

THE ROAD TO ENOSHIMA (*Continued*)

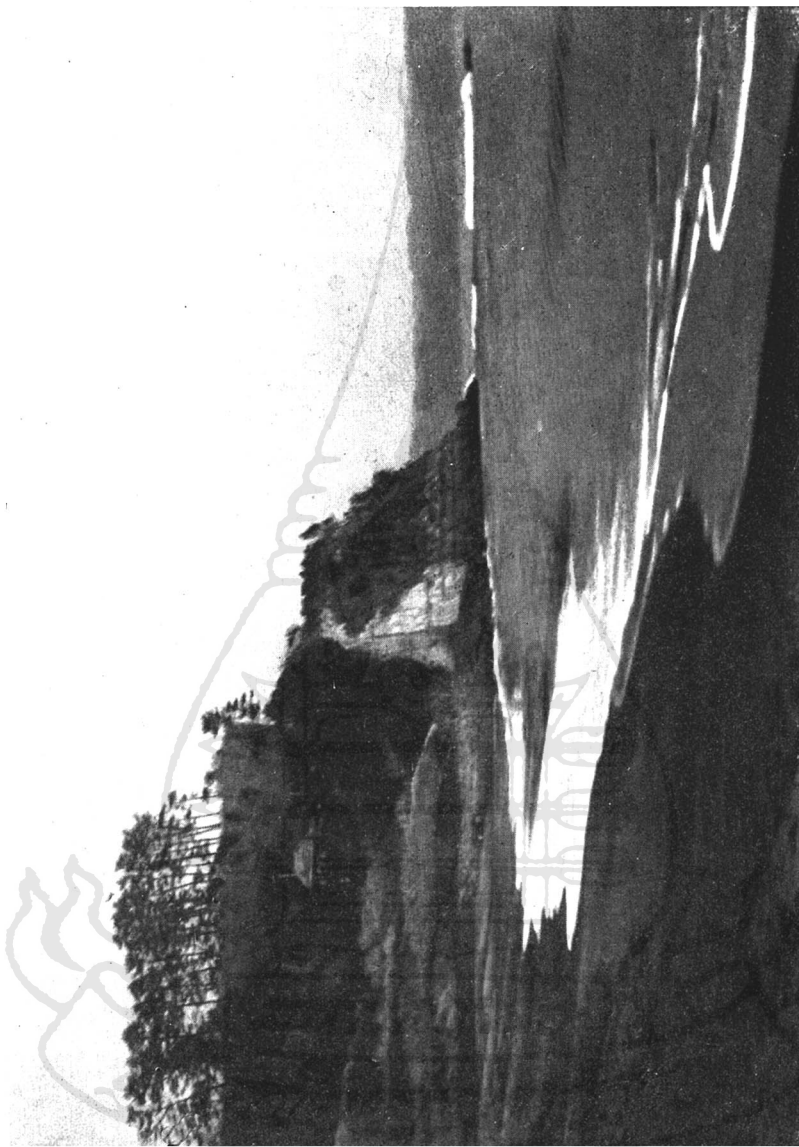
From Gokurakuji to Inamuragasaki is but a short distance. This historic cliff—so universally celebrated as the scene of the immortal drama of Nitta Yoshisada and the sword—appears to have received its name because the formation of the eminence somewhat suggests a pile of the rice-harvest. At the present day the base of this steep promontory always lies in deep water, but from ancient writings it appears that in the Kamakura Era a narrow strip of sand was left bare at low tide. The *Azuma Kagami* records that on Sept. 21st, 1191, Yoritomo and his suite repaired to Inamuragasaki in order to witness an archery tournament that took place on the beach.

