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The Singing-School

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Mrs. Polly Duck decided one morning, as she walked along toward the pond, that the barnyard animals were quite behind the times and that a singing-school ought to be started in the barnyard.

So she called all the barnyard dwellers together and told them she was going to start a singing-school. Everybody thought that would be a fine thing, and they decided it should be held in the field back of the barn.

When they were all assembled, Mr. Dog asked, "Who is to lead the singing?"

"Why, I had not thought of that," said Aunt Polly. "I guess I better lead it myself. I used to be quite a singer in my day."

"That all may be, Aunt Polly," said Mr. Dog, "but your day was long ago and times have changed. I think I'm better fitted to lead the singing than you are."

"I don't want to sing like you, Mr. Dog," said Miss Henny Black. "I have heard you sing at night, and it sounds very distressing, very indeed."

"I think I'd better settle this by leading the singing myself," said the Gobbler, strutting out in front of them all.

"Well, if I have to gobble, I won't stay," hissed Miss Goosey Gray. "My voice is not so loud as some, but if I do say so, I have a very soft, fine-toned voice and I do not intend to have it spoiled by any Gobbler."

Mr. Gobbler threw Miss Goosey a look of disdain and strutted off.

"I have a good bass voice," said Mr. Pig, "but I don't know much about teaching. I think, however, I could grunt so you could all follow if I tried."

"Well, if anyone is to teach, I think I should," said Mr. Donkey, with his ears standing up straight. "I can make more noise than anyone in the barnyard."

"That you can we will all agree," said Mr. Rooster, "but, my dear fellow, it isn't the sort of music we like to hear."

"If you are looking for a leader of this singing-school, I will take charge," said the Peacock. "You need dignity and grace, and beauty is not a bad trait in one who leads."

"If you want a leader firm on his feet, Peacock is the one," whispered Tommy Cat. "Look at those feet!"

But just then, Mr. Peacock spread his beautiful tail and all else was forgotten. He certainly was a beautiful creature, and before Tommy Cat could get in a word about his own lovely voice and how he was used to leading a chorus, it had been decided that the Peacock should lead the singing-school.

Mr. Peacock strutted up in front of the wall, taking care to stand behind a stone large enough to hide his feet, and with his tail spread out full width, he said, "Now I will give you a few tones, and then all sing as I do."

One shrill, harsh, and awful tone did Mr. Peacock give, and when it was over, he found himself alone, for not a creature was near him. Mr. Dog dropped his tail and ran, and Tommy Cat went up a tree, where he sat with staring eyes looking down at Mr. Peacock. The Donkey dropped his eyes and bounded away, and the hens and ducks and geese went as fast as their two legs would carry them, scurrying under bushes and behind barrels to get away from what they knew not.



When they felt safe, they peeped out to see what had really happened, and there stood Mr. Peacock, looking all around for his vanished pupils.

"What is the matter with you all?" he called out. "Are my tones too high for you? I can make them lower. I should have known you would not be able to sing as well as I do at the first, but don't get discouraged. You will be able to sing if you practice."

But no one went back, and after a while, Mr. Peacock walked away.

"Too bad, too bad," he said, "to throw away such a fine chance as they all had to learn to sing. It isn't every day one with my beautiful voice is willing to teach the common animals in the barnyard. And to think they might all in time have been able to sing almost as well as I. They certainly have thrown away an opportunity."

When Mr. Peacock was well out of sight, all the animals came out from their hiding places.

"Wasn't that just awful?" said Miss Goosey Gray.

"Awful is not bad enough," said another. "I thought at first a hawk or some terrible animal was upon us all, and everybody was screaming."

"And the worst of it is he thinks he can sing," laughed Tommy Cat, "and he does not know he can't. He thinks we were discouraged because of his fine tones and feared we never could sing like him."

"Let him think so," said Aunt Polly Duck. "It won't hurt us."

"Yes, let him think, but don't let him sing," said Mr. Dog. "If ever he begins to sing around here again, I'll chase him off the place."

"I guess my singing-school is a failure," said Aunt Polly Duck to herself as she waddled away. "The trouble is that each one thinks just as the Peacock does. None of us can sing, but I can quack, and I will," and off she went, quacking as loudly as she could.

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