The story of the aged mother

The Story of the Aged Mother A Japanese Folktale by MATSUO BASHO Long, long ago there lived at the foot of the mountain a poor farmer and his aged, widowed mother. They owned a bit of land which supplied them with food, and their humble were peaceful and happy. Shining was governed by a despotic leader who though a warrior, had a great and cowardly shrinking from anything suggestive of failing health and strength. This caused him to send out a cruel proclamation. The entire province was given strict orders to immediately put to death all aged people. Those were barbarous days, and the custom of abandoning old people to die was not common. The poor farmer loved his aged mother with tender reverence, and the order filled his heart with sorrow. But no one ever thought a second time about obeying the mandate of the governor, so with many deep hopeless sighs, the youth prepared for what at that time was considered the kindest mode of death. Just at sundown, when his day's work was ended, he took a quantity of un whitened rice which is principal food for poor, cooked and dried it, and tying it in a square cloth, swung and bundle around his neck along with a gourd filled with cool, sweet water. Then he lifted his helpless old mother to his back and stated on his painful journey up the mountain. The road was long and steep; then arrowed road was crossed and re crossed by many paths made by the hunters and woodcutters. In some place, they mingled in a confused puzzled, but he gave no heed. On path or another, it mattered not. On he went, climbing blindly upward Ã,— ever upward towards the high bare summit of what is known as Obatsuyama, the mountain of the " abandoning of aged". The eyes of the old mother were not so dim but that they noted the reckless hastening from one path to another, and her loving heart grew

anxious. Her son did not know the mountain's many paths and his return might be one of danger, so she stretched forth her hand and snapping the twigs from...