A version of Nitta Yoshisada's invasion is given in the *Taiheiki*—the celebrated classical history containing an account of the Emperor Go-Daigo's attempts to overthrow the ascendancy of the Eastern usurpers, and may be translated as follows:—

‘ During the night preceding the attack Nitta ascended to the summit of the cliff, and in the moonlight watched the enemy's encampment. The silvery beams, paling in the light of dawn, revealed the dangers and difficulties with which the undertaking was beset. As far as the *Kiridoshi* (or cutting) on the northern side, the mountain was high, and the pass was steep and bristling with defences: a fortress had been constructed, and hostile

warriors, numbering many tens of thousands, were lying in wait. To the south, although so scanty was the strip of sand below the cliff, yet it was blocked with timber and obstacles to impede their progress: moreover the sea-approach was guarded by hundreds of war-ships stationed near the shore, and manned with archers all in readiness to pour their darts upon the foe. Nitta Yoshisada dismounted from his horse: from the edge of the towering cliff he fixed his gaze beyond the waiting craft, and uttering a fervid appeal to the sea-god, he cast his sword into the deep. Lo, a miracle! The tide—that had never before receded thus—obeyed the summons, and slowly rolled back its waves to the distance of twenty *cho* (over one mile); sweeping the threatening boats away upon the retreating flood, and leaving broad sands for the attacking host to fall upon their prey.

The tiny bay to the west of Inamuragasaki is known as *Sode-no-ura* (Sleeve-inlet) as it is supposed to resemble the shape of a sleeve. The seashore, extending from this point to Koshigoye is called *Shichirigahama*, or 'Seven-Ri-beach': in the old days, according to the Chinese standard of measurement 6 *cho* = 1 ri. This was the site of an ancient battle-ground: a record of over 200 years ago states that even at the time skeletons, bones, and broken weapons were constantly unearthed. The same chronicle describes the sand of this shore as being of black iron; dark as lacquer, and very fine—glittering like jewels in the sunlight and considered highly efficacious in polishing swords and weapons. Unlike the Kamakura beach, the wild and rocky shore of *Shichirigahama* is in the present day almost destitute of shells: however, according to the same authority, in



Inamuragasaki.

those days it was noted for the discovery of a beautiful pale-pink variety called the *hanagai*, or flower-shell, which was much used by girls in the construction of artificial flowers.

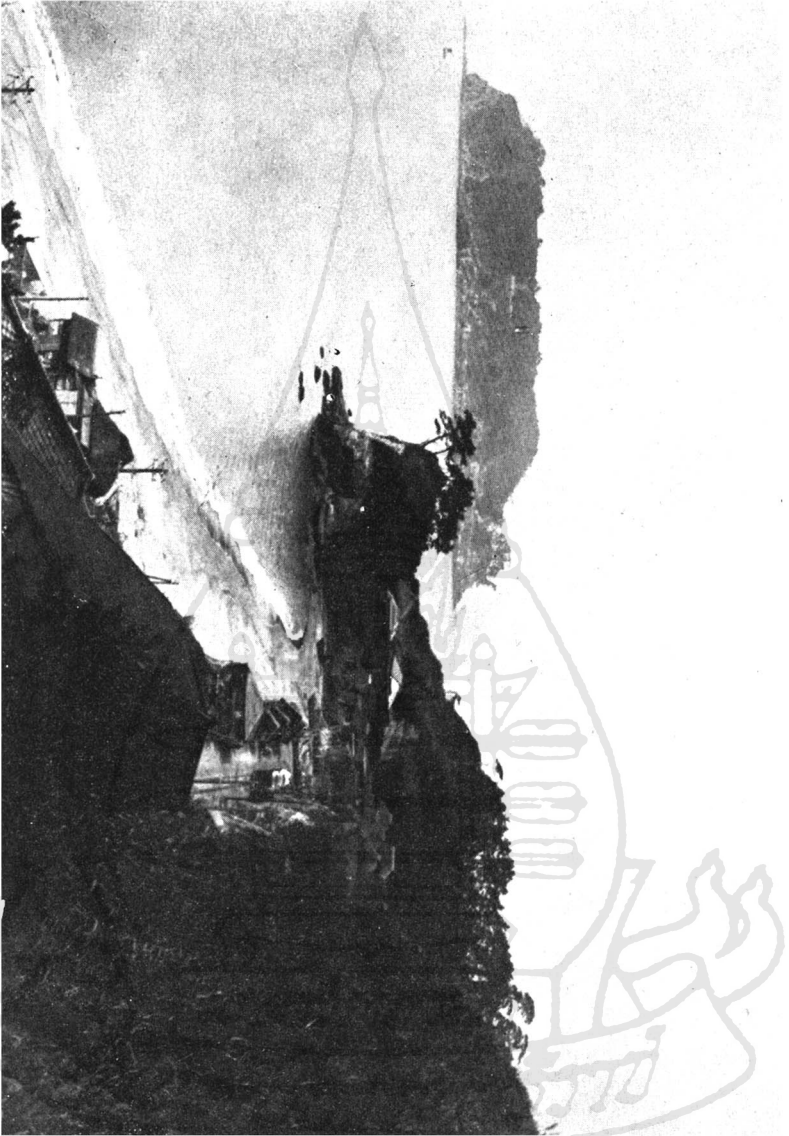
A few paces beyond Inamuragasaki a little brook flows into the sea; beside the bridge spanning this stream is a small cascade falling over the rocks in three tiers: this is the *Otonashi* or soundless fall, the water being supposed to descend upon beds of sand that muffle the sound. On the main road, a short distance before reaching this bridge, is an ancient pine with long drooping branches. Nichiren was said to have hung his *kesa* (part of his priest's robe) upon one of the boughs as he halted beneath its shade on his way to the execution ground at Katase, thus causing the tree to become a sacred landmark. The road continues with beautiful views to the *Yukiaibashi* or 'Bridge of Meeting'—the spot so famous in connection with the attempted execution of Nichiren: the messenger hastening to report the miraculous delivery to Kamakura met at this little stream the emissary of Tokiyori bringing the reprieve from the Regency.

