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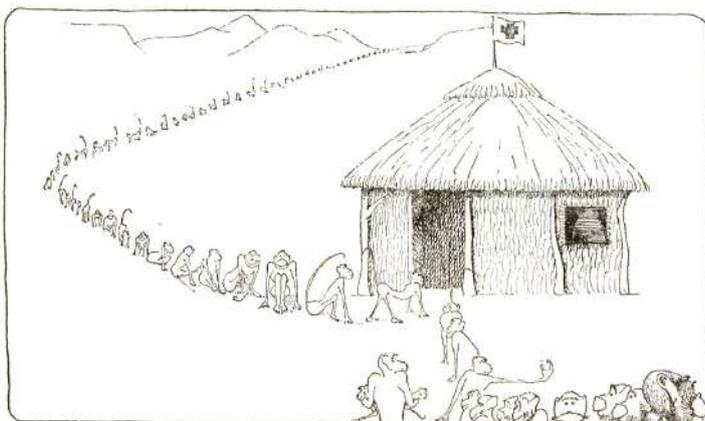
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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Dr. Dolittle and the Leader of the Lions (8/21)

John Dolittle was now terribly busy. He found hundreds, no, thousands of sick monkeys: gorillas, orangutans, chimpanzees, baboons, silk monkeys, gray monkeys, red monkeys, all kinds. And many had already died. The first thing he did was separate the sick monkeys from the healthy ones. Then he got Chee-Chee and his cousin to build a grass hut for him. The next thing he did was to have all the monkeys who were still healthy come to him for a shot against the disease. For three days and three nights, the monkeys from the jungle, the valleys, and the hills kept coming to the grass hut, where the doctor gave shots all day and all night. Then he had another house built, a big one with many beds in it, and



he placed all the sick monkeys in this house.

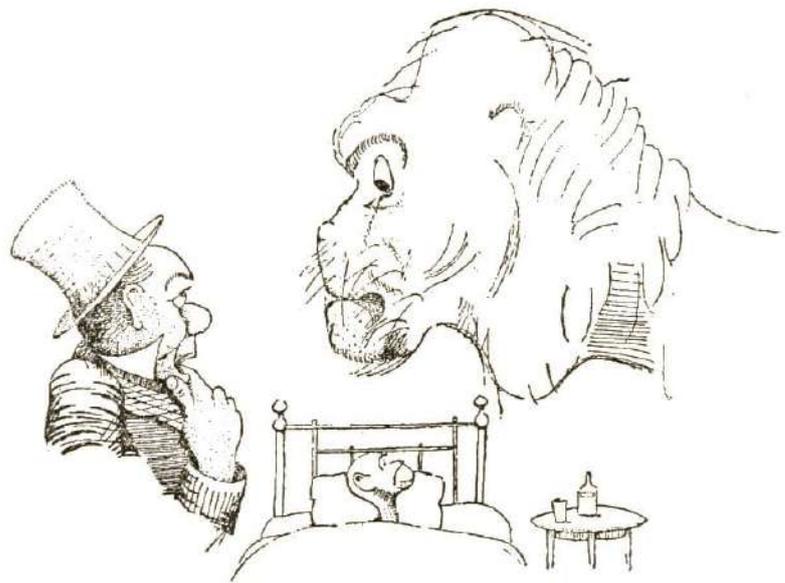
But there were so many animals that there weren't enough healthy monkeys to take care of them. So he sent messages to

the other animals, such as the lions, leopards, and antelopes, asking them to come and help with the

nursing. But the Leader of the Lions was a very proud creature. And when he arrived at the doctor's big house, full of beds, he seemed angry and looked around contemptuously.

"How dare you ask me that?" he said, angry at the doctor. "Do you dare to ask me - ME, the King of the Beasts - to take care of a lot of dirty, sick monkeys? Well, I wouldn't even want to eat them as a snack alongside my meals!"

Although the Lion looked terribly dangerous, the doctor did his best not to appear afraid of him.



"I didn't ask you to eat them," he said softly. "And besides, they're not dirty.

They've all had a bath this morning. Your coat looks like it needs brushing, you look really dusty. Listen, I'll tell you something. There may come a day when the lions get sick. If you don't help the other animals now, the lions may be left all alone when they are in trouble. That often happens to proud people too."

"The lions are never in trouble, they only make trouble," said the Leader, wrinkling his nose. And he sneaked away into the jungle, feeling that he had been smarter than smart.

Then the leopards also became proud and said they would not help either. And of course, the antelope - although they were too shy and timid to be as rude to the doctor as the lion - they scratched the ground with their feet and laughed foolishly, saying they had never been nurses before. And now the poor doctor was desperately worried, wondering where he could get enough help to take care of all those thousands of monkeys in bed. The Leader of the Lions saw, when he returned to his den, that his wife, the Lioness Queen, was running towards him in a hurry, with her mane in a mess.

"One of the cubs won't eat," she said. "I don't know what to do with him. He hasn't eaten anything since last night."

And she began to cry and tremble with nerves because she was a good mother, even though she was a lioness. So the Leader went into his den and looked at his children: two very cunning little cubs, lying on the ground. And one of them seemed to be very ill. Then the Lion told his wife, very proudly, what he had said to the doctor. And she got so angry that she almost drove him out of the den.

"You've never had an ounce of sense!" she shouted. "All the animals from here to the Indian Ocean talk about this wonderful man and how he can cure any kind of sickness. How kind he is, the only man in the whole world who can speak the language of the animals! And now, just when we have a sick baby, you have to insult him! You're a great fool! No one but a fool is ever rude

to a good doctor. You, grrr.." and she began pulling wildly at her husband's mane.

"Go back to the doctor right away," she yelled, "and tell him you're sorry. And take all the other empty-headed Lions and those stupid Leopards and Antelopes with you. Then do everything the doctor tells you to do. Work as hard as you can! And maybe he'll be kind enough to come and see the baby later. Now go! Hurry, I tell you! You're really not fit to be a father!" And she went to the next den where another Lioness lived and told her the whole story.

So the Leader of the Lions went back to the doctor and said, "I happened to be coming this way and thought I'd just look in. Do you still need help?"

"Yes," said the doctor. "I do. And I'm terribly worried."

"It's very hard to get help these days," said the Lion.

"Animals don't seem to want to work anymore. You can't blame them, in a way... Well, since you're in trouble, I don't mind doing what I can, just to ease your worries, as long as I don't have to wash those creatures. And I've told all the other hunting animals to come and do their share too. The Leopards could be here any minute now... Oh, and by the way, we have a sick cub at home. I don't think there's much the matter with him myself. But my wife is very anxious. If you could come over and see him tonight, would you? "

Then the doctor was very glad, for all the Lions, the Leopards, the Antelopes, the Giraffes, and the Zebras - all the animals of the forests, the mountains, and the plains - came to help him with his work. There were so many that he had to send a few away, only keeping the

cleverest! Very soon the monkeys began to get better. By the end of the first week, the beds in the big house were half empty. And at the end of the second week, the last monkey had become well. Then the doctor's work was done; and he was so tired that when he finally went to bed, he slept for three days without even turning over.