

The Japanese Jack the Giant Killer.

BY LEONARD LARKIN.

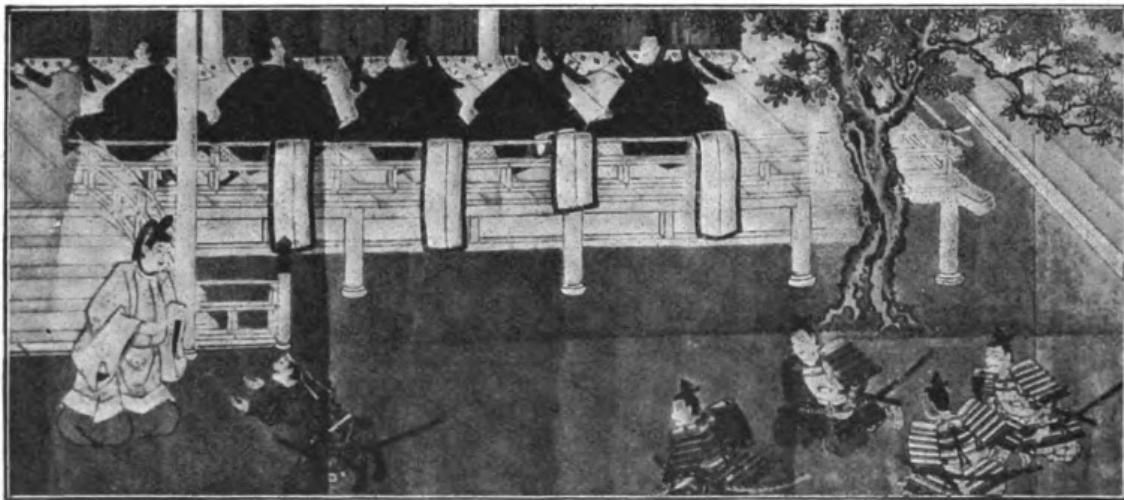
With Illustrations from an ancient Japanese illuminated roll.



THOUSAND years ago Japan was a land as full of giants and fairies and ogres and dragons as this country (or, indeed, any other country) at about the same time. That is to say, stories are told in Japan to-day of the fairies and giants of those times just as they are in our own nurseries; and the Japanese tales, like the English, the French, and the rest, have usually some groundwork of historical fact. Indeed, it is far more certain that the hero of the story I am now to tell was an actual historical personage than that our own King Arthur was; though his adventures, like the King's, have been enlarged and improved by the imaginations of many generations. Listen, then, to the story of the terrible Shiuten Doji, the man-eating ogre

natural creatures, but, no matter what form he might take in his waking hours, he could not keep it in sleep, and the moment that slumber overtook him he lay revealed in all his hideousness for what he was—a horned, red, ugly giant. His almost constant form during day was that of a great, clumsy, smooth-faced boy, 7ft. or 8ft. high; and as he passed all his inactive days in orgies of drunkenness, he was given the name of the Shiuten Doji, or the great drunkard boy. But always, as I have said, so soon as he was overcome by sleep, the smooth, boyish face was changed into that of a great, hairy, flaming, red demon, and in place of a great boy there lay an even greater horned and terrible giant.

This fearful creature lived wholly on human flesh, and to supply his larder he and



RAIKO RECEIVES THE EMPEROR'S COMMISSION TO DESTROY THE OGRE.

of Japan, and his final destruction by the valiant knight Raiko, aided by his five faithful esquires.

A thousand years ago, in the days of the good Emperor Murakami, there lived in a secure fastness among the mountains and woods a fearful ogre, who, with his body-guard of demons, laid waste the country round about, killing, plundering, enslaving, and devouring the people. This ogre was not originally an ogre by nature, as are those of most other countries, but a human being whose frightful impieties and flagrant crimes, long persisted in, wholly changed his nature and transformed him into a giant of cannibal tastes, and made him the scourge of the peaceful country-side. He had the faculty of changing his appearance, like other super-

his terrible retainers swept the country, killing and robbing and carrying off men, women, and children captives, of whom the most beautiful of the women and children were devoured by the ogre himself. And always he was waited on by his most beautiful prisoners, gentle ladies dragged from the nobles' castles, which he and his demons took and destroyed, till it became the turn of each of the unfortunate captives to be killed and eaten.