Another interesting association with Nichiren exists in this neighbourhood, and enjoys great popularity with his numerous devotees; this is known as the *Amagoi-ike*, or lake from which the saint successfully prayed for rain. To the right of the bridge a path intersects the valley, its entrance being marked by a tall grey stone inscribed with scarlet characters and informing the faithful that this road leads to the holy ground sanctified by the intercession of Nichiren. Several of these monuments stand by the wayside to indicate the route—after a short

distance a turn to the left brings into view this famous hill.

In former times a large lake called *Tanabe-no-iké* existed below the small eminences—its shape, outlined by high banks, can be plainly distinguished, but the waters have been drained and the site converted into ricefields: it is said that the project has been discussed of restoring the lake and converting the historic scene to its pristine aspect—a charming addition to the landscape should this be accomplished. The little height is ascended by a rustic path; at the entrance is a well whose waters are used by the more ardent believers to purify themselves before mounting to the hallowed spot. The path leads to a huge pine of curious formation—gnarled and hoary, enclosed within a small fence and encircled with a *shimenawa*, or tasseled rope used to indicate an object of veneration: beneath these far-spreading twisted boughs tradition asserts the saint knelt to supplicate the gods to banish the dread spectre of famine and grant the longed-for rain. According to the legend, while the saint was wrestling in prayer for the alleviation of the general distress, a *ryu*, or dragon, appeared beside him, then ascended into the clear blue heavens: soon afterwards dark clouds rolled up from the horizon and the drought was at an end.

Near the ancient tree stands a monument roofed with a wooden canopy; this is dedicated to the holy messenger that assumed the guise of the dragon, and commands much attention from the numerous pilgrims that visit this place. On the western side, facing these memorials, a small commemorative temple has been erected, and through the efforts of the faithful celebrated



Shichirigahama, or 'Seven Ri Beach,' with Katase and Enoshima.

contemporary sculptor (Takeuchi Kiuichi) was recently requested to carve a statue of Nichiren to be installed therein. While the artist was considering what material would be best suited to his subject, a destructive storm occurred in Kamakura, during which a large bough of the consecrated pine crashed to the ground: this was forwarded to the sculptor and he converted it into the desired effigy of the saint. This statue is duly enshrined within the sanctuary and is considered a striking work of art. The detached shrine on the left contains a large statue of *Jōgyō-Bosatsu*—one of Buddha's immediate disciples and of whom Nichiren is believed by his followers to be a re-incarnation. This small building is also newly erected, and results from the enthusiasm of a guild of Yokohama devotees.

