

THE RUINED TEMPLES OF KAMAKURA

I

ONE of the results of the earthquake disaster of 1923 in Japan was the partial destruction of the ancient town of Kamakura and the demolition of numbers of temples and historical sites. The earthquake brought down many of these ancient shrines in a second just as if they were a pack of cards instead of massive weather-beaten old edifices which had withstood the hand of time, some of them for centuries. Kamakura itself, which was the seat of the Shoguns' government in ancient days, and is in modern ones a smiling seaside town noted for its ancient sites, fared sadly from the ruthless shaking of that disastrous day. When most foreigners think of Kamakura, they remember the Daibutsu, the great image of the Buddha Amitabha. Pictures of this Buddha may be found all over the world. It is almost too well known to require description, for when the word Buddha is mentioned to the average globe-trotter, it means the Daibutsu of Kamakura. But to the Japanese, Kamakura was famous not only for the beautiful statue of Amida but also for many other ancient relics of the past. All over the town and in its immediate environs were historic and interesting temples set in beautiful surroundings. Alas! many of these, although happily not all, are now no more or survive in a mutilated state, — an irreparable loss to the historian, the artist, and the religionist.

While the memory of these ancient fanes is still with me, I wish to recall them to those who have seen them and remind those who have not of all they meant to the history, art, and religion of Japan.

First of all, the Daibutsu itself. Fortunately it still stands although it has sunk somewhat and is propped with stones and shows that even its massive bulk must have stood some shaking. Fire, flood, and earthquake each has tried to displace the

serenity of this Buddha but in vain. It still sits unmoved, calm, lost in meditation, symbol of the wisdom of the East. It stands in a charming retired grove about a mile from the railway station. Tradition has it that in 1195 A. D. Yoritomo, founder of the Shogunate form of government in medieval Japan, when taking part in the dedication of the restored temple of the Nara Daibutsu, desired to have a similar object of worship in his own capital of Kamakura. He died however before he was able to carry out the plan; but a lady of his court, Itano-no-Tsubone, together with a pious priest, Joko-Shonin, collected funds for the purpose, and in 1252 a large wooden statue was sculptured, the head of which was eighty feet in circuit, and a stately temple to enshrine it was built. But ten years later it was demolished by a great storm and it was then resolved to erect the Buddha in some more enduring material, so the present majestic statue was cast in bronze in 1252 A. D. by the artist known as Ono Goroyemon. We know nothing more of this wonderful artist who has given to the world the perfect statue of Amitabha Buddha. Something, I am sure, of the Buddha's serenity must have been a part of his own soul. The image was enclosed in a spacious temple which was twice destroyed by tidal waves, but the Buddha sat on serenely with downcast eyes and hands folded in meditation. Last year the adjoining temple was again destroyed. I like to think that a woman had the chief part in the erection of this grand statue. It was due to her efforts that funds were collected to built the colossal figure, and this has not been forgotten; for behind the Daibutsu is a stone memorial to the lady Ita-no Tsubone and flowers and incense are still offered to her spirit.

No matter when one sees the Daibutsu, in early morning, at high noon, in the twilight, or by moonlight, it is always wonderful and impressive. What marks it most is the expression of serenity which it reflects. One may come to the Buddha sad or happy, calm or nervous, angry or filled with melancholy, yet the impression is the same. This Buddha touches the soul

with something of its own peace and serenity, and looking at its calm face and perfect repose of world-abstraction one is filled even if only for an instant with an admiration which is a combination of appreciation and love.

Lafcadio Hearn felt this for he writes: "No matter how many photographs of the colossus you may have already seen, this first vision of the reality is an astonishment. The gentleness, the dreamy passionlessness of those features — the immense repose of the whole figure — are full of beauty and charm. And contrary to all expectation, the nearer you approach the giant Buddha, the greater this charm becomes. You look up into the solemnly beautiful face — into the half-closed eyes that seem to watch you through their eyelids of bronze as gently as those of a child, and you feel that the image typifies all that is tender and calm in the Soul of the East. Yet you feel also that only Japanese thought could have created it. Its beauty, its dignity, its perfect repose reflect the higher life of the race that imagined it; and, though doubtless inspired by some Indian model, as the treatment of the hair and various symbolic marks reveal, the art is Japanese."

