

## **The Heifer, the Goat, and the Sheep**

by Jean de La Fontaine

The heifer, the goat, and their sister the sheep,  
    Compacted their earnings in common to keep,  
'Tis said, in time past, with a lion, who sway'd  
Full lordship o'er neighbours, of whatever grade.  
The goat, as it happen'd, a stag having snared,  
Sent off to the rest, that the beast might be shared.  
All gather'd; the lion first counts on his claws,  
And says, "We'll proceed to divide with our paws  
The stag into pieces, as fix'd by our laws."  
    This done, he announces part first as his own;  
    "'Tis mine," he says, "truly, as lion alone."  
    To such a decision there's nought to be said,  
    As he who has made it is doubtless the head.  
"Well, also, the second to me should belong;  
'Tis mine, be it known, by the right of the strong.  
Again, as the bravest, the third must be mine.  
To touch but the fourth whoso maketh a sign,  
    I'll choke him to death  
    In the space of a breath!"