



The Annotated Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan By Lafcadio Hearn: Volume I (The Lafcadio Hearn's Japan Series (Annotated)) (Volume 1)

Hayato Tokugawa

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Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan is regarded as Lafcadio Hearn's seminal work with regard to Old Japan and things Japanese: the first popularly published book that told the West, in beautiful language, of the wonders that he saw there. These two volumes truly gave the West its first glimpses of a part of the world and a country of which little was known, but that fascinated almost everyone. In Volume One of The Annotated Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan, in addition to a brief biography of Lafcadio Hearn and an explanation of his literary style, necessary I think, in order to understand a man who lived one of the strangest lives of any American author and who loved Japan deeply, we have the opportunity to explore, right along with Hearn, what are now some of the most popular tourist attractions of Japan, but at a time long before they ever became destinations for sightseers. We are given the opportunity to share the thrill of his first days in Japan and his images of new places and things, many of which no longer exist today. As he tours about Yokohama and Kamakura, and then later moves westward to the city of Matsue in Izumo, he tells us of Japan's people, its culture, its traditions, its mysteries, and its gods, sharing with us his own special perceptions, appreciation, and love for what he saw. He goes even further than that, taking the reader to places never before (at least at that time) seen by a foreigner; such places as Kitzuki, the most ancient Shinto shrine in Japan, the mysterious "Cave of the Children's Ghosts," and completely unfamiliar towns and villages on the west coast of the Japanese Sea. Hearn concludes this volume with a marvelous essay on a uniquely Japanese phenomenon, that of Shinju, or the suicide of star-crossed lovers, followed by a treatment of many of the traditions of Japanese romance, founded in both Buddhism and Shinto. The author's last essay turns out to be well worth the wait: a delightful collection of Japanese legends and lore on of all things, the mysterious, fanciful fox — kitsune — both informative and fun for any student of Japanese folklore. We hope you enjoy this new profusely illustrated and augmented presentation of Volume I of Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan, and find it some of the best of Lafcadio Hearn.

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