Japanese name on the glowing front of its iron lantern.

A familiar blue envelope bearing Elizabeth Bisland's handwriting brought praise for his latest book, 'Kwaidan,' but the manuscript now with his publishers was uppermost in his mind. It wasn't what it ought to be, he told her in answering, because everything had been against him. Also, a serious sociological treatise required training far beyond his range. But perhaps the book would suggest something to somebody.

'I ought to keep to the study of birds and cats and insects and flowers, and queer small things — and leave the subject of the destiny of empires to men of brains. Unfortunately, the men of brains will not state the truth as they see it.'

It had never before seemed quite so important to hold a new book in his hands, and see its words in formal, final print; and he spoke of it each day to Setsuko. When his publishers cabled 'Good' after reading the corrected proofs of 'Japan,' he could almost hear the presses starting up. 'The printers are working on it now, Mama-San!' he would say at irrelevant moments. 'My book about Japan is being made, and soon they'll send me some copies!'

A day or so later, on the nineteenth of September, Setsuko helped him into his kimono when he returned from Waseda. For some reason she went back to the study a few minutes later, and she found him walking the floor in obvious pain, his hands clamped against his chest.

'Don't you feel well?' she asked quickly.

He was breathing with such difficulty that he could scarcely answer. 'I've a — new kind of sickness,' he gasped.

'What is it?'

'— Heart trouble — I think.'

His face was tight with pain, and Setsuko tried to hide her alarm. 'You've been working and worrying too much,' she said. 'You'll feel better if you lie down and rest a little.'

But he shook his head and continued pacing back and forth, bending over his hands.

As soon as he straightened up a little, she hurried from the room and sent two men with the jinrikisha to bring Doctor Kizawa.

When she came back to the study, Hearn was sitting at his desk, writing a letter in French. Again she asked him to lie down, but without raising his head he said it would be better if she just went on with her work.

When he realized she would not leave him, he slowly explained what he was trying to write. 'This is a letter for Professor Ume. He'll help you if anything happens. I may die if this pain increases, and this is what I want you to do. Buy a little urn for three or four *sen* and bury my bones in it near some quiet temple in the country. There'll be no need to announce my death. If anyone asks for me just say, "Oh, he died some time ago." That will be quite all right. And I shan't like it if you cry. Amuse the children and play games with them — I'll enjoy that much more.'

With that he turned back to his desk and started writing again. But very shortly he laid down his pen, whispering, 'It's no use!' And at last he went over to his bed and lay down.

At that moment Kazuo arrived from school, and hearing of his father's illness he ran to the study. When he entered, Hearn looked up at him and then said to Setsuko: 'You must never think your body is your own. Your health is a treasure entrusted to you for the children. Always remember to take good care of yourself — the children will need you for a long, long time.'

Kazuo was awed by his father's grave tones, and he and his mother stood there in silence, looking down at Hearn's closed eyes and listening for Doctor Kizawa.

Gradually, however, Hearn began to breathe more easily; and soon he opened his eyes and sat up. The pain had disappeared, he told Setsuko; and he persuaded her to give him a sip of whiskey. Presently he went over to his desk, picked up a book, and came back to his bed. When he opened the book and began reading, she and Kazuo relaxed a little.

When Doctor Kizawa finally arrived, Hearn himself went into the guest-room to greet him. 'You'll have to forgive me, my friend,' he chuckled quietly. 'My illness has vanished, as you can see. I'm quite well again!'

The physician knew his dislike for medical attention, but he nonetheless insisted upon examining him; and Setsuko went back to her sitting-room. A little later Hearn came to tell her that Doctor Kizawa had listened to his chest and had found nothing seriously wrong. At supper he talked and laughed as usual; and life began slipping back into its accustomed pattern for his anxiously watchful household.

Three or four days later, Hearn's favourite cherry tree burst into scattered bloom, and though cherry blossoms out of season were a bad omen, no one would have thought to conceal such an interesting event from his attention. 'The cherry tree thought it was spring again,' he said as he stood admiring it. 'And yet it's a pity. Soon the blossoms will get cold and die. I'm so sorry for them!'

