

## Death and the Woodman

by Jean de La Fontaine

A poor wood-chopper, with his fagot load,  
Whom weight of years, as well as load, oppress'd,  
Sore groaning in his smoky hut to rest,  
Trudged wearily along his homeward road.  
At last his wood upon the ground he throws,  
And sits him down to think o'er all his woes.  
To joy a stranger, since his hapless birth,  
What poorer wretch upon this rolling earth?  
No bread sometimes, and ne'er a moment's rest;  
Wife, children, soldiers, landlords, public tax,  
All wait the swinging of his old, worn axe,  
And paint the veriest picture of a man unblest.  
On Death he calls. Forthwith that monarch grim  
Appears, and asks what he should do for him.  
"Not much, indeed; a little help I lack--  
To put these fagots on my back."

*Death ready stands all ills to cure;  
But let us not his cure invite.  
Than die, 'tis better to endure,--  
Is both a manly maxim and a right.*