

KAMAKURA-NO-MIYA

“Death and love are two wings that bear man
from earth to heaven.”

This is the only temple in Kamakura of modern foundation; it was constructed as recently as the year 1869 by order of the Emperor Meiji, and is of pure Shintō architecture. Prince Morinaga, to whom the shrine is dedicated, was formerly the head priest of a temple on Hiyeizan near Kyōto, and, was also known as Daito-no-miya from the name of his place of residence. A stone bridge spanning a small stream gives access to two courtyards, shaded with a grove of pines, maples, and many cherry-trees.

On the right-hand side of the upper court is a building enclosed within a high dark palisade. This *sanctum* was specially erected as a rest-house for the Emperor Meiji when he visited this shrine in 1873: it consists of a wide matted verandah with two rooms—the apartment on the right contains the raised dais upon which His Majesty reposed. The *tokonoma* is decorated with an interesting work of art in the shape of a life-sized and vigorous equestrian statue of Prince Morinaga, in which the spirit of mediæval times is well reflected; the ill-fated Prince is clad in picturesque armour, equipped with a case of arrows and grasping a long bow; this carving was the work of a modern sculptor, Kisai Yamada, and was executed in 1893.

The shrine of Kamakura-no-Miya is of historic and tragic interest, for here the unfortunate Prince Morinaga, third son of the Emperor Go-Daigo, was imprisoned for seven months in a dark cavern behind the temple, and then cruelly assassinated in 1335 at the age of twenty-seven. This gallant prince had been the mainstay of the revolution which had for its object the overthrow of the military government and the restoration of the Imperial ascendancy, which had been divested of all power by the military rule at Kamakura. However the crafty and ambitious Takauji (who became the first Ashikaga *Shōgun*), realising that the Prince was a serious obstacle to his design of establishing himself at Kamakura as the military governor and practical ruler of the empire—conspired to poison the Emperor's mind against his own son, and falsely concocted a plot to the effect that the innocent Prince Morinaga was scheming to depose his Imperial parent and to usurp the throne in his stead. Unhappily the Emperor Go-Daigo was over-susceptible to the influence of his advisers, and lending a ready ear to these sinister reports, in Nov. 1334 he caused a warrant to be issued for his son's arrest.

In answer to the accusation Prince Morinaga inscribed a pathetic appeal to the parent whose cause he had so loyally served, and passionately asserted his innocence: he concludes with the following words:—

“In spite of all this I have unwittingly offended. I would appeal to heaven, but the sun and moon have no favour for an unfilial son. I would bow my head and cry to the earth for help, but the mountains and rivers do not harbour a disloyal subject. The tie between father and son is severed, and I am cast away. I have

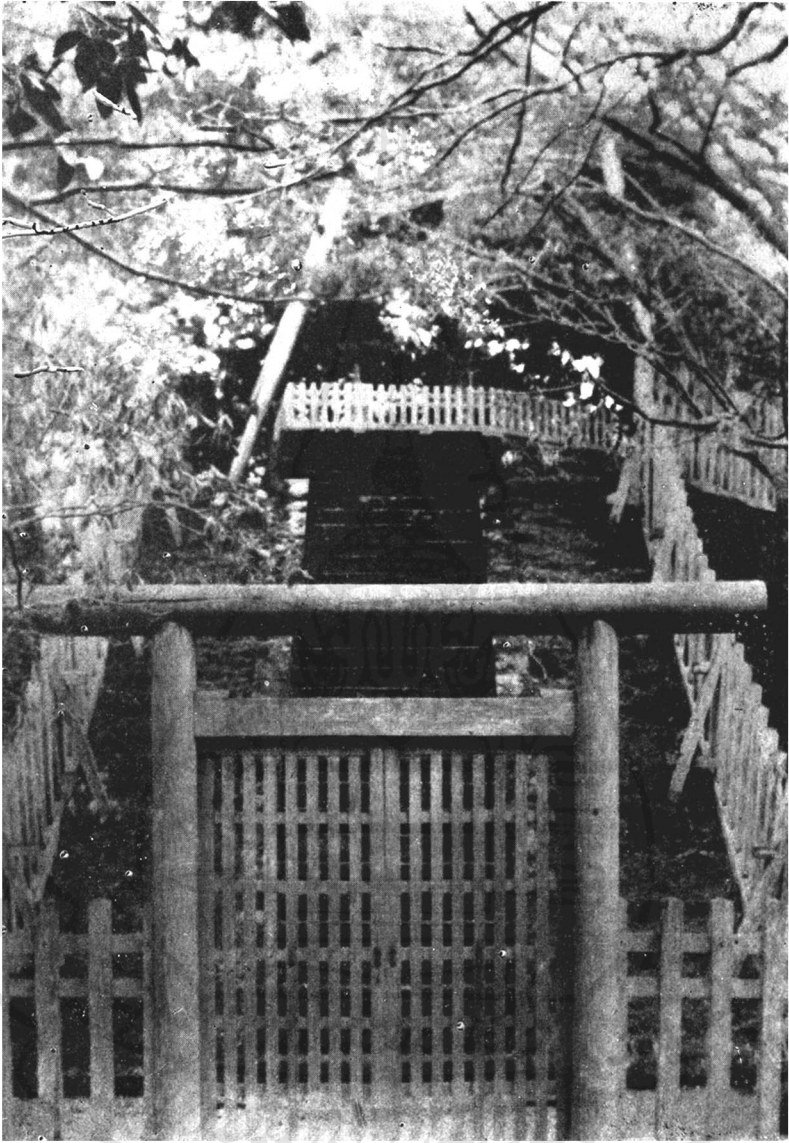
no longer anything to hope in this world. If I may be pardoned, stripped of my rank, and permitted to enter religion, there will be no cause for regret. In my deep sorrow I cannot say more."