The news of these atrocities being brought to the good old Emperor Murakami, he was greatly afflicted and angry, and he asked if there were no valiant knights in his country who would face the Shiuten Doji and deliver the land from his oppressions. Now, at this time the greatest of the knights of Japan

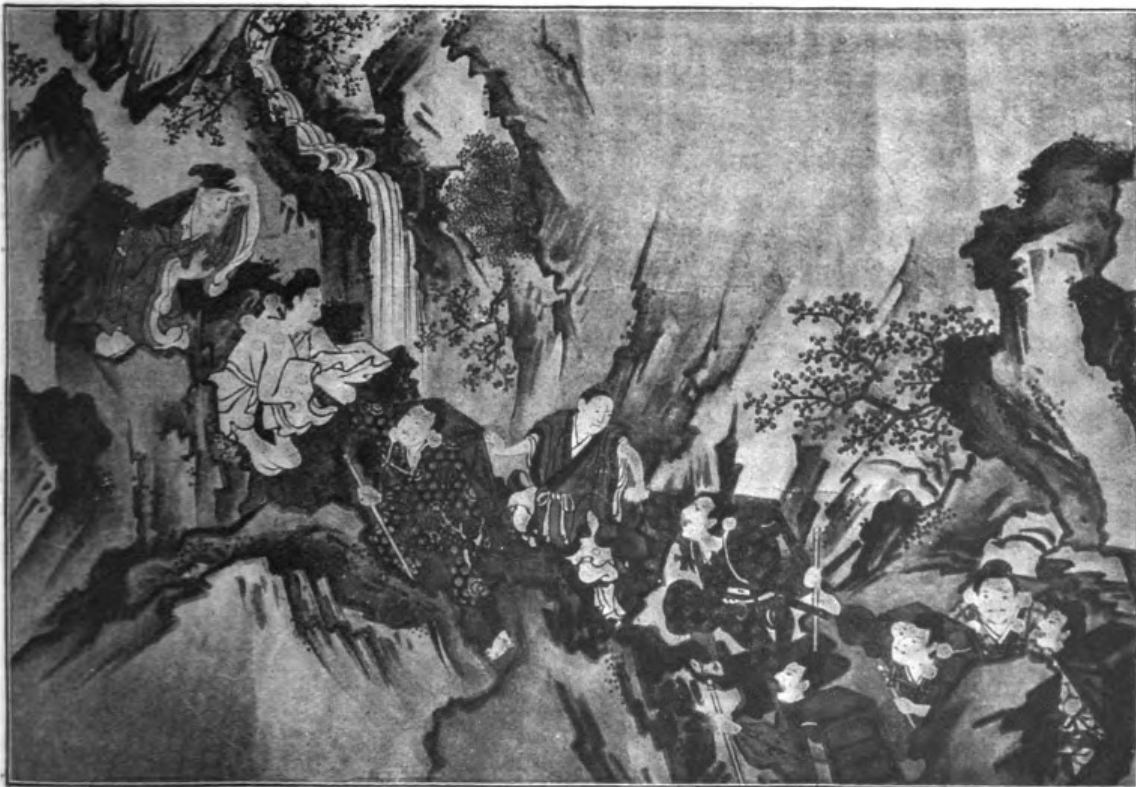
was one Yorimitsu, chief of the great Minamoto clan, who for his great deeds of valour had been given the surname Raiko—the name by which he was known in future ages. He had travelled for years in Japan as knight-errant, attended by his faithful squire Tsuna, righting wrongs, fighting demons, and succouring the oppressed. It was on one of these expeditions that he vanquished the great Demon Spider, of which I may perhaps tell you another time. Well, the Emperor's appeal was no sooner uttered than Raiko sprang forward and eagerly begged to be permitted to undertake the task. The aged monarch gladly accepted the offer, assuring the knight that when he spoke he knew that he could depend on the devotion of Raiko, and asked what aid he would need. But Raiko would have none, but that of his trusty squires, and expressed himself ready to face the demon and all his retainers with these at his back; and so he was given the Imperial commission, inscribed in golden letters, to go forth and destroy the Shiuten Doji and all who aided him.

First, like a devout warrior, Raiko repaired to the temples, offering up orisons before setting out on his adventure, and receiving purification at the hands of the priests. Then he took his squires into council, and while the arms were being prepared, and the great

two-handed swords sharpened, they resolved on their plans.

