



The Animals Sick of the Plague

La Fontaine
French

Easy
1 min read

The sorest ill that Heaven hath
Sent on this lower world in wrath,—
The plague (to call it by its name,)
One single day of which
Would Pluto's ferryman enrich,—
Waged war on beasts, both wild and tame.
They died not all, but all were sick:
No hunting now, by force or trick,
To save what might so soon expire.
No food excited their desire;
Nor wolf nor fox now watch'd to slay
The innocent and tender prey.
The turtles fled;
So love and therefore joy were dead.
The lion council held, and said:
"My friends, I do believe

This awful scourge, for which we grieve,
Is for our sins a punishment
Most righteously by Heaven sent.
Let us our guiltiest beast resign,
A sacrifice to wrath divine.
Perhaps this offering, truly small,
May gain the life and health of all.
By history we find it noted
That lives have been just so devoted.
Then let us all turn eyes within,
And ferret out the hidden sin.
Himself let no one spare nor flatter,
But make clean conscience in the matter.
For me, my appetite has play'd the glutton
Too much and often upon mutton.
What harm had e'er my victims done?
I answer, truly, None.
Perhaps, sometimes, by hunger press'd,
I've eat the shepherd with the rest.
I yield myself, if need there be;
And yet I think, in equity,
Each should confess his sins with me;
For laws of right and justice cry,
The guiltiest alone should die."
"Sire," said the fox, "your majesty
Is humbler than a king should be,

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