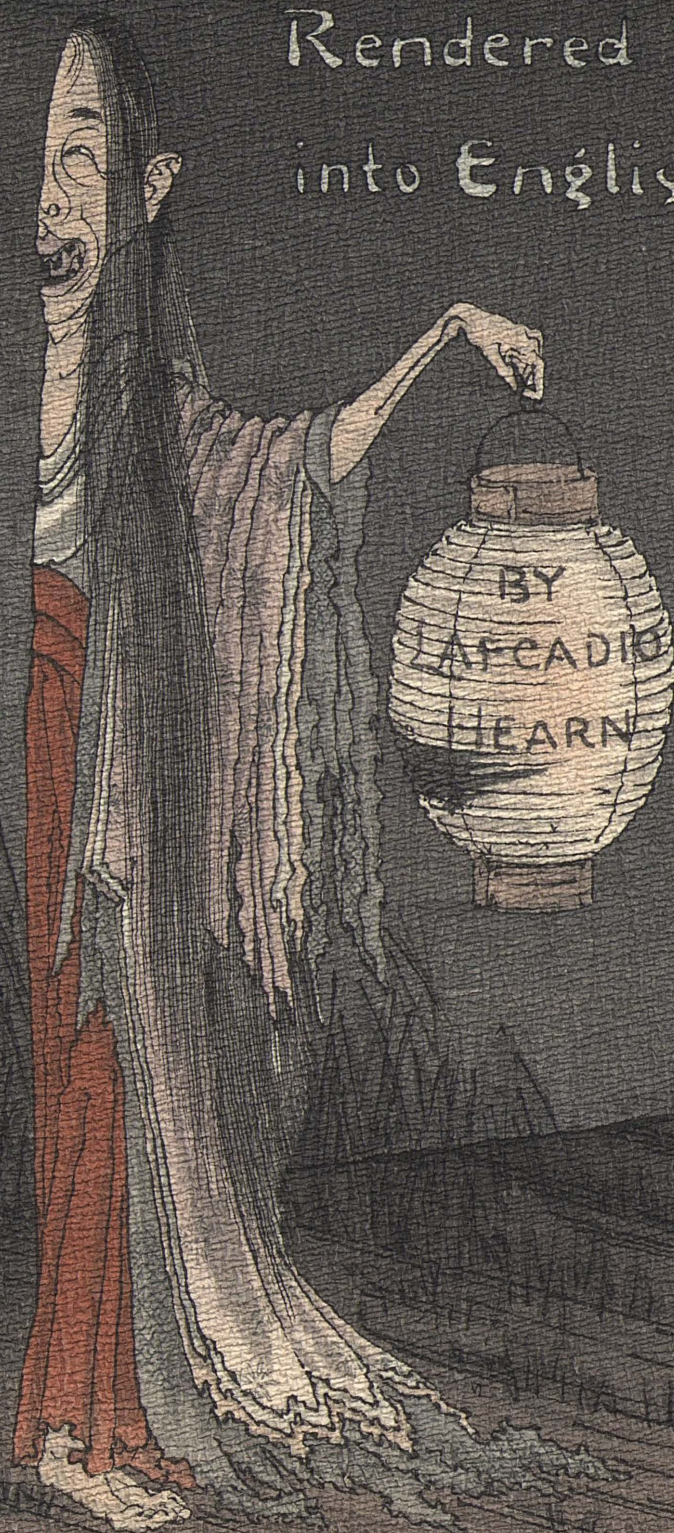


# JAPANESE FAIRY TALE THE GOBLIN SPIDER

Rendered  
into English







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明治三十二年四月十日第一版發行  
昭和六年十一月十日第六版印刷  
同年同月二十日發行

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T. Hasegawa, Publisher & Art-printer,  
17 Kami Negishi, TOKYO





# THE GOBLIN SPIDER

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LAFCADIO HEARN

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**I**N very ancient books it is said that there used to be many goblin-spiders in Japan. Some folks declare there are still some goblin-spiders. During the daytime they look just like common spiders; but very late at night, when everybody is asleep, and there is no sound, they become very, very big, and do awful things. Goblin-

