

KŌSOKUJI

A few paces before the gate of Hase-no-Kwannon, a path on the right leads to the little valley in which is situated the small, but historic temple of *Kōsokuji*; a locality held in high esteem by Nichiren worshippers for its connection with the saint and his disciples. This secluded and beautiful spot—enclosed on three sides by wooded heights—was in former times the abode of Mitsunori, a retainer of the Regent Tokiyori, and who later entered priesthood under the name of *Saishin*. At the time that Nichiren was seized and sent to Katase to be beheaded, (p. 248) four of his disciples intended to offer up their lives with their master—Nichirō, Nisshin, Shijō Kingo and his son: for safe keeping they were entrusted to Mitsunori, who confined his captives in a rocky cavern on the mountain-side above his dwelling. However the attempted execution of the saint, and the miracle by which he was preserved from death, made a deep impression upon the samurai, leading to his conversion, when he became an ardent disciple of Nichiren. A small hermitage was built in the grounds of his residence, which served as a place of worship until a suitable edifice could be erected. Thus originated the temple of *Kōsokuji*—whose title is written with the same characters as the name of the founder—his former prisoner Nichirō being installed as the first priest.

Although of small dimensions the interior is fairly

attractive, the centrepiece of the sanctuary being a statue of Nichiren that is alleged to have been carved by another of his disciples, Nikkō. The garden possesses a venerable plum-tree enclosed by a stone fence: this tree is an object of interest to the Nichiren pilgrims from the legend, duly recorded upon a notice-board, that the saint once hung his rosary upon one of its drooping boughs. An interesting tradition connected with this temple is that on his return from exile in the Island of Sado Nichiren took up his abode upon this site, and here he received Tokimune's famous charter, conferring full liberty upon the reformer to practise his religion free from molestation and opposition. An ascent on the right of this small valley leads up to the cave wherein the disciples were imprisoned, and which contains a statue of Nichirō. Nearby is a spring of clear water known as the 'Well of the New Moon': its waters are said to have been used by Nichiren to moisten his ink-stone in the composition of his essays during his sojourn in this locality.

Pictures of the imprisoned disciples are dispensed by the temple, together with the history of the cave; they were held in captivity from Sept. 12, 1271 until April, 1273—a period of some 18 months. Reprints are moreover furnished of the reprieve of Nichiren, also of the charter bestowed upon him by the *Shōgunate* three years later (May 2nd, 1274): the original of the latter document is asserted to be still in the possession of the temple.



Cave of Kōsokuji wherein the disciples were imprisoned
from Sept. 12, 1271 until April 1273.