The Shichirigahama beach culminates in a beautiful pine-crowned rock—nearby lies Enoshima, the fairy islet; beyond, the gleaming shape of Fuji hovers in the 'unshadowed calms of over-curving sky', with indescribable effect: many poems have been inspired by the romantic beauty of this scene. Katase, the village on the mainland opposite Enoshima, is also celebrated in history as the spot where the Mongolian ambassadors, sent by *Kublai Khan* (1275 and 1279) on their mission of attempting to induce the Regency to pay tribute to China, met their doom. Both embassies met with the same drastic reception. The leaders of the former expedition were arrested upon their arrival by order of Tokimune, and escorted to the execution-ground at Kamakura: the latter were beheaded upon the Katase beach, their heads being pilloried as a warning.

The eastern part of Katase is known as *Koshigoe*;

famous in history from its association with the ever-popular Yoshitsune, ill-fated younger brother of Yoritomo. The story is well-known. Yoritomo's mind had been poisoned against his brother, and when after his brilliant victories over the Taira Yoshitsune was on his way to Kamakura to deliver his prisoners, and to give an account of his triumphs—in which he had rendered such powerful assistance to Yoritomo—he was intercepted at *Koshigoe*, and a document was transmitted to him by Hōjō Tokimasa prohibiting his entry to Kamakura. Yoshitsune remained at *Koshigoe* some twenty days while vainly attempting to allay Yoritomo's suspicions: during this period he stayed at the small temple of Mampukuji (in close proximity to the beach). Many relics of Yoshitsune and his giant follower Benkei are still preserved; the venerable tree in front of the little building is said to have been planted by Yoshitsune's own hands. On the right is a charming landscape-garden backed by high rocky cliffs: 'Benkei's stone' is pointed out, which tradition states he used as a seat; moreover this lake is known as *Suzuri-no-ike*, as Benkei is said to have used its waters to moisten the ink in inditing Yoshitsune's celebrated appeal to his implacable brother.

"Here am I, weeping crimson tears in vain at thy displeasure. Well was it said that good medicine tastes bitter in the mouth, and true words ring harshly in the ear. This is why the slanders that men speak of me remain unproved, why I am kept out of Kamakura unable to lay bare my heart.

"These many days have I lain here and could not gaze upon my brother's face. The bond of our blood-brotherhood is sundered. But a short season after I was born, my honoured sire passed to another world, and I was left fatherless. Clasp'd in my mother's bosom I was carried down to Tamato, and

since that day I have not known a moment free from care and danger. Though it was but to drag out a useless life, we wandered round the capital suffering hardships, hid in all manner of rustic spots, dwelt in remote and distant provinces, whose rough inhabitants did treat us with contumely. But at last I was summoned to assist in overthrowing the house of Taira, and in this conflict I first laid Kiso Yoshinaka low. Then so that I might demolish the Taira men, I spurred my steed on frowning precipices. Careless of death in the face of the foe, I braved the dangers of wind and wave, not recking that my body might sink to the bottom of the sea and be devoured by monsters of the deep. My pillow was my harness, arms my trade....."

(Aston's Translation.)

The original draft of this famous document is said to be still preserved at Mampukuji, and it was to this temple that Yoshitsune's head was supposed to have been sent for identification after his death in 1188. It is recorded that the latter grim relic of the brilliant young hero was despatched to Yoritomo in a lacquered 'headbox' according to custom: it arrived during the festivities that marked the triumphant completion of the temple of Hachiman.

A short distance beyond this small shrine of memories lies the large and important temple of Ryukōji.