

## HŌKAIJI

A short distance to the north beyond Hongakuji lies the temple of Hōkaiji. Although the building has shrunk to melancholy proportions, this spot is famed as the scene of the culminating tragedy of the Hōjō: the mansion occupied by the nine generations of the Hōjō Regents stood near the site of the present small survival. When the Imperialist troops under Nitta Yoshisada took Kamakura by storm, turning the city into a holocaust of flame, the ninth and last Hōjō Regent Takatoki, realising the end was at hand, assembled his family in the ancestral temple of Tōshōji. There, with some 870 of his officers and loyal retainers, all drank the farewell cups and 'died the death of fidelity', displaying extraordinary heroism; Takatoki himself, as of the most exalted rank, was the last to fall upon his sword, and with him perished the line of the Hōjō rulers. Later, it is recorded that the first Ashikaga *Shōgun* Takauji requested permission of the Emperor Go-Daigo to remove Tōshōji to the present site, together with all the bones and skeletons of the Hōjō—this was duly effected, and the name changed to Hōkaiji. The newly-established temple was presided over by the priest Enkwan, on whose demise Takatoki's second son, Jigen, succeeded to the office.

It was commonly rumoured that after this dreadful scene of carnage was enacted, the neighbourhood was haunted by the ghosts of the Hōjō martyrs; so a shrine



### The Hara-Kiri Yagura.

Cave containing the tomb of Takutoki and scene of the *orgy of suicide* that took place in 1333, wherein perished the last of the Hōjō Rulers.

called Tōkusō Gongen was erected to pacify the troubled spirits—(the Hōjō estate was known as Tōkusō): this small structure is still in existence on the left of the main entrance. Upon the altar of Hōkaiji are installed three large figures—*Jizō*, *Bonten* and *Teishaku* respectively: according to the temple record this divine trio was brought to these shores by a Chinese ship in 1335. Another small shrine on the left of the main entrance is dedicated to Shōtoku Taishi, son of the Emperor Yōmei, whose influence was so potent in establishing Buddhism in Japan; the central object is a quaint coloured statue of this famous Prince of the 7th century. A short distance behind the temple of Hōkaiji on the hillside is the *Harakiri yagura*—the cave containing the tomb of Takatoki: a wooden pillar is inscribed with the facts concerning the orgy of suicide that took place upon this spot, dying the earth with rivers of blood and wiping out the powerful family that ruled Japan from 1203–1333.