Professor Chamberlain has said in his book, *Things Japanese*, "He who has time should visit the Daibutsu repeatedly; for, like Niagara, like St. Peter's, and several other of the greatest works of nature and art, it fails to produce its full effect on a first or even on a second visit; but the impression it produces grows on the beholder each time that he gazes afresh at the calm, intellectual, passionless face, which seems to concentrate in itself the whole philosophy of Buddhism, — the triumph of mind over sense, of eternity over fleeting time, of the enduring majesty of Nirvana over the trivial prattle, the transitory agitations of mundane existence." According to John La Farge: "Like all work done on archaic principles, the main accentuations are overstated, and saved in their relations by great subtleties in the large surfaces. It is emphatically modelled for a colossus; it is not a little made big, like our modern colossal

statues; it has always been big and would be so if reduced to life-size." Speaking of the Daibutsu as a colossus, it might be well to remember its dimensions. Its height is forty-nine feet seven inches and its circumference ninety-seven feet two inches. The length of its face is eight feet five inches and its width from ear to ear seventeen feet nine inches, the length of the ear itself being six feet six inches. The circumference of the thumb is three feet. The eyes are of pure gold and the silver boss on the forehead weighs thirty pounds. The image was not cast in a single sheet but made of sheets of bronze cast separately, brazed together and finished off with a chisel.

As I have said, in the old days a great temple encompassed it, but I wonder if much of its charm is not due to the fact that it stands unfettered and unprotected in the open under the sky among the pine trees. It thus makes one think of some great Arhat in India sitting in meditation in a lonely forest, absorbed in contemplation, yet there is no doubt that the Buddha would gain in impressiveness if it were in a more lonely place, in a vaster space, solemn rather than picturesque. In spite however of the rather circumscribed surroundings the coming and going of tourists and pilgrims, the tea-houses and the charm selling booth beside it, in spite of all these drawbacks, I say, the Buddha is perfect to the beholder in its representation of complete repose and pure peace. Here, it must be felt, is the personification not only of Japanese beauty but the symbol of the teachings of Buddhism, which give repose to the spirit and rest and peace to the religious devotee.

There is another great statue in Kamakura much revered by the Japanese. It represents Kwannon, the goddess of mercy. It is made of gilded lacquer over thirty feet high. It stands in the Hase temple. Unfortunately the goddess is hidden behind a wooden door where it is so dark that in order to see the statue well the attendant priest uses a lantern on a pulley so that one can see it only in sections. This is of course a

great drawback and the beholder can only imagine how striking the golden goddess might be were she in more fitting and lovely surroundings. Lafcadio Hearn, master of description, has spoken of the Kwannon thus: "The old priest lights a lantern, and leads the way, through a low doorway on the left of the altar, into the interior of the temple, into some very lofty darkness. I follow him cautiously awhile, discerning nothing whatever but the flicker of the lantern; then we halt before something which gleams. A moment, and my eyes, becoming more accustomed to the darkness, begin to distinguish outlines; the gleaming object defines itself gradually as a Foot, an immense golden Foot, and I perceive the hem of a golden robe undulating over the instep. Now the other foot appears; the figure is certainly standing. I can perceive that we are in a narrow but also very lofty chamber, and that out of some mysterious blackness overhead ropes are dangling down into the circle of lantern light illuminating the golden feet. The priest lights two more lanterns, and suspends them upon hooks attached to a pair of pendant ropes about a yard apart; then he pulls up both together slowly. More of the golden robe is revealed as the lanterns ascend, swinging on their way; then the outlines of two mighty knees; then the curving of columnar thighs under chiselled drapery, and, as with the still waving ascent of the lanterns the golden Vision towers ever higher through the gloom, expectation intensifies. There is no sound but the sound of the invisible pulleys overhead, which squeak like bats. Now above the golden girdle, the suggestion of a bosom. Then the glowing of the golden hand uplifted in benediction. Then another golden hand holding a lotus. And at last a Face, golden, smiling with eternal youth and infinite tenderness, the face of Kwannon."

The temple which enshrines the Kwannon is picturesquely situated and being small and low escaped destruction by the earthquake. There is a belfry containing a fine bell, one of the three largest and finest in Kamakura. The boom from it

is clear and resonant like a great prayer breathed out to land and sea, and it is interesting to note that when it is sounded it is said that all influences of ill omen, all calamities and catastrophes cease and all prayers are granted. Pity then it did not strike at two minutes before noon of that fateful day, September 1, 1923.

This temple of Kwannon is supposed to be of very ancient date, but the present building was erected by Yoshimasa, the eighth Ashikaga Shogun who died in 1492 at the time that Columbus discovered America.

The following is the legend of the temple as related by Lafcadio Hearn.

“In the reign of Emperor Gensei, there lived in the province of Yamato a Buddhist priest, Tokudo Shonin, who had been in a previous birth Hoki Bosatsu, but had been reborn among common men to save their souls. Now at that time in a valley in Yamato, Tokudo Shonin walking by night saw a wonderful radiance; and going towards it, found that it came from the trunk of a great fallen tree, a kusumoki or camphor-tree. A delicious perfume came from the tree, and the shining of it was like the shining of the moon. And by these signs Tokudo Shonin knew that the wood was holy; and he bethought him that he should have the statue of Kwannon carved from it. And he recited a sutra and repeated the Nembutsu praying for inspiration; and even while he prayed there came and stood before him an aged man and an aged woman; and these said to him, “We know that your desire is to have the image of Kwannon Sama carved from this tree with the help of the gods; continue therefore to pray, and we shall carve the statue.”

