

NIGNI, THE DWARF

THE ADVENTURES OF A LITTLE MAN, AS
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

I HAVE good cause to remember my 6th birthday. Early in the morning my father weighed me and nodded and smiled and said:

"Mother, our Nigni will be a man some day. If he keeps on. I find that he weighs more than eight pounds, and his height must be all of 11 inches."

Almost every baby 3 months old is as tall and heavy as that twice over, but I was a dwarf, you see, and as I gained ever so little it pleased my parents. For birthday presents my father gave me my first pocket-knife, and my mother's gift consisted of a dumb watch. Being poor people, they could do no better by me, nor did I expect them to. It was on July 6, and breakfast had been ended about an hour, and I was playing in the garden, when a stranger arrived.

I heard him talking to a white with mother, and then I was called in. I found him to be an oldish man, and his face him to be an oldish man, and his face looked so kind I liked him at once. He looked me over as I stood in the door, and then said:

"Well, my little man, how do you do? I have heard of you, and have traveled 600 miles to see you. I was told that you were the smallest dwarf in the world, and I see that the news is true. I am here to see all the family. Do you think you can find your father and bring him here for a talk?"

I replied that I could, and hastened down to the shore of the sea, where father was mending his boat. The stranger had said that his name was Yeddo, and when I gave it to father he said:

"Yeddo? Why, that is the name of Japan's greatest showman! He is a second Barnum. I wonder why he should want to see me?"

When we reached the house Mr. Yeddo shook father by the hand and hoped he was well, and after a little talk about the weather, he said:

"Perhaps you can guess why I am here. I want to arrange with you about taking little Nigni around the country on exhibition. He certainly is the smallest of all dwarfs, and the public will be glad to pay a good price to see him. He has been written up in the press several times, and people are asking why I don't engage him."

"What! Exhibit our Nigni around the country as if he were some strange beast?" screamed my mother, as she felt into a chair.

"I am not the sort of a man to sell his children," added my father, as a frown came to his face.

The showman did not lose his good temper. He talked pleasantly and kindly, and after about an hour he brought my parents around to view the thing in a different light. As for me, I was delighted with the idea, and my mother and father at once had it rested with me. Mr. Yeddo remained all day, and by supper time it was settled that he was to exhibit me. He was to pay father a large sum of money—more than my parents had ever



"WELL, MY LITTLE MAN, HOW DO YOU DO?"

thought could be collected together by one man and mother was to go along and take care of me. I had not been to school, but mother and others had taught me to read and spell, and I could sing fairly well and speak a piece. It was decided that when I went on exhibition I should make a recitation, sing a couple of songs and dance a jig. This I would do twice a day, and the rest of my time would be taken up talking with the people. It was also decided that I should be dressed as a Colonel in the

army and wear a real sword, and the name the public was to know me by was Colonel Mite. As I was to be ready in two weeks, I went right at it next day to learn my lessons, and I was so determined to succeed that it was only eight days before I could recite a long poem and sing a couple of funny songs. As to my dancing, that was good enough without any further lessons. Mother and I were ready when the showman came for us, and in my next I will tell you how I went out into the world.

TOMMY'S BIRD NEIGHBORS

HOW HE OBEYED HIS MOTHER AND PROTECTED A LITTLE NEST

IT WAS the second day that Tommy's mother had been away to work, and when he came home at noon from kindergarten, unlocked the door and entered the room. He felt very lonesome. His lunch was laid out on the table, but at first he was not feeling like eating, but threw himself on the bed and began to cry. Then remembering what his mother had said about his being a man and taking care of her, he sprang up and ran to the glass to look at his black eye.

It was still horribly black, and it made him feel worse to look at it, so he went to the table and began to eat. While he was eating he kept wishing he had not got into that fight with the landlady's boy. Mrs. Jewett had offered to take care of him while his mother was away, but he was so spoiled and bossy that Tommy just couldn't stand being ordered around by him, so they fought, and when Mrs. Craven came home at night, three and said, there was this story of Tommy's naughtiness awaiting her. She had not said one word, but just let her boy upstairs, had got the supper and waited on him as kindly as on other nights, but when she put him to bed she told him that after this he was never to be any one in the house while she was out, but come straight to his room from school and remain there until she returned. Then she kissed and tucked him in, and in a kind of dream, just as he was falling asleep, he heard her praying for his father, who was away in Alaska. They had not heard from him for so many months that they thought he must be dead. That was why, her money all being gone, Tommy's mother had been obliged to go to work, and that was why through her tears she had said to Tommy: "You are all the man I have got now; you must take care of me."

At that thought he sat up in bed, and with his sleepy eyes half closed, threw his arms around his mother's neck, and whispered: "Oh, mamma, I will be a man! I will be a man!"

Then he fell asleep and dreamed that he was, oh, so big, and he hit the crack in the eye that he felt over like a ninepin. The memory of that dream made Tommy laugh, and by the time he had finished his lunch and put away the dishes he felt better.