His prediction was quickly fulfilled, for next morning the sky was grey and cold, and the white petals lay on the ground.

But there was little time to mourn this misfortune, for Setsuko's mother had wakened with a high fever and was unable to leave her bed. At the same time the carpenters arrived to start work on the garden gate, and because of her mother's illness Setsuko could not supervise the alterations as she had planned.

'Just stay with Grandmother and don't worry about the meals,' Hearn told her. 'Have the girls fix something simple. Bread and milk will do.'

On the morning of the twenty-sixth, it was still cold, and when Setsuko brought the children to bid him good morning, Hearn was sitting up in bed, huddled in a thick robe, but still shivering and unhappy. Earthquakes had gradually ceased to bother him, but he had never become acclimated to Tokyo's chilly, damp winters. 'This wretched weather is going to kill me!' he grumbled as he glanced disdainfully at his *hibachi* — glowing with fresh coals, but giving off very little heat. His family laughed at his complaints, but Setsuko called a servant to build a fire in his stove.

After the boys had left for school, Setsuko came back to the study, and Hearn told her of a dream he had had during the night. He was still huddled in his heavy robe, and as he talked he slowly rocked back and forth inside his wrappings. 'It was a most unusual dream,' he said reminiscently. 'I took a very long journey, and now that I am awake it seems to have been not a *real* journey in a dream, but a *dream* journey in a dream! I was travelling in a very strange country, and I was going a long distance. Very far away.'

That was all he could tell her of his dream, but he appeared to enjoy thinking about it. When she went out to get his clothes, he was lost in thought, a rapt, faraway look on his face.

When he returned from Waseda that afternoon, a long-awaited letter from Captain Fujisaki lay on his desk. He was well, the young officer wrote, and serving on a reception committee for foreign military observers. And did *Sensei-San* have any interesting novels or plays he could send him? 'I'll return them if I live. I pray for the health of all of you as I listen to the cannon here in Manchuria.'

Hearn selected Maeterlinck's plays from his bookshelves and gave them to a maid to be wrapped for mailing. When his sons came in for their English lesson, he had Kazuo write a letter in English to Fujisaki while Iwao was put to work

composing a letter in Japanese. He himself also wrote to his young friend.

'You have often been in my thoughts and dreams. And, of course, we have been anxious about you. . . . Your good mother writes to us; and all your household seem to be as well and as happy as could be expected, — considering the natural anxieties of the war. Even for me, a stranger, the war has been trying. . . . I am still hoping to see you next spring, or at latest in summer. For this hope, however, I have no foundation beyond the idea that Russia will probably find, before long, that she must think of something else besides fighting with Japan. The commercial powers of the world are disturbed by her aggression; and industrial power, after all, is much more heavy than all the artillery of the Czar. Whatever foreign sympathy really exists is with Japan. In any event Russia must lose Manchuria, I fancy.'

Although her mother was still confined to her bed, Setsuko joined the family at supper that evening; and throughout the meal Hearn talked and laughed with his little cluster of sons. When he went back to his study, Setsuko returned to her mother, and Niimi and Aki went to their room to study.

After the meals were cleared away, the dining-room served as the children's play-room, and tonight O-Hana, one of the maids, stayed to look after the boys. Kazuo began writing Japanese characters in a copy-book for school the next day, and Iwao was still toiling over his letter to Captain Fujisaki. Kiyoshi and O-Hana brought out some toys.

About eight o'clock Hearn came back into the room, and his face was so strange and white that all three of the boys looked up at him in surprise as he walked over to the cupboard and opened it, asking O-Hana where the whiskey was.

O-Hana jumped up quickly and ran for Setsuko; and Hearn's three sons watched him in frightened silence as he stood peering into the cupboard, his hands clutching his chest.

When Setsuko hurried to his side, he turned to her help-

lessly. 'It's that same pain, Mama-San,' he gasped. 'It's come back again.'