And Tokudo Shonin did as they bade him; and he saw them easily split the vast trunk into two equal parts, and begin to carve each of the parts into an image. And he saw them so labour for three days; and on the third day the work was done, — and he saw the two marvelous statues of Kwannon made perfect before him. And he said to the strangers: “Tell

me I pray you by what name you are known." Then the old man answered: "I am Kasuga Myojin." And the woman answered: "I am called Ten-sho-ko Daijin; I am the Goddess of the Sun." And as they spoke both became transfigured and ascended to heaven and vanished from the sight of Tokudo Shonin.

And the Emperor hearing of these happenings sent his representative to Yamato to make offerings and to have a temple built. Also the great priest, Gyogi Bosatsu, came and consecrated the images and dedicated the temple which by order of the Emperor was built. And one of the statues he placed in the temple enshrining it and commanding it: "Stay thou here always to save all living creatures!" But the other statue he cast into the sea, saying to it: "Go thou whithersoever it is best, to save all the living."

Now the statue floated to Kamakura. And there arriving by night it shed a great radiance all about it as if there were sunshine upon the sea; and the fisherman of Kamakura were awakened by the great light; and they went out in boats, and found the statue floating and brought it to shore. And the Emperor ordered it that a temple should be built for it, the temple called Shin-Hase-dera, on the mountain called Kaiko-san, at Kamakura.

There is a famous Shinto shrine in Kamakura which is known to most tourists. Like the temples at Nikko and the Kasuga shrine at Nara, it is painted red and makes a charming picture in a frame of green pines and cryptomerias. This is the temple of the god Hachiman.

The stage building of the sacred dance and the great red colonade were demolished, but the inner shrine standing at the head of a long flight of steps is intact. The doves still hover about the shrine portal and fly down to eat the grain which visitors may buy, served in tiny plates. The picturesque approach to the shrine has been partly spoiled by the loss of the big

drum bridge and other buildings. There remains the lotus pond which in August displays beautiful white and pink flowers, so closely associated with thoughts of Buddhism. When we see the pure and graceful lotus flowers do we not think of the mystic phrase, "Om mani padme hum!" (The jewel in the lotus)? The aged *icho* (gingko) tree, said to be over one thousand years old, is as stately as ever.

In former days there were many grand buildings in the Buddhist style, the guardian gates of the Ni-o, the belfry, the pagoda, the six-sided pavilion, the Gomado where incense was constantly burned, the Rinzo library where the holy books were kept, and the priest quarters, and the great altar building. Hachiman was constructed in the style of Ryobu Shinto; for until the Restoration of 1868 this temple represented the teachings of both Shinto and Buddhism, an amalgamation of the two sects inaugurated by Gyonen and augmented and developed by Kobo Daishi. The present buildings were built in 1828 in this style of architecture, but in 1868 the Buddhist elements were effaced as far as possible in order to preserve Shinto in its simplicity. Except for its brilliant colour it is plain and austere compared to what it must have been in the former days of its Buddhist splendour before the time of the ruthless separation of Buddhism and Shinto. The present temple was erected on the site of a former temple built in Yoritomo's day. The deity worshipped here is Hachiman who was the son of the Empress Jingu, herself a woman of unusual qualities, noted for her manlike spirit, her beauty and intelligence, and who invaded Korea and conquered it. The god had a flourishing reign under the name of Ojin, and upon his death became the patron god of soldiers; for this reason no doubt Yoritomo favoured this god and this temple, and did everything in his power to enhance its beauty and brilliancy. Hachiman was the patron saint of the Minamoto family, and there is a legend to the effect that Yoshiie, ancestor of Yoritomo was born as a son of the god and inherited his

bravery and valour and this name was given to him by his father and he was called Hachiman Taro, so there are really two Hachimans who receive worship from the people. In the later times of Ryobu Shinto, the Buddhists found that Ojin incorporated the eight incarnations of a Bodhisatva.

The dancing stage or Maidono before the earthquake was situated in front of the broad flight of steps leading to the main shrine, but now it has been destroyed. This dancing stage was associated with the name of a beautiful woman, Shizuka Gozen. She was the mistress of Yoshitune, famous youngest brother of Yoritomo. During the exile of Yoshitsune, she was taken prisoner by Yoritomo, brought to Kamakura, and forced to dance in public before him. She obeyed, but as she danced she sang a love song to Yoshitsune exalting his virtues and his heroism and bemoaning his fate. Yoritomo was angry and went away, but he did not take the life of the brave lady as all feared, for another remarkable woman, Masako, the wife of Yoritomo, intervened in her behalf, and her life was saved but saved for sadness, for later when her little son was born he was taken from her side and killed. So was Yoritomo revenged upon her for her spirited song. The poems she sang at that time are famous.

