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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Tale of Fatty Coon: Fatty Coon at Home (1/20)

Fatty Coon was so fat and round that he looked like a ball of fur, with a plumelike tail for a handle. But if you looked at him closely you would have seen a pair of very bright eyes watching you.

Fatty loved to eat. Yes—he loved eating better than anything else in the world. That was what made him so fat. And that, too, was what led him into many adventures.

Close by a swamp, which lay down in the valley, between Blue Mountain and Swift River, Fatty Coon lived with his mother and his brother and his two sisters. Among them all there was what grown people call "a strong family resemblance," which is the same thing as saying that they all looked very much alike. The tail of each one of them—mother and children too—had six black rings around it. Each of them had a dark brown patch of fur across the face, like a mask. And—what do you think?—each of them, even Fatty and his brother and his sisters, had a stiff, white moustache! Of course, though they all looked so much alike, you would have known which was Mrs. Coon, for she was so much bigger than her children. And you would have known which was Fatty—he was so much rounder than his brother and his sisters.

Mrs. Coon's home was in the hollow branch of an old tree. It was a giant of a tree—a poplar close by a brook which ran into the swamp—and the branch which was Mrs. Coon's home was as big as most tree-trunks are.

Blackie was Fatty's brother—for the mask on his face was just a little darker than the others'. Fluffy was one of Fatty's sisters, because her fur was just a little fluffier than the



other children's. And Cutey was the other sister's name, because she was so quaint.

Now, Fatty Coon was forever looking around for something to eat. He was never satisfied with what his mother brought home for him. No matter how big a dinner Mrs. Coon set before her family, as soon as he had finished eating his share Fatty would wipe his white moustache carefully—for all the world like some old gentleman—and hurry off in search of something more. Sometimes he went to the edge of the brook and tried to catch fish by hooking them out of the water with his sharp claws. Sometimes he went over to the swamp and hunted for duck among the tall reeds. And though he did not yet know how to catch a duck, he could always capture a frog or two; and Fatty ate them as if he hadn't had a mouthful of food for days.

To tell the truth, Fatty would eat almost anything he could get—nuts, cherries, wild grapes, blackberries, bugs, small snakes, fish, chickens, honey—there was no

end to the different kinds of food he liked. He ate everything. And he always wanted more.

"Is this all there is?" Fatty Coon asked his mother one day. He had gobbled up every bit of the nice fish that Mrs. Coon had brought home for him. It was gone in no time at all.

Mrs. Coon sighed. She had heard that question so many times; and she wished that for once Fatty might have all the dinner he wanted.

"Yes—that's all," she said, "and I should think that it was enough for a young coon like you."

Fatty said nothing more. He wiped his moustache on the back of his hand (I hope you'll never do that!) and without another word he started off to see what he could find to eat.