She and O-Hana helped him pour a little whiskey and fill the cup with water, and after he drank it, he started slowly back down the hall toward his study. When he realized Setsuko was following him, he said over his shoulder: 'I'm all right now. You stay with Grandmother or the children.' But his wife accompanied him down the hall and went into the study with him and closed the door.

'Master's very sick!' O-Hana said in a hushed voice to the three still-silent boys. 'Someone may have to send the *kurumaya* for Doctor Kizawa!'

Kazuo was far more frightened than his brothers were; but he was also the eldest son. 'I'll do it myself right now!' he answered quickly. And he began picking up his papers and copy-book.

'Grandma-Sama's sick. Papa-San's sick. — Everything's bad!' young Kiyoshi whimpered.

Inside the study Hearn walked the floor for a moment, his face twisted in anguish and his hands still pressed against his heart. He did not protest when Setsuko led him toward the bed, and as he lay down she hurried over to the desk and turned the lamp lower.

When she got back to his bed, the pain seemed to have relaxed its grip and dropped him there, exhausted. He was lying on his back with his hands clasped lightly across his chest; and as she bent over him he sighed: '*Ah — byoki no tame!*'

Kazuo was just entering the hall when his mother opened the study door and called out: 'Kazuo! Kazuo! O-Hana! Come at once! All of you!'

Without knowing how he got there, Kazuo was kneeling by his father, laying his hands on his chest and crying: 'Papa-San! — Papa-San! — PAPA-SAN!'

In the dim lamplight he saw his father's lips were slightly parted beneath his grey mustache. But they did not move.

Frantically he grabbed his shoulder and shook him, tugging

at the breast-folds of his kimono, and calling and pleading. But his father neither spoke to him nor looked at him.

Sighing: 'Ah — because of sickness!' Lafcadio Hearn had left his family.

CHAPTER

33

In 'Kwaidan' Hearn had written: 'I should like, when my time comes, to be laid away in some Buddhist graveyard of the ancient kind, — so that my ghostly company should be ancient, caring nothing for the fashions and the changes and the disintegrations of Meiji.'

Even without the directions he had given her a week earlier, Setsuko would have known that the burial-grounds of some old, secluded temple would afford her husband the most appropriate resting-place. But she wished his grave to be in Tokyo, near his family. And in the capital no ancient Buddhist graveyard was safe from 'the disintegrations of Meiji.' Since Zoshigaya had been one of his favourite haunts and as a public graveyard was safe from modern encroachments, she chose a plot of ground in that cemetery.

While the carpenters hastened to finish the garden gate, she completed the funeral plans. And again she felt unable to follow her husband's specified wishes. It would seem out-

rageous to all his native friends if his last rites were not formal and public. But within the bounds of convention she did what she thought would have pleased him. Archbishop Tatara was asked to return to the Kobudera temple to officiate at the ceremony; and Hearn's oldest Matsue student, now Professor Tanabe, was summoned to act as chief mourner.

Evidently Mitchell McDonald was not in Japan at this time. But another devoted though humbler friend rushed to Tokyo to be of any assistance he could. When word of Hearn's death reached Yaidzu, Otokichi boarded the first train for the capital, even though it necessitated travelling in his working-clothes.

To Kazuo he was a dear, familiar figure in a world that had broken apart.

On the twenty-ninth of September — a luminous, pale blue day — the funeral procession wound its way from the Koizumi residence to the Kobudera temple. First came the bearers of Buddhist symbols — white lanterns, towering pyramids of asters and chrysanthemums, and long poles fluttering with sacred streamers. Next came two boys in jinrikishas, carrying birds in small bamboo cages to be released as symbols of the soul escaping its earthly prison. Six men robed in blue carried the portable hearse on their shoulders, its gleaming, unpainted wood adorned with clusters of gold and silver lotus blossoms. Priests followed, ringing little bells and carrying food for the dead. And behind the family and immediate mourners came a long file of university professors and students.

To the tolling of the temple bell, the procession climbed the Kobudera hill and entered the ancient building. In the temple dimness eight priests chanted a Kwannon dirge. Over their white robes layers of brightly tinted gauze shimmered like jewel mist; and at regular intervals they paused in their chanting while a bell tinkled.