It was decided that the little band should travel disguised as travelling priests—Yamabushi—who wander about the mountains and woods. In this guise they might travel anywhere without causing suspicion as to their real objects. And so, all being ready, they set out, each carrying on his back the wooden box, or pack, that the wandering priests used. But in this box was no mere change of garments and scraps of alms, but the adventurer's suit of armour.

So they went their way laboriously on foot, through the woods and streams and over the mountains for many miles, slowly journeying toward Sumiyoshi, beyond which place lay the ogre's castle. And even as they went they heard rumours of the Shiuten Doji and terrible stories of his crimes, increasing in number and enormity every day. Many urged them to turn back or take another direction, else assuredly they would be taken and eaten by the demons. But for all these entreaties they pressed on the harder, resolved that they would strike at the giant as soon as they might, and so put an end to the destruction that devastated the land, or die themselves in their daring attempt. And so they went, till they came to a part all bleak and bare, where no living thing remained; for now they were nearing the ogre's country, and



RAIKO AND HIS FOLLOWERS MEET WITH THE GOOD SPIRIT.

all about had been devastated. That night they slept in the ruins of a noble castle, burnt and blood-stained, from which every person not killed on the spot had been carried off.

The next day, as they pressed forward in a rocky, barbarous place, where only pines grew, they spied before them, standing on a rock, an aged, white-bearded elder, who greeted them courteously and asked them whither they were bound.

"We are travelling priests, honourable father, as you see," answered Raiko; "and being come into this desolate place in our journey, we are going as well as we may toward a castle that is hereabout, that we may rest and eat."

Now, this white-bearded elder was no man, but a good spirit, the guardian spirit of that province which the wicked ogre had laid waste. So he answered and said, "O Raiko, well I know thou art a valiant knight, and no

Shiuten Doji." And he made himself known to them.

When Raiko and his squires knew that this was the Spirit of Sumiyoshi they bowed before him and gave humble salutation. And they went very joyously with him and rested in his retreat among the mountains, and ate and drank and were refreshed; and Raiko served the Spirit very dutifully with his own hands. And as they sat the good Spirit gave them much counsel as to the place they were going to and the ways and manners of the ogre and his demons, so that they should see nothing that should surprise them or disconcert their actions. And to Raiko the Spirit gave a magic golden cap to wear under his helmet—a cap that nothing could pierce: neither sword, nor axe, nor tooth, nor claw, no matter what spells of magic should be upon the weapon; for he warned him that all the expedients of black magic were used by the giant, and that the most valiant warriors



THE GOOD SPIRIT GIVES RAIKO THE MAGIC CAP.

priest, and these are thy brave squires; and well I know the castle thou seekest, the castle of the wicked ogre that slays and eats the people of the country. Truly I welcome thee and give my blessing. Come now, with thy good squires, and eat, drink, and rest in my retreat ere thou goest forth to slay the

would find themselves bewildered and helpless in the midst of his fiendish enchantments. Also, he gave the gallant companions a mighty drug that should overcome the spirits of the ogre and make him sleep.

And now, as Raiko and his little band went forward once more, the Spirit of Sumiyoshi



RAIKO FINDS THE WEEPING LADY.

was always with them, leading them safely over the rocky mountains through the black woods and dangerous passes and giving them words of encouragement. And so they went through a wilder and rockier country than ever, and at last arrived by the side of a lake where the Spirit bade them farewell, assuring them that he would be with them though invisible, and that presently they should see him again.

They kept by the shore of the lake till they came to a stream, and here they heard a sound of weeping. So they turned and followed the stream till they came upon a noble lady, who was weeping bitterly and washing a blood-stained garment as she wept. Of her they asked the whereabouts of the ogre's castle, but she entreated them to turn and fly, for if they were seen they would be taken, and their doom was certain. Finding them resolved, however, with a last warning as to what they might expect, she indicated a path through a little wood. This path they took. It was a short one, and no sooner had the adventurers emerged

