

The Fox, the Monkey, and the Animals

by Jean de La Fontaine

Left kingless by the lion's death,
The beasts once met, our story saith,
Some fit successor to install.
Forth from a dragon-guarded, moated place,
The crown was brought, and, taken from its case,
And being tried by turns on all,
The heads of most were found too small;
Some hornèd were, and some too big;
Not one would fit the regal gear.
For ever ripe for such a rig,
The monkey, looking very queer,
Approach'd with antics and grimaces,
And, after scores of monkey faces,
With what would seem a gracious stoop,
Pass'd through the crown as through a hoop.
The beasts, diverted with the thing,
Did homage to him as their king.
The fox alone the vote regretted,
But yet in public never fretted.
When he his compliments had paid
To royalty, thus newly made,
"Great sire, I know a place," said he,
"Where lies conceal'd a treasure,
Which, by the right of royalty,
Should bide your royal pleasure."
The king lack'd not an appetite
For such financial pelf,
And, not to lose his royal right,
Ran straight to see it for himself.
It was a trap, and he was caught.
Said Renard, "Would you have it thought,
You ape, that you can fill a throne,
And guard the rights of all, alone,
Not knowing how to guard your own?"

The beasts all gather'd from the farce,

That stuff for kings is very scarce.