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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Contest

The old white rooster was dead.

The hens stood in groups of threes and fours all around the yard, the turkeys were gathered around the big gobbler and seemed to be talking very earnestly.

The ducks stood around the old drake, who was shaking his head emphatically as he talked.

The geese were listening very attentively to the gander, and he was stretching his neck and seemed to be trying to impress them with its length.

"I see no reason now why I should not be king of the yard," he was saying. "White Rooster is dead and there is no other rooster to take his place. I am going to see the hens and ask them what they think.

"White Rooster is dead," he said to them, "and I think I should be king of the yard. My neck is very long and I can see over the heads of all the fowls; I see no reason why I should not take the place of White Rooster."

The turkeys and the geese, seeing the gander approach the hens, ran as fast as they could to hear what he was saying.



The turkey gobbler, hearing the last part of the gander's remark, said: "How can you say that you can see over all heads? Have you forgotten me and my height? And as for being king," he said, "the rooster never should have been cock of the walk. I am a much more majestic-looking bird than any rooster. No, indeed, you should never think of ruling, Sir Gander. I should be king of the yard."

The gobbler walked away, spreading out his wings and letting them drag on the ground and gobbling very loudly.

The ducks and the drake stood listening to all this talk, and as the gobbler walked away the drake said: "I cannot understand why any one should think of being king when I know so much of the world. I am the one to rule, for I have been all around the pond, and it is very large; because of my knowledge I think I should be king."

"He must not be king," whispered one old hen to another; "he would make us go in the water, and we will all be drowned."

They had talked a long time without reaching any decision, when the dog happened along. "What is the matter?" he asked.

"The old white rooster is dead," said the gobbler, who had returned with his family to hear the discussion, "and I think I should be king, and the drake and the gander think they should, but, of course, you can see that I am best suited to rule the yard."

"You can settle that very easily," said the dog. "You can all take a turn at being king, and in that way you will know who is best suited to rule." And so it was decided, and the gobbler was the first one to go on trial. The poor hens tagged along after the turkeys, for the gobbler insisted upon parading all around the yard. The gander and the drake would not follow behind, so the gander and his family walked on one side of the gobbler, and the drake and his family on the other. The poor hens wept as they followed behind. "I never was so humiliated in my life," said one old hen, "and it is not right."

The next day there was so much dissatisfaction because of the gobbler's overbearing way that the dog decided that the drake must take his turn.

"Everybody must learn to swim," said the drake as soon as he was appointed ruler. "Come down to the pond," and off he started, his family waddling after him.

"What did I tell you?" said the old hen. "This will be the end of us."

The geese did not mind being in the water part of the time, but the turkeys set up such a gobble and the hens cackled so loudly that the dog had to decide right there that the drake was not a suitable king.

The gander, knowing that his time had come, stretched his neck and looked very important.

"You need not go near the pond," he said to the hens, "but you must learn to fly," and he spread out his wings as he spoke and flew over the fence, the geese following him.

The turkeys flew to the top of the fence and roosted there, but the hens and ducks stood on the ground, looking up at them in the most discouraged way, and at the gobbler, who gobbled at them, saying, "You are to be pitied, for you do not see all the sights we do and you never can fly to the top of this fence.

"There is the master," he said. "He is coming down the road and he has something under his arm. I'll tell you what it is when he gets nearer."

The hens were trying to look under the fence and through the holes.

The gobbler looked for a minute, and then he said: "I do believe--" then he stopped. "Yes, it is," he continued, looking again; "it's a rooster."

The gobbler flew down and the turkeys followed and the master drove the gander and his family back to the yard. "You will get your wings clipped to-morrow," he said, and then from under his arm he released a big yellow-and-black rooster, which flew to the ground, looked about, spread his wings and crowed in a way that plainly said: "I am cock of this walk and king of this yard. Let none dispute my rights."

The drake collected his family and started for the pond, and the gander and geese followed along behind.

The turkey spread his wings and held his head high as he strutted away with his family. But he did not impress the new rooster; he was ruler and he knew it.

"Now the sun will know when to rise," said one hen, "and we shall know when to awake."

"Yes," said another, "and we have had a narrow escape; it looked for a while as if our family were to lose its social standing, but now that we have a new king we can hold up our heads again and look down on the others, if we have to go to the top of the wood-pile to do it."

The dog laughed to himself as he walked away. "I knew all the time," he said, "that the new rooster was coming, but I thought it would do them good to know they were only fitted to care for their own flock."