

EMMEIJI

In the neighbourhood of the station is a bridge known as *Emmeiji-bashi*. Besides this bridge stands an unpretentious temple of modest proportions—Emmeiji, but the possessor of a remarkable statue to which a remarkable legend is attached.

An ancient history of Kamakura records that in the remote ages a certain nobleman upon one occasion was playing *sugoroku* with a lady opponent. (*Sugoroku* is a game of chance, played on a board with dice). After several contests, and becoming wearied of the ordinary stakes, he insisted that the next game should be played with the condition that the loser should discard all clothing, and stand disrobed upon the board. The lady lost! In confusion and consternation at such a prospect she closed her eyes and fervently prayed to the compassionate Jizo for rescue. Immediately a vision of the divinity appeared upon the board; his garments falling away, the form of a woman was disclosed.

The present statue of the Jizo was carved in illustration and commemoration of this incident, being known and celebrated as the *Hadaka* (or Naked) *Jizo*—the unique specimen of its kind in Japan. The *Hadaka Jizo* is enshrined within a curtained niche on the left of the altar, it is of life size and realistically tinted in natural colours. Arrayed in the silken robes of a priest and holding the customary emblems, the statue gives no sug-

gestion of its unusual form—but when the vestments are removed the body is revealed to be of feminine shape. In conformity with the legend the feet of the divinity are resting upon a *sugoroku* board: the temple guardian asserts that formerly the latter was constructed of beautiful and valuable wood—but owing to the cupidity of a priest this trophy has disappeared, at the present time the Jizo being reduced to an ordinary board for his pedestal.

The original temple of Emmeiji was founded in 1332, and was of imposing proportions. However at the beginning of the *Meiji* Era the building had become so decayed that its destruction was considered advisable. At the same time the *Kyō-do*, or Hall of the Scriptures, belonging to *Kōmyōji* was also done away with; so the timbers of the latter were procured wherewith to reconstruct Emmeiji, the present small structure being the result. Upon the altar are several statues of great antiquity, the centre-piece being a venerable image of Amida. At one time a son of Okajima Yasoemon (one of the Forty-seven *Rōnins*) was a priest of Emmeiji, and formerly the temple was in possession of a valuable painting of the immortal Forty-seven, but alas, like the *sugoroku* board this has also become 'the evidence of things unseen'.