

Name: _____ Class: _____

The Rich Man and the Bundle of Wood

By Maude Barrows Dutton
1908

Maude Barrow Dutton's book The Tortoise and the Geese includes fables and folktales originally from India. Included in her book is "The Rich Man and the Bundle of Wood." In this folktale, a Rich Man doesn't pay a Poor Man enough for a bundle of wood. As you read, take notes on how the narrator describes the Rich Man.

There was once a man, who, although he was very rich, was also very stingy.[1] In the winter when the peasants[2] brought him wood to buy, he would give them only half their price.

One day, as he was purchasing a large bundle of wood from a Poor Man, a Priest came by. He saw the few pennies that the Rich Man had thrown at the Poor Man's feet, and he could not help saying, —

"My Rich Brother, can you not be more generous than this? Do you not see that this Poor Woodsman has brought you a large bundle of wood, and you are sending him away with only a penny or two? How can he buy bread enough to keep himself and his family from starving with such small wages?"

But the Rich Man was greatly vexed[3] at the Priest's words. "What is it to me that the man is poor?" he cried, and he drove both the Poor Man and the Priest from his door.

That very night, this same bundle of sticks caught fire and the Rich Man's house and barn burned to the ground. Thus he awoke the next morning to find himself as poor as the poorest wood-chopper from whom he had ever bought wood.



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