When the chanting ended, Tanabe led Kazuo toward his father's candle-lit coffin. To the desolated young boy the shadowy congregation was a sea of eyes riveted upon him,

and he looked up gratefully to the serene old face of Archbishop Tatara who waited in golden robes to receive him.

With Tanabe beside him, Kazuo knelt down before the coffin, and after touching his head to the floor he placed incense in a small brazier burning between the candles. As its faint perfume drifted out into the stillness, a surge of loneliness and grief swept over him. But the thought of Tatara standing behind him strengthened his control. It was almost as though he and his father were visiting the temple again, and the gentle old priest might pat his head and give him little cakes.

After Tanabe and Kazuo withdrew, Setsuko came forward with Iwao. She was wearing the magnificent white girdle donned only for family weddings and funerals; and her face was an expressionless mask for which the stiff, upward-sweeping rolls of her coiffure formed a carved ebony frame. She and grave young Iwao performed the same ceremony of kneeling and lighting incense; and then Tanabe and Kazuo prostrated themselves once more before the coffin. Additional chanting ended the services as the congregation knelt with heads bowed to the floor.

As Hearn had wished it, his flesh turned into smoke that rose from the tall chimney of Ochiyai-mura. In the ceremony of lifting the bones from the ashes, Otokichi was one of the participants, intoning Buddhist prayers in a rough, hushed voice. When he lifted a knee-cap from the ashes, he stared at it sadly, forgetting his prayers to mutter: 'This helped *Sensei-Sama* swim in our sea only a little while ago!' Apologetically, then, he dried his eyes with his small blue towel and continued his sombre duties.

One of Hearn's favourite pens, a gift from Captain McDonald, was placed in the funeral urn with his bones.

After the Zoshigaya burial, the freshly packed earth of his grave was covered with a flat stone, the centre hollowed out to hold water for his spirit, and on either side a small round hole for incense. As a last tribute, his students presented a laurel wreath which bore the inscription: 'In memory of

Lafcadio Hearn, whose pen was mightier than the sword of the victorious nation which he loved and lived among, and whose highest honour it is to have given him citizenship and, alas, a grave!'

In America, the first copies of 'Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation' were coming from the press to be acclaimed his masterpiece. Theologians, while condemning Shinto, extolled the book as a classic of science, a wonder of interpretation, and a sociological appraisement of Japan which should serve as a warning against intolerant propaganda of any kind. Many sociologists, to the contrary, challenged his scholarship as a scientist, but praised his 'complete and intimate account of a people's sincere faith.' Both schools agreed upon his signal contribution in setting forth the changeless nature of the Japanese soul and Shinto's profound influence on the life and politics of Japan.

But Patricio Lafcadio Tessima Carlos Hearn — Yakumo Koizumi — was now beyond the importance of words. Only a few days before he could have seen his Shinto book in print, he had become a ghostly recipient of the ancestor worship it propounded.

The Koizumi family shrine was moved into his study, and twice daily down through the years Shinto prayers were murmured to him before the shrine. Until his children were grown, they came in at bedtime to say: 'Good night, Papa-San. Pleasant dreams!'

On the twenty-sixth of each September, Setsuko assembled her children, and eventually her grandchildren, for an anniversary feast in the study. Inside the shrine small lacquer bowls held another feast in miniature; and behind them stood Hearn's picture — veiled in drifting incense smoke and guarded by a worn pen in a bronze holder.

THE END

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While the purpose of this book has not called for critical consideration of Hearn's writings, the man and his work were so interrelated and his pen so consistently dipped in the ink of autobiography that I have included all of his published writings outside the journalistic-periodical field. In that large category only his outstanding writings have been collected; and the numerous volumes of such compilations are sometimes overlapping or drawn from each other. Here, as in the case of Hearn's university lectures, I have sought to avoid undue repetition by listing only the original, more comprehensive collections and those composed chiefly of hitherto uncollected material. Though I have occasionally drawn from Hearn's uncollected newspaper and periodical

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