Go-Daigo's heart might have been melted had he received this affecting petition; but the messenger fearing the wrath of Takauji it was never delivered, and the doom of the ill-starred Prince was written in the Book of Fate. He was exiled to Kamakura, where he was placed in charge of Tadayoshi—brother of the enemy who had accomplished his ruin—and who confined his victim in this dark and gloomy cavern. Seven months later, just before the invasion of Kamakura by Hōjō Tokiyuki (son of the late last Hōjō Regent), as Tadayoshi was leaving Kamakura he determined to put an end to his royal prisoner. Accordingly he instructed one of his followers named Fuchibé to return, in order to execute this deed as speedily as possible.

History thus describes the tragic scene that ensued. With an escort of seven horsemen the assassin arrived at the earth-prison, but although in the outer world the morning sunshine was clear and invigorating, the air of the dank cave was dark as night; by the light of a flickering taper the captive was reciting the Scriptures. Fuchibé announced his presence, informing his victim that a palanquin was in readiness to bear him from that place. Straightway the Prince grasped the ominous significance of this message, for which, doubtless he had long been waiting; springing forward he cried, "Thou art the messenger of Death" and essayed to wrest away the assassin's sword, but Fuchibé was too dexterous; parrying the attack he felled the Prince to

the earth, inflicting a sharp wound upon his knee with the weapon. However the imperial spirit was not yet quelled. When the murderer leapt upon his victim's chest to consummate his evil purpose, the frenzied Prince seized the dagger in his teeth, breaking off part of the steel—but furiously grasping another sword the emissary twice stabbed Prince Morinaga in the heart: then raising the dying prisoner by his long black hair he slashed off his head. As Fuchibé was bearing away this trophy as a sign that the grim and bloody deed had been accomplished—the expression of the dead face, with its mournful eyes widely opened, was so appalling that the courage of the murderer failed him, and he cast away his dreadful burden a few paces beyond the cavern. A pathway leads to this place; the actual spot where the head was thrown is railed in, and a notice is erected whereon the circumstances are recorded. Later on the remains of Prince Morinaga were buried on the top of a hill a short distance eastward of the shrine amidst surroundings of great natural beauty, the tomb lying in the shadow of a mighty pine-tree: the hill is now enclosed with a palisade by order of the Imperial Household, and entrance is forbidden.

As this temple is of such modern foundation naturally its treasures are few. But they comprise a few memorials of the Prince in the shape of various manuscripts, including one in his own handwriting; also a realistic painting of the severed head, pale and cadaverous of aspect, in which harrowing representation the artist has rendered full justice to the sufferings of the imperial victim.



Entrance to the Mountain-tomb of Prince Morinaga.