

The Woods and the Woodman

La Fontaine

French

Easy
1 min read

A certain wood-chopper lost or broke
From his axe's eye a bit of oak.
The forest must needs be somewhat spared
While such a loss was being repair'd.
Came the man at last, and humbly pray'd
That the woods would kindly lend to him—
A moderate loan—a single limb,
Whereof might another helve be made,
And his axe should elsewhere drive its trade.
O, the oaks and firs that then might stand,
A pride and a joy throughout the land,
For their ancientness and glorious charms!
The innocent Forest lent him arms;
But bitter indeed was her regret;
For the wretch, his axe new-helved and whet,
Did nought but his benefactress spoil
Of the finest trees that graced her soil;
And ceaselessly was she made to groan,

Doing penance for that fatal loan.
Behold the world-stage and its actors,
Where benefits hurt benefactors!—
A weary theme, and full of pain;
For where's the shade so cool and sweet,
Protecting strangers from the heat,
But might of such a wrong complain?
Alas! I vex myself in vain;
Ingratitude, do what I will,
Is sure to be the fashion still.

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