

## THE FUDO TEMPLE AND LAKE OF IMAIZUMI

"The green delight of the earth and the blue  
delight of the heavens are holding mystic  
dialogue in a tongue that is older than Time."

The small hamlet of Imaizumi consists of some dozen or more farmers' cottages, and lies somewhat over two miles distant from Engakuji, across the hills in a north-easterly direction. Before the thatched gate of Meigetsu-in a path crosses the stream towards the tomb of Tokiyori. A few steps beyond the tomb a small raised graveyard will be seen upon the hill, immediately below which a track ascends, bearing to the left; if this foot-path is followed it gradually rises to a pass commanding a wide panorama on every side, and rewarding the climber with an enchanting prospect of the manifold glories of earth and sky and sea. From the summit on the northern side the scattered thatched roofs of Imaizumi are visible in the valley below: the path descends—gently at first, then more precipitously—to the little hamlet, which is intersected by a high road. After traversing this road (from Ōfuna) for about a mile towards the east, the pilgrim reaches the enclosure of the famous Fudo; but half that distance brings one to the lake—a beautiful and picturesque sheet of water lying in a high valley, and reflecting in its sili green depths the thickly wooded peaks that rise steeply from its shores: the remoteness

and inaccessible nature of this tranquil and poetic spot contributing in no small measure to its charm.

This characteristic also belongs in a marked degree to the venerable mountain-temple that has stood for so many centuries enshrined in its old-world setting of hills and rocks and noble forest trees, far from the haunts of man: within the enclosure one is attracted by the loud rushing sound of water. Steps descend to a lower plateau; the waterfall leaps out of its rocky bed above that is credited with the unexpected attribute of restoring their senses to the insane! Nearby is a lodging erected for the accommodation of lunatics during the process of recovering their reason: the remedy is drastic and consists of standing beneath the fall three times daily with the whole force of the water descending upon their defenceless heads.

A steep abundance of steps lead up to the ancient and hoary temple, standing remote within its sacred grove. Midway towers a huge pine encircled with a *Shimenawa*, or rope with straw tassels, denoting an object of veneration. A short distance from the ground the mighty trunk divides into twain. This is the lovers' tree—a symbol of undying affection and marital fidelity—and is dedicated to *En-Musubi-no-Kami*; the god who hearkens to the woes of lovers. The great tree is supposed to be tenated by the sympathetic deity, and prayers offered here are considered efficacious in exercising the frets and obstacles that beset the course of true affection. The temple is dedicated to Fudo, the popular god of wisdom. A statue of the divinity sits aloft upon an adjoining hill: below are the thirty-six representations of his attendants, carved in stone and



A Corner of the Lake of Imaizumi.  
(viewed from above)

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arranged in tiers. The path on the left winds up to the *Shōrō*, or belfry.

The annual festival is held in March, when the priests give exhibitions of '*Hiwatari*,' or firewalking, before the assembled crowds of worshippers and pilgrims, slowly wending their way barefooted across a bed of glowing charcoal. The site of this demonstration is near the cascade; before the rite takes place, the priestly actors in this fiery drama divest themselves of their robes and purify their bodies from the dust of earth by standing beneath the falling water.

The steep road ascending the hill opposite the temple, spanned by *torii*, is a popular route leading to the peak of Hansōbō, and also to the cave-pierced heights above Kakaonji.