His mother's room and little kitchen were at the very top of the house. On one side the windows opened on a flat roof, and here Tommy liked to play. On the other side the window overlooked the garden of a rich man, which was full of shrubs, flowers, pines and other trees.

It was to this window Tommy now went. He opened it wide, and sitting with his chin on his folded arms on the sill, looked out. The wind awayed the tops of the pine trees, and saucy little sparrows played among the branches or climbed along the new shoots, picking off and eating some thing, may be insects. Tommy's teacher had said that sparrows were quarrelsome creatures, who drove away birds that otherwise might nest in the gardens of the town. But Tommy liked the independent little fellows, they were good company for a lonely little boy, for they always seemed happy.

As he sat watching these merry rogues out of the air seemingly came a curious thin, reed-like, rasping sound. Tommy had often heard it before, but had never been able to find out where it came from. Now, bending his head and following the sound, he looked up, and saw a tiny bird, with a long black beak, and a beautiful burnished neck, making quick little movements as it sang its unusual song.

"Oh, oh, oh!" cried Tommy, who knew the bird from pictures. "It's a hummingbird! It's a hummingbird!"

He looked around to tell his mother, forgetting that she was away, then turned back to watch the little stranger, who did not rest very long, and darted away so quickly that Tommy could not see where it went. He had to content himself with his old friend, the sparrow, and had almost forgotten the winged jewel, when suddenly something flashed past his face and into the room. Quick as thought he closed the window, and turning back saw the hummingbird fly around the room. At last it dashed against the glass of the window and fell to the floor ex-

actly as Tommy ran over and picked it up gently and tenderly. How small it felt, even in his little hand! He bent his head and could just hear the beating of its tiny heart. It was such a little, little thing! Tommy softly spoke to it with his smooth cheek and whispered to himself: "I'll keep it."

Then he looked around the room for something to put the creature in, and he thought came to him that after living in freedom there, the active little hummingbird would never be happy caged up indoors. Tommy shut his eyes, so as not to see the beauty outside, and muttered: "It came into my room; it's mine. I will keep even but he could not get away from the thought that it would be cruel to deprive the creature of liberty."

He opened his eyes and looked down at the creature in his hand. It had recovered from its fall, and was glancing from side to side with its bright eyes, and though it did not seem frightened, it was struggling to get free. A tear fell on the burnished head and whispered: "I want you just as you are; but I'm going to let you go."

His voice ended in a sob, but he bravely raised the window, opened his hand and the little friend flew away, while the sparrows chattered and scolded as though they were saying:

"What a goose you were not to keep that fierce little warrior when you had him!" For you must know that, little as they are, hummingbirds are not afraid of sparrows.

"You hold your tongue!" cried Tommy. "I let him go because—because he didn't want to stay."

Then he went out on the roof, crumbled a little bread for the sparrows and watched the children play in the next yard. It was getting late when he returned to the room, and he went into the kitchen, lit the gas stove and put on the vegetables. He wanted to surprise his mother, and you may be sure she was surprised and pleased to find supper nearly ready when she reached home.

After that Tommy was not lonely any more. The birds were company for him, and when Pete, having got over being mad with Tommy, knocked and asked him to come and play, he did not even feel disappointed when he called back through the locked door that his mother had forbidden him to speak to any one in the house. Pete had to find another play-fellow.

Tommy now saw his hummingbird friend quite often. He used to hover over the flowers in the garden, dart through the air, or, as on the first day, sit on the telephone wire and sing. Tommy felt sure that he must have a nest, but it was a long time before he found it.

One day when he was looking down at the big, crooked apple tree he saw something move. He gazed closely at the spot, and at length made out the shape of a new bird very like Mr. Hummingbird sitting on a tiny cup fashioned of material closely resembling the mossy bark of the tree. While Tommy was looking the bird flew off, and he saw that the nest contained two little eggs like peas.

Just then Mr. Hummingbird came back, and glancing up saw that Tommy had discovered his secret. He flew boldly up to the window, and as his white wings brushed the child's cheek he made a sound of entreaty.

"I don't know if I 'magine it," said Tommy when he told his mother. "but it sounded to me just as if he said, 'Please don't tell anyone where my nest is. And I won't never tell anybody 'cept only you.'"

Just after Mr. Hummingbird left Tommy, the rich man's boy came out on his back porch, and, seeing Tommy, Levi called out:

"What are you always looking out of that window for, kid?"

Tommy was so full of what he had seen that he very nearly said, "At the hummingbird's nest," but at that moment his little friend flew by again, and Tommy seemed to hear these words quite plainly. "That boy Ross's nest," so instead Tommy said what was quite true:

"You have such a pretty garden that I like to look at it."

"It isn't bad," responded the rich boy

proudly. After a minute he shouted again, "Say, kid, I'll give you a dollar if you can see from up there where the hummingbird's nest is."

"What would