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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Tale of Fatty Coon: Fatty Coon's Mistake (4/20)

Fatty Coon was very fond of squirrels. And you may think it strange when I tell you that not one of the squirrels anywhere around Blue Mountain was the least bit fond of Fatty Coon. But when I say that Fatty Coon was fond of squirrels, I mean that he liked to eat them. So of course you will understand now why the squirrels did not care for Fatty at all. In fact, they usually kept just as far away from him as they could.

It was easy, in the daytime, for the squirrels to keep out of Fatty's way, when he wandered through the tree-tops, for the squirrels were much sprier than Fatty. But at night—ah! that was a very different matter. For Fatty Coon's eyes were even sharper in the dark than they were in the daylight; but the poor squirrels were just as blind as you are when you are safely tucked in bed and the light is put out.

Yes—when the squirrels were in bed at night, up in their nests in the trees, they could see very little. And you couldn't say they were SAFE in bed, because they never knew when Fatty Coon, or his mother, or his brother, or one of his sisters, or some cousin of his, might come along and catch them before they knew it. Fatty thought it great sport to hunt squirrels at night. Whenever he tried it he usually managed to get a good

meal. And after he had almost forgotten about the fright the goshawk had given him in the tall hemlock he began to roam through the tree-tops every night in search of squirrels and sleeping birds.

But a night came at last when Fatty was well punished for hunting squirrels. He had climbed half-way to the top of a big chestnut tree, when he spied a hole in the trunk. He rather thought that some squirrels lived inside that hole. And as he listened for a few seconds he could hear something moving about inside. Yes! Fatty was sure that there was a squirrel in there—probably several squirrels.



Fatty Coon's eyes turned green. It was a way they had, whenever he was about to eat anything, or whenever he played with his brother Blackie, or Fluffy and Cutey, his sisters; or whenever he was frightened. And now Fatty was so sure that he was going to have a fine lunch that his eyes turned as green as a cat's. He reached a paw inside the hole and felt all around. WOW! Fatty gave a cry; and he pulled his paw out much faster than he had put it in. Something had given him a cruel dig. And in a jiffy Fatty saw what that "something" was. It was a grumpy old tramp coon, whom Fatty had never seen before.

"What do you mean, you young rascal, by disturbing me like this?" the ragged stranger cried.

"Please, sir, I never knew it was you," Fatty stammered.

"Never knew it was me! Who did you think it was?"

"A—a squirrel!" Fatty said faintly. And he whimpered a little, because his paw hurt him.

"Ho, ho! That's a good one! That's a good joke!" The tramp coon laughed heartily. And then he scowled so fiercely that poor Fatty nearly tumbled out of the tree.

"You go home," he said to Fatty. "And don't you let me catch you around here again. You hear?"

"Yes, sir!" Fatty said. And home he went. And you may be sure that he let THAT tree alone after that. He never went near it again.