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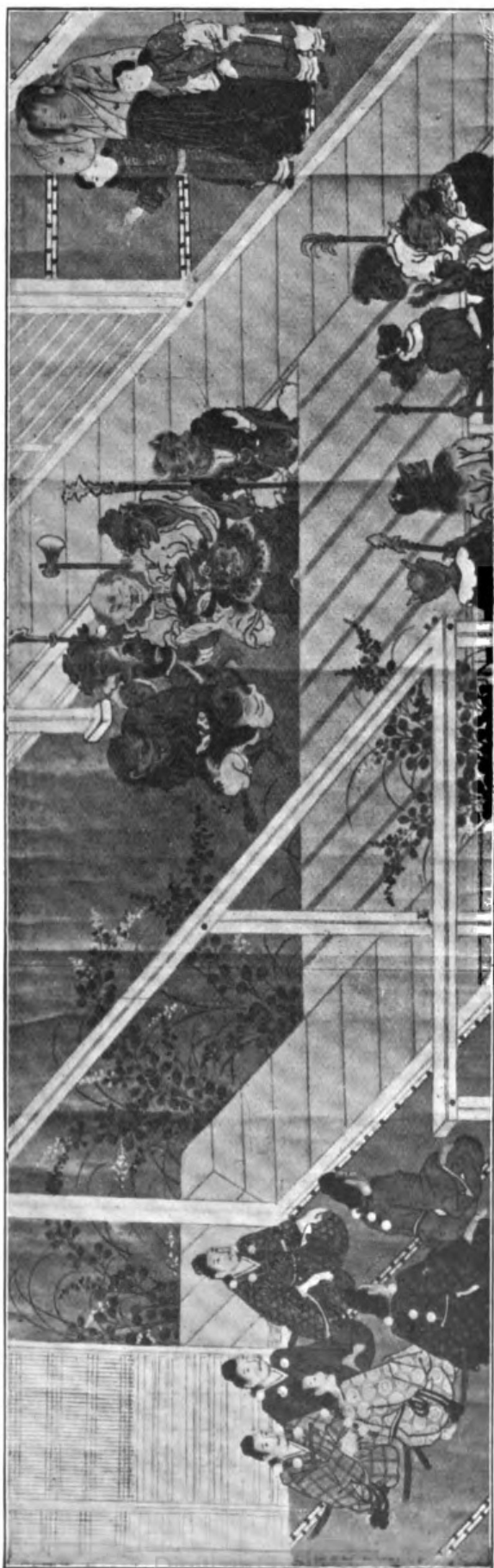
from among the trees than they found themselves before the great gate of the giant's castle, about which stood groups of demons of the bodyguard.

The demons—hairy, tusked, grotesque, blue, red, and green, and armed with fantastically cruel weapons—were amazed at the intrusion of this helpless handful of wandering priests. They received them with many mocking reverences, and assured them of a very hearty hospitality. But Raiko and his men kept impassive countenances, and, appearing to take the welcome quite seriously, prayed to be brought into the presence of the lord of the castle. The demons, anticipating a pleasant meal from these adventurous priests, led them to an ante-room while the news of their arrival was conveyed to the ogre.

It had been agreed that, until the time for action arrived, the adventurers should strictly avoid any appearance of surprise, no matter what might happen; and that they should behave precisely as they would in seeking the shelter of any nobleman's castle which they might come upon on their journey, conforming to the customs of the place, and



THE DEMONS AT THE GATE OF THE OGRE'S CASTLE.



RAIKO AND HIS FOLLOWERS RECEIVED BY THE OGRE.

betraying no signs that what they saw and heard was anything out of the ordinary. So they sat stolidly in the ante-room, apparently regardless of the sardonic grins of the demon guard, till presently they were told to follow the messenger, and at last found themselves in the presence of the dreaded Shiuten Doji.

He stood upon a daïs at the upper end of a great apartment, and on the lower floor at each side was ranged his personal guard of demons. He appeared in his usual waking guise of a great boy, clad in Chinese garb, and he rested upon the shoulders of two pages, also in Chinese costume. His smooth countenance was nevertheless very terrible as he demanded angrily to know the reason of the priests' visit.

Raiko and his men, sitting respectfully at the lower end of the room, bowed low, with their foreheads to the ground. "We are a small company of pilgrims, O Prince," answered Raiko, "and for many days have we wandered in unknown ways about this country, seeing no man, and much oppressed by the toil of travel. By good fortune have we come upon the gate of this your castle and palace, and we throw ourselves upon your worship's honourable hospitality, begging the rest and refreshment that are never refused to the poor Yama-bushi, more especially by so great a Prince as yourself."

