

The Story of Doctor Dolittle

by Hugh Lofting

Doctor John Dolittle has an amazing ability. He is able to talk with animals and understand their language. In this selection from The Story of Doctor Dolittle, Doctor Dolittle has traveled to Africa to help sick animals in the monkey kingdom.

The Eighth Chapter: The Leader of the Lions

John Dolittle now became dreadfully, awfully busy. He found hundreds and thousands of monkeys sick—gorillas, orangutans, chimpanzees, dog-faced baboons, marmosets, gray monkeys, red ones—all kinds. And many had died.

The first thing he did was to separate the sick ones from the well ones. Then he got Chee-Chee and his cousin to build him a little house of grass. The next thing: he made all the monkeys who were still well come and be vaccinated.

And for three days and three nights the monkeys kept coming from the jungles and the valleys and the hills to the little house of grass, where the Doctor sat all day and all night, vaccinating and vaccinating.

But so many were sick, there were not enough well ones to do the nursing. So he sent messages to the other animals, like the lions and the leopards and the antelopes, to come and help with the nursing.

But the Leader of the Lions was a very proud creature. And when he came to the Doctor's big house full of beds he seemed angry and scornful.

"Do you dare to ask me, Sir?" he said, glaring at the Doctor. "Do you dare to ask me—ME, THE KING OF BEASTS, to wait on a lot of dirty monkeys? Why, I wouldn't even eat them between meals!"

Although the lion looked very terrible, the Doctor tried hard not to seem afraid of him.

"I didn't ask you to eat them," he said quietly. "And besides, they're not dirty. They've all had a bath this morning. YOUR coat looks as though it needed brushing—badly. Now listen, and I'll tell you something: the day may come when the lions get sick. And if you don't help the other animals now, the lions may find themselves left all alone when THEY are in trouble. That often happens to proud people."

"The lions are never IN trouble—they only MAKE trouble," said the Leader, turning up his nose. And he stalked away into the jungle, feeling he had been rather smart and clever.



What Happened?

What was the first thing Doctor Dolittle did?

What did Doctor Dolittle want the lions to do?

What does Doctor Dolittle say happens to proud people?
