

## THE STORY OF A MOTHER.

FROM THE GERMAN OF H. C. ANDERSEN,  
BY OMICRON.

A MOTHER sat beside her child, sad and over come with care, lest it should die, for it was so pale and its little eyes were closed, it drew as heavy and at times as deep a breath as if it were sighing its little life away, and the mother looked yet more sorrowfully upon her child. A knock was heard at the door, and a poor old man came in who seemed to be covered all over with a great horse cloth, to keep him warm, and indeed he had great need of it for it was then cold winter. Outside, every thing was covered with ice and snow, and the wind blew so sharply in his face that it made him shiver with cold. And while the old man shivered, and the little child slept for a moment, the Mother went and placed some beer in a small pan on the hearth to warm for the old man. He sat and rocked himself, and the Mother seated herself on a stool near him and looked upon the sick child. She took its tiny hand in hers, and still it drew its breath as deeply and as heavily as before.

"Do, you not think," she said "that he will be left to me, and that the Blessed God will not take him from me. Then the old man,—'t was Death!—nodded so evasively that it might just as well mean yes as no, and the Mother cast down her eyes, and tears rolled down her cheeks.

For three long days and longer nights she had no rest, and her head was so heavy that now she slept, but it was only for a moment, and she started up and shook with the cold. "What was that?" she cried as she looked around on every side, but no one answered, for the old man was gone, and her child was no where to be seen, and yonder in the corner creaked and groaned the old clock—the heavy leaden weight ran down the floor with a bang—and the clock stood still—and the poor Mother rushed out of the house and called on her child.

In the midst of the snow sat a woman in long black robes—and she said to the bereaved Mother: "Death has been with you—in your chamber—I saw him, but just now, come out with your child—he was in great haste and walked swifter than the wind. He never brings back what he takes away."

"Tell me! Oh tell me only which way he went, and I will find him" said the Mother.

"I know the way" said the woman in the black garments "but before I tell you, you must sing me all the songs that you have sung for your child—I love those songs—I have listened to them before—I am the Night, and have seen your tears as you sung for your sick child."

"I will sing them all,—all" said the Mother, "but do not detain me now, I must go and find my child."

Then the Night sat down silent and quiet, and the Mother wrung her hands, sung, and wept, and there were many songs but still more tears.

Then said the Night. "Turn to the right among the dusky pines, I saw Death go in there with your little child."

Deep and far into the dark pine wood did the Mother work her way, and she knew not what direction she should take, but she saw a Thorn-bush which had neither leaves nor flowers upon it, for it was cold winter and icicles hung from the twigs.

"Have you seen Death pass by with my little child?" asked the Mother.

"Yes," said the Thorn-bush, "but I will not tell you which way he went until you first warm me in your bosom for I freeze here to death, I shall soon be clear ice."

Then the Mother clasped the Thorn-bush to her bosom, and so closely that it became altogether thawed, and the thorns penetrated into her flesh, and her blood flowed in great drops. But the Thorn-bush shot out fresh green leaves, and blossomed in the cold wintry night; so warm is the heart of an afflicted mother.

And now the Thorn-bush told her the way, and she next came to a great Sea on which neither ship nor boat was to be found. The Sea was not frozen hard enough to bear her over, nor yet was it shallow enough for her to wade through it, so she laid herself down to drink it up, but that was indeed impossible, yet, the sorrowing Mother thought that perhaps a miracle might be wrought in her favour.

"No! that will never do," said the Sea, "let us two rather be of one mind—I love to gather pearls, and thine eyes are the most precious pearls I have seen. If thou wilt weep them out into my bosom, I will bear thee over to the great conservatory, where Death dwells. All these that thou seest are his trees and flowers, each of them corresponds with the life of a human being."

"Oh! what would I not give to find my child," said the weeping Mother, and she wept still more, until at last her eyes fell out upon the sea shore, and became two costly pearls.

Then the Sea lifted her up so softly, just as if she were on a couch, and in a moment she found herself on the wished for shore. There, was a house, wonderful in size and structure, so that one could not tell whether it was a great mountain with woods and caves, or was divided into numberless apartments, but the Mother could not see it, she had wept away her eyes.