"O village maiden at the spinning wheel,
May it not turn backward just once for me!
Bringing back my old happy times again!"

"Oh, the hills of Yeshino buried snow white,
Where is he whom I love now wandering?
Alas! I know not, but how I long for him!"

Hachiman temple is associated with another interesting character that of Sanetomo, the second son of Yoritomo and the reigning Shogun. There is a great Gingko tree by the steps leading to the main shrine, and this was the scene of a tragedy, for here Sanetomo was murdered one night as he was returning from a ceremony at the temple. His assassin was

his nephew Kugyo who believed that Sanetomo had been instrumental in bringing about his own father's death. As Sanetomo descended the steps Kugyo rushed out at him, thrust at him with his sword and carried off his head. So perished the last survivor of the direct line of Yoritomo. One may fancy that the spirit of Shizuka Gozen was now revenged for the murder of her lover and of her little son. But the young Shogun Sanetomo draws our pity, for he seems to have been a fine young man and a poet of wonderful character. His poems are considered among the best in classical literature.

As you walk on past Hachiman towards Ofuna station you will come to a small temple reached by a steep flight of steps called Arai-no-Emma or Ennoji. Now Emma-O is the god of the Buddhist hells who judges the departed souls. He is represented with a judge's cap and with a most fearful and terrible face with wide open eyes and mouth. This Emma was carved by the celebrated artist Unkei seven hundred years ago and it is said that he died and his soul was brought before Emma who said to him: "When you were alive you made no image of me. Look at my face well and go back and carve it." Unkei returned to the land of the living and from memory wrought the fearful face. The image is kept in a shrine-like receptacle, and at a certain time the priest draws the curtain, and Emma, god of the hells, suddenly glares at you. As Lafcadio Hearn says, "And suddenly, out of the blackness of some mysterious profundity masked by that sombre curtain, there glowers upon me an apparition at the sight of which I involuntarily start back, — a monstrosity exceeding all anticipation, — a Face." On the platform around him stood Ju-O, the nine kings, companions of Emma. I say "stood" for since the earthquake they are mutilated and broken, an arm here, a head there. They are all in piles, the pieces of each god in a separate heap, but I understand as they are government treasures they will be repaired. This is not the first time they have

suffered disaster, for formerly Ennoji stood near the sea-shore and in the fourteenth century the temple with its treasures suffered from the great tidal wave which destroyed the Daibutsu temple. Kamakura has indeed been a great sufferer from the disastrous forces of Nature, — flood, tidal wave, wind, fire, and earthquake. The dread Emma-O has also been injured but the terrible face is till intact and in time will look out from his shrine again. Unkei was a celebrated sculptor of the Kamakura era and a great master of the art. His sculptures are among the art treasures of Japan. They are always characterised by great force and spirit. Professor Fenolosa says that Unkei and Tankei, another great sculptor of the Kamakura era, are as well known to modern Japanese as Donatello and Michael Angelo are to us and that as individuality was the keynote of the new life in the violent days of Yoritomo, they gave great prominence to portraiture. Unkei did much of his finest work at Nara and Kyoto, but later he came to live at Kamakura, and Kamakura is identified with Unkei as far as sculpture is concerned. Besides the dread Emma and the Devaraja, there are two other notable sculptures at Ennoji, the wrinkled old hag, Shozukano-Baba, the demon who is supposed to rob dead children of their garments and compells them to pile up stones upon the banks of the River of the Dead, Sai-no-kawara. The earthquake has shuttered her also, but restoration is contemplated as the face is still intact. The other work of Unkei's here is a small statue of a fierce demon remarkable for the skill in moulding his muscular little body.

As I walked down the steps of Ennoji, I could not help thinking with keen regret of the old straw-thatched Kamakura temples in the Chinese style, now broken or patched, and if patched then roofed with tin and corrugated iron. The whole landscape is changed. One's spirit grows heavy. I retrace my steps to Engakuji where I am lodging and of which I shall write next time, reflecting upon the transitoriness of this terrestrial world, "this fleeting soap-bubble

world," as a Buddhist poet words it. Suddenly amidst the desolation and waste of Engakuji, the gong belonging to the monks' hall boomed forth and I heard one of the priests intoning the sutra to the goddess of Kwannon. Ah, I thought, the temples may be broken and mutilated, but the spirit of Buddhism is alive even in the waste. It will take more than a great earthquake to destroy it.

BEATRICE SUZUKI