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 mediaeval 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 Takauiji (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 fear-
ing 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 cadaverous 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.