"Truly you shall have our hospitality," answered the Shiuten Doji, in a great voice. "Truly you shall have the hospitality you deserve, every man of you—the hospitality that has been given every man, woman, or child that has come within my gates since they were built." And being minded to divert himself with the poor priests ere he added them to his list of victims, he called aloud that a feast should be prepared, and that the best the castle could produce should be laid before the guests, to whom he would do honour by eating and drinking with them.

So the seeming priests, having removed their packs and placed them within easy reach, took their seats to receive such entertainment as the ogre might give them. First he caused to be placed before Raiko a dish which he announced as the choicest to be procured in that country, and his own favourite. And behold, when the cover was removed there lay before the knight a human leg, bleeding and ghastly! But neither Raiko nor one of his squires gave any sign of disgust or horror, and the ogre, waiting to enjoy the panic which he had expected to see among them, was surprised to observe the apparent relish with which the chief of

the priests feigned to devour his portion of the loathsome food. "Come," cried the giant, "I see you are better men than I thought, you priests, and not so squeamish as I expected. We will drink together."

The horrible feast went on, the demon attendants waiting on the Shiuten Doji and his guests, and the warriors, showing no signs of astonishment or fear, still making pretence to eat and drink, till at last Raiko, bow-

ing low before the ogre, said, "O Prince, your humble servants and guests have had such a feast as never before was set before them. We are poor, and can never make an adequate return, but we have a secret in the preparation of hot wine that makes it a drink truly fit for a great Prince, and we beg to be allowed to show our skill."

Now, there was nothing in the world that the Shiuten Doji loved beyond strong drink, and he called aloud for saké, the Japanese wine made from rice. And as the fragments of the feast were cleared away the saké was brought, and the ogre, dismissing his pages, was waited on by two beautiful captives, two of the many noble ladies whom he had taken in his forays. The adventurers made hot



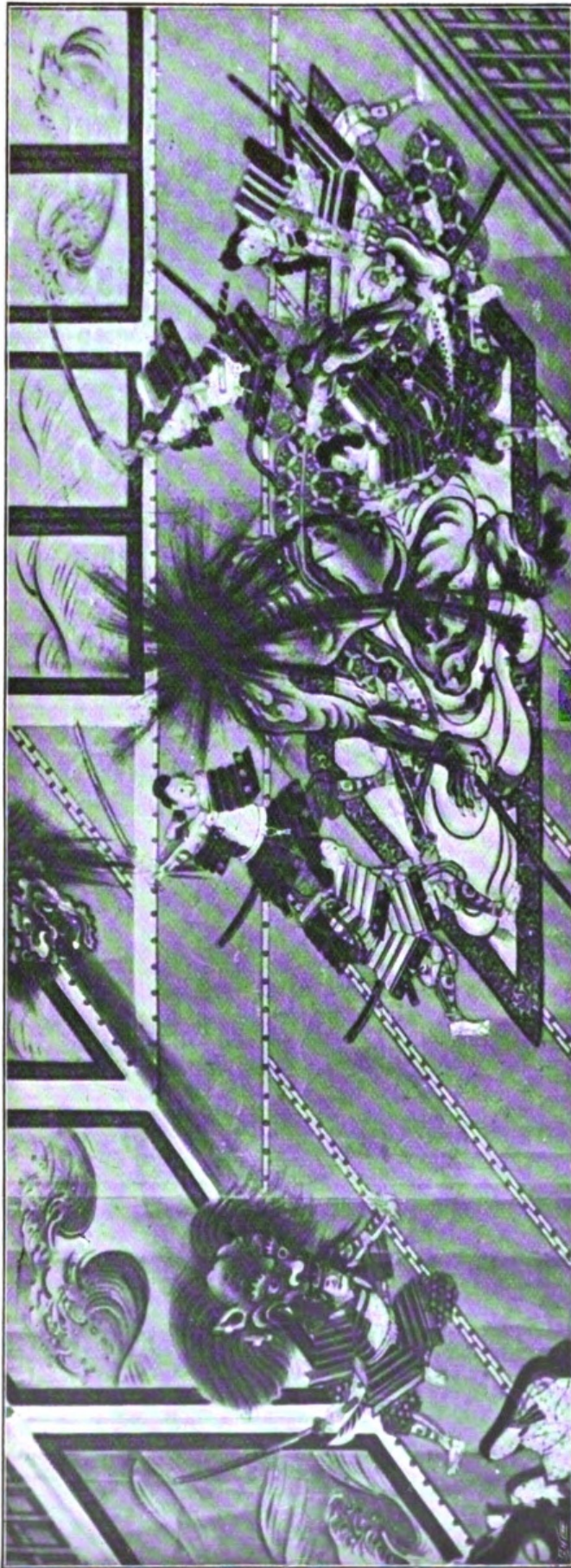
THE OGRE DRINKS THE DRUGGED WINE.

the saké, pouring into it the powerful drug given them by the good Spirit of Sumiyoshi, and when he had tasted it the ogre pronounced it the best drink that had ever been offered him.

So began an orgie in which the Shiuten Doji and his demon retainers drank copiously and recklessly, while Raiko and his companions cautiously kept themselves sober, and drank none of the saké that was drugged. Dances were called for, and after one of the demons had exhibited his skill, the Squire Sadamichi performed a brilliant measure, amid great applause. But all this while the drug was working, and presently the Shiuten Doji was hopelessly drunk, and was carried away by his attendant demons. The adven-



THE OGRE ASLEEP.



THE SLAYING OF THE OGRE.

turers still plied the remaining retainers, till at last every demon in the place was completely overcome, and fell helpless.

All this the heroes had done because they knew not what magical enchantments were at the hand of the ogre, and they were resolved that he should have no opportunity of so exercising them as to be able ever to continue his career of murder. And now they revealed themselves to the captive ladies, and, opening the packs they had been carrying, armed themselves completely.

The ladies, rejoiced to know that deliverers were at hand, led the little band past the sleeping guards and pointed out the chamber in which the ogre lay asleep. And here, as they approached the sliding-door, they saw before them once again the white-haired elder, the tutelary Spirit of Sumiyoshi.

"Greeting once more, O Raiko!" said the Spirit. "Truly thou hast done well, and I give thee my blessing now that thou goest to accomplish the end of thy purpose. But thou must know that the Shiuten Doji has a body of magical strength, and full of venom like a snake. So that though he be mortally hurt yet shall he live active and evil for a little while and poisonous to all he may wound. Wherefore take this my third gift—an enchanted cord. Tie him well with this while yet he sleeps and he shall be helpless."

So Raiko made obeisance to the Spirit and took the enchanted cord, and with his squires entered the monster's chamber. And now they saw the Shiuten Doji as he lay asleep, most wonderful to behold. For he was a great, hairy giant, far greater than he had seemed in his waking guise, tusked and horned and terrible, all of the colour of burning flame, and with the head of a demon. And round about him were many fair ladies, noble captives who saw with joy the coming of the adventurers in their armour, with their two-handed swords, heavy as lead and sharp as razors.

First, remembering the warning of the tutelary Spirit, the squires, under Raiko's direction, secured the ogre with cords, fastening him to the pillars

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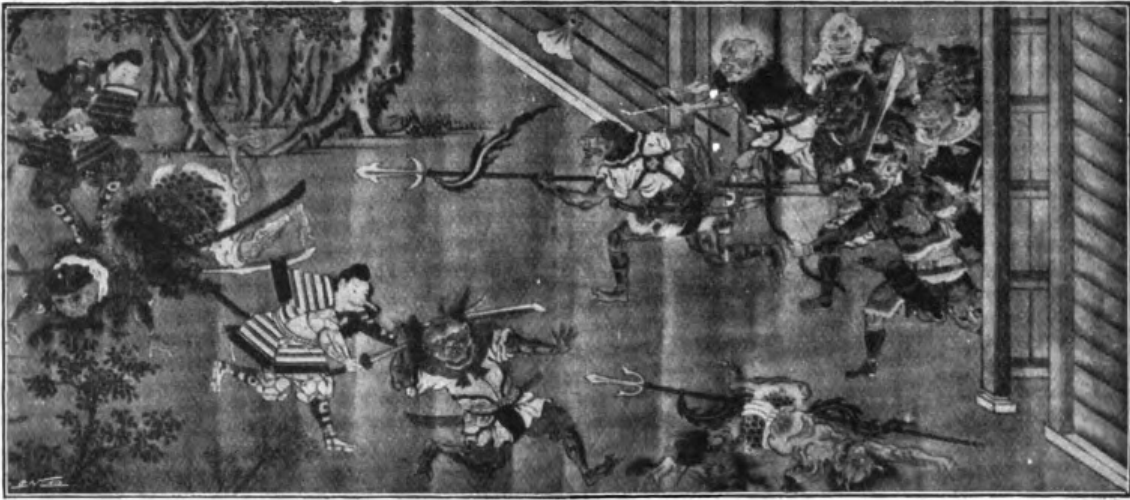
IN THE OGRE'S CHARNEL-HOUSE.

of the apartment. And, this being done, Raiko with one slash of his great sword struck off the horrible head. Then it was seen that the words of the Spirit of Sumiyoshi were true. For the great head sprang into the air, gnashing its teeth and spouting blood, and flew down upon the head of Raiko,* burying its terrible tusks in his helmet, and for the moment bearing the hero to his knee. But though the fangs pierced the hardened steel of the helmet the magic cap beneath was impenetrable, and so the gift of the good Spirit saved Raiko. More, as the head was struck off, the whole gigantic body turned and writhed, snapping every cord except the enchanted rope given by the good Spirit. But that held fast, and instantly the squires sprang upon the body, slashing it to pieces with their sharp swords, while the poor ladies ran in horror from the terrible scene. So was the Shiuten Doji slain, and the body so cut and dismembered that it could do no mischief.

Now, the terrible noise of this struggle awakened the demon guards, who rushed in helter-skelter upon Raiko and his men. But Raiko, flinging away his broken helmet, though still wearing his magic cap, met the captain of the demons as he came, and clove his head to the chin with a stroke of his sword; and the squires made great play with their long swords among the rest. Watanabe no Tsuna, Raiko's first and best-beloved squire, who had helped him kill the Demon Spider years before, cut one hideous devil in two across the waist, while Suyetaké and Sadamichi the dancer each brought down a demon with the terrible stroke that falls between neck and shoulder and cleaves the body to the opposite side; and the others, with similar feats of swordsmanship, overthrew the enemies opposed to them. And so the fight raged furiously, the half-dozen warriors maintaining their ground unflinchingly, and striking down the demons one after another as they came running into the fray. Till, after a long struggle and many wounds, the whole demoniac guard lay dead.

Then the heroes sought the dungeons where the ogre had kept his captives, and after a long search they came upon a fearful place where there were caves round about, and where the ground was strewn with skulls and bones. Guarding this place they found the last two of the demons, greater and more formidable than the rest. But

* In the illustration the head is shown twice, once in the air, and once biting at Raiko's head; the expedient is adopted by the artist to tell the story completely.



THE FIGHT WITH THE DEMONS.

these they captured alive and bound securely, thinking to use them as guides to such dungeons as might otherwise lie undiscovered. But now some of the captive ladies, seeing the last of the demons rendered harmless, came forward and conducted the gallant band through the caves, which were places more horrible than ever human eyes had beheld before, piled high with the bodies of hundreds of murdered people and littered everywhere with bones. So horrified were the adventurers at what they saw that they were impatient to return and kill the two remaining demons, that none should live a minute longer who had been concerned in crimes so fearful. And so at last, when every place had been explored and every wretched prisoner still alive released, they went and struck off the two demons' heads.

And this was the end of the ogre and his band. Taking the head of the Shiuten Doji with them, and the heads also of the chief among his demons, Raiko and his squires

returned in triumph to the Imperial city, bringing with them the noble ladies who had been rescued; and everywhere on the mountainous road where the passes were difficult or dangerous the Spirit of Sumiyoshi walked before them, leading them in the safest paths.

Of the Emperor's gratitude and of the rewards with which he loaded Raiko and his men there is little need to tell. The illuminated roll from which the illustrations have been taken describes a triumphal procession, and sets forth the honours at great length. The valiant Raiko lived to a great age—over a hundred—and died in peace, honoured through all Japan. The actual date of his death was the year 1021 of our era, and the slaying of the Shiuten Doji is said to have taken place in 947. It is probable that in reality the ogre was merely some powerful and cruel robber chief whom Raiko overcame, and the story has gained its supernatural embroidery in course of tradition.



THE EXECUTION OF THE TWO CHIEF DEMONS.