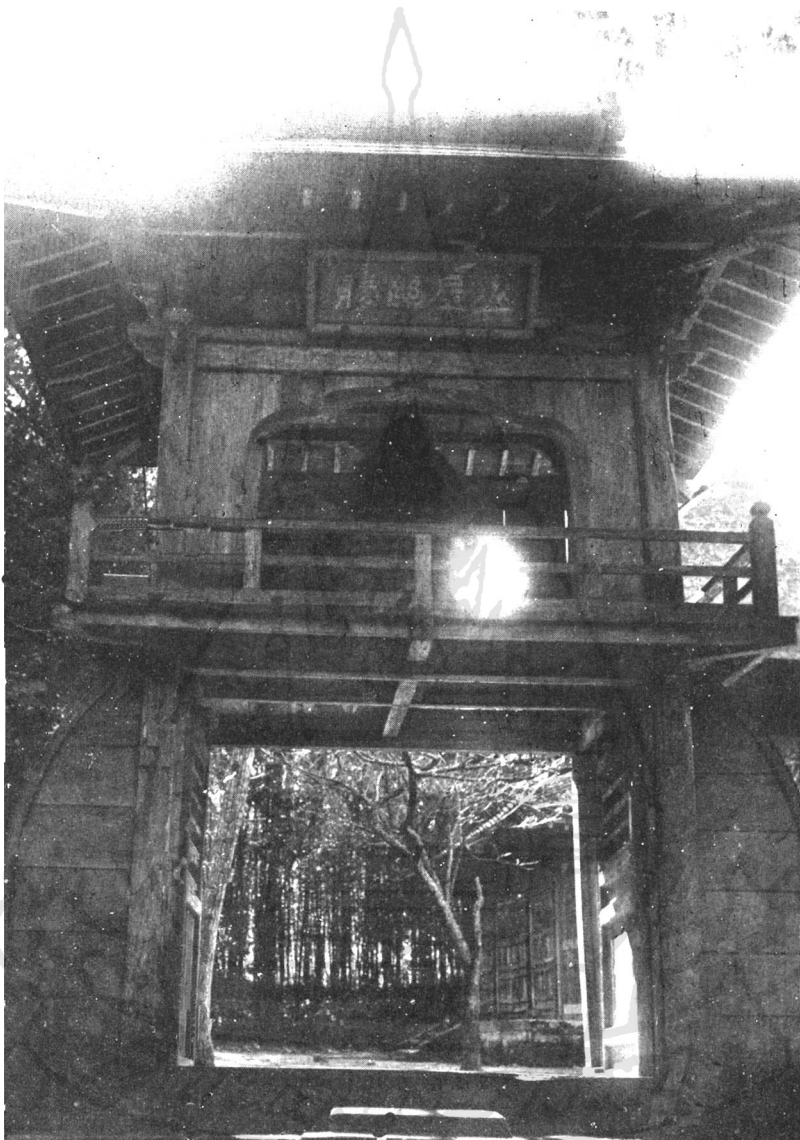


JŌCHIJI

On the Ōfuna high road opposite the approach to Meigetsuin is the gate of a very ancient temple, Jōchiji. Although now in an advanced condition of oblivion and decay, in the days of old Jōchiji was a foundation of high importance, ranking fourth on the list of Kamakura's five great monasteries: however its origin remains shrouded in the mists of uncertainty, and no exact records seem to have survived to the present day.

A long and gently rising avenue of cryptomeria leads to the courtyard, which is entered by a curious old gate and bell-tower in one, the large bell being suspended in the upper story with quaint and mediæval effect. The interior of the temple is of extreme simplicity, the sole adornment of the altar being three large figures of Amida, while below is a dark statue of the first Chinese priest to preside over the monastery.

A path running north of the bell-gate leads to the deserted Jizo-do. This dilapidated structure contains a National Treasure in the shape of the celebrated Jizo ascribed to Unkei, and which is supposed to be one of the best examples in Kamakura of this popular saint. The figure is time-stained and mouldy, conveying the impression of centuries of neglect.



The Bell Gate of Jochiji.