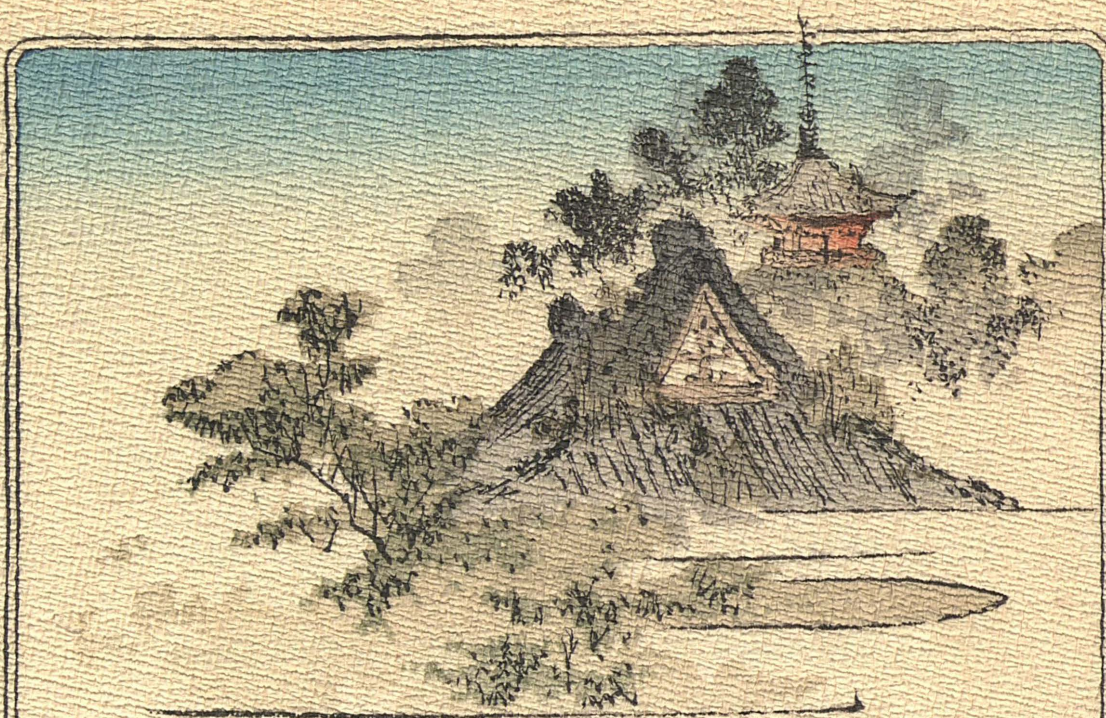


spiders are supposed also to have the  
magical power of taking human shape  
— so as to deceive people.

And there is a famous  
Japanese story about  
such a spider.







**T**HERE was once, in some lonely part of the country, a haunted temple. No one could live in the building because of the goblins that had taken possession of it. Many brave samurai went to that place at various times for the purpose of killing the goblins. But they were never



heard of again after they had entered the temple.

At last one who was famous for his courage and his prudence, went to the temple to watch during the night. And he said to those who accompanied him there:—





“If in the morning I be still alive,  
I shall drum upon the drum of the  
temple.” Then he was left alone,  
to watch by the light  
of a lamp.









As the night advanced he crouched down under the altar, which supported a dusty image of Buddha. He saw nothing strange and heard no sound till after midnight. Then there came a goblin, having but half a body and one eye, and said;





*"Hitokusai!"* (There is the smell of  
a man). But the samurai did not move.  
The goblin went away.

Then there came a priest and





played upon a *samisen* so wonderfully  
that the samurai felt sure it was not  
the playing of a man. So he leaped  
up with his sword drawn.





The priest, seeing him, burst out laughing, and said:—"So you thought I was a goblin? Oh no! I am only the priest of this temple; but I have to play to keep off the goblins.—Does not this *samisen* sound well? Please play a little."

And he offered the instrument to the samurai who grasped it very cautiously with his left hand. But instantly the *samisen* changed into a monstrous spider-web, and the priest into a goblin-spider; and the warrior found himself caught fast in the web by the left hand. He struggled bravely, and







struck at the spider with his sword,  
and wounded it; but he soon became  
entangled still more in the net, and  
could not move,







However, the wounded spider crawled away, — and the sun rose. In a little while the people came and found the samurai in the horrible web, and freed him. They saw tracks of blood upon the floor, and followed the tracks out of the temple to a hole in





the deserted garden. Out of the hole  
issued a frightful sound of groaning.



They found the  
wounded goblin in  
the hole, and killed  
it.

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