

JIMMUJI AND KANAZAWA

“Verily an unearthly charm entwines this place of coolness, of silence, of shadows, fraught with memories ineffaceable . . . Not of strange sights alone is this charm made, but of numberless subtle sensations and ideas interwoven and interblended—the sweet sharp scents of grove and sea ; the dumb appeal of ancient mystic mossy things ; vague reverence evoked by knowledge of treading soil called holy for a thousand years ; the glory of the view from those green sacred silent heights between sea and sun ; and the remembrance of the sky, a sky spiritual as holiness, a sky with clouds ghost-pure and white as the light itself—seeming, indeed, not clouds but dreams, or souls of *Bodhisattvas* about to melt forever into some blue Nirvâna.” *Hearn.*

The ancient temple of Jimmuji is situated upon the rocky eminence known as Konodake, high up in the hills behind Dzushi ; a pilgrimage to the peace and solitude of this lovely spot constitutes one of the most delightful walks from Kamakura. Somewhat over a mile in the direction of Taura a tall stone carved with the temple's name stands besides a roofed gate ; from this point a long path ascends “through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways” to the sequestered space enclosed by rocks wherein is situated the main edifice of Jimmuji. Belonging to the Tendai sect of Buddhism, this foundation owes its existence to the celebrated priest of the 8th century Gyōgi Bosatsu : it is chronicled that later it was

repaired and restored under the direction of another famous divine, Jikaku, who died in the year 864. An appealing feature, that specially lingers in the memory in connexion with this remote mountain-temple, is its intense greenness. Every shade of verdure blends into an inexpressibly restful and harmonious ensemble ; from the deep tones of ancient forest-trees to the pale hues of the jungle of ferns, and the rich luminous emerald that glows from the heavy film of moss clinging to the huge boulders, and lavishly carpeting these leafy aisles and corridors ;—that

“Strange tapestry by Nature spun
On viewless looms aloof from sun,
And spread through lonely nooks and grotts
Where shadows reign and leary rest.”

Steps cut in the solid rock lead up past the belfry, past the six Jizo in their placid niches, to a higher level, entered by a two-storied gate from which the protective presence of the kings has disappeared. The building opposite is the famous *Yakushi-do* described in early records, dedicated to the Healing Buddha, and containing a venerable image said to have been carved by the priest Gyogi himself. A smaller shrine nearby contains the *Anzan Jizo*, to whom expectant mothers have recourse ; prayers to this divinity being considered efficacious in securing a safe journey into the world for the impending scion. Amongst the noble old trees a great pine is conspicuous, whose trunk measures ten feet in diameter : this is described in ancient books as the *Tengu-no-koshikake-matsu*, or the pine upon whose boughs a tengu was in the habit of reclining.

The path to the summit ascends from the left of the

Yakushi-do. After a short climb the track forks to the right, where a relic of past days will be observed in the shape of a notice carved in stone whereon members of the female sex are prohibited from desecrating the sacred mountain by proceeding beyond that point! A beautiful monument of green stone records the visit of the present Emperor, when Crown Prince, to the heights of Jimmuji. The narrow path winds up to the summit of this chain of hills, along which enchanting views are commanded in all directions—the peninsula lying beneath like a map in relief. It is asserted that when the atmosphere is clear the peak of Nantai-San, above Chuzenji (Nikkō), is plainly visible. To the south, the vast Pacific glitters in the sunshine, while on the northern side is outlined the indented shores and irregular promontories of the bay of Tōkyō; nearby lies Yokosuka, the great naval port, with its wide harbour and grim vessels of war;—the blue inlet of Taura; and beyond, the pine-clad islets and jagged coast of Kanazawa.

This latter resort is six miles from Kamakura along the high road, and was first discovered by a Chinese priest of the Ming dynasty, who detected a resemblance between the celebrated *Hsi-lu*, or Western Lake in China, and the lovely and imaginative scenery of Kanazawa, beloved of poets and painters and widely famed for its *Hakkei*, or Eight Views. The latter are named from the Chinese originals:—

Sunlight dispersing the mists of Susaki,
 Descending wild geese of Hirakata
 The twilight bell of Shōmyōji-
 The evening snow of Uchikawa
 Returning sails of Ottomo

The sunset glow of Nojima
The autumn moon of Seto
The evening showers of Koizumi

In this instance the 'wild geese' are represented by the people of the district gathering shells in the lagoon at low tide; viewed from a distance they present a similar effect to the birds of the Chinese scene. The names refer to various beauty spots in the immediate neighbourhood: Nōken-do—a small temple on the hillside above—and also a height outside the village are considered the best coigns of vantage for admiring the poetic effects of the 'Eight Views.'

In the days of the Kamakura Era Kanazawa was a town of considerably importance, and possessed a celebrated library of Japanese and Chinese books—the (*Kanazawa Bunko*) first established by Hōjō Sanetoki, a grandson of the second Regent. This collection of valuable works having somewhat declined, it was restored under the auspices of a member of the Uesugi family, Norizane; however towards the end of the 16th century the library practically disappeared. A remnant still exists in the shape of certain of the books and documents preserved in Kanazawa's most important temple, Shomyōji, also founded by Sanetoki. The late Prince Ito, who possessed a villa at Kanazawa, contributed over three hundred books to the latter collection, which were used as works of reference at the time the Constitution of Japan was compiled. The name of this romantic spot is derived from the fact that in the Hōjō days it was the stronghold of Sanetoki, another name of whom was Kanazawa; the site of his castle remains to the present day.

The picturesque old temple of Taineiji enshrines an

ancient figure known as the *Heso Yakushi* from its legend. Long, long ago a very poor thread-spinner lived in the village; her poverty was so extreme that on the death-day of her parents she was unable to make the customary offerings. In despair she wove all her thread into a number of *Heso*, or round cotton balls—but no one needed them, and none would buy: at last a beautiful youth appeared and purchased all her stock. Overjoyed, the poor woman at last was able to make her offerings: lo, in front of the compassionate Yakushi lay a pile of the cotton balls—the deity himself had come to the rescue and personated her deliverer!

Tradition also associates this temple with Yoritomo's unfortunate brother Noriyori. Five hundred soldiers led by Kajiwara Kagetoki were sent to attack him during his exile at Shuzenji, province of Idzu, but Noriyori set fire to his place of residence and then committed suicide. His charred head was found and despatched to Yoritomo at Kamakura: subsequently this relic was buried in the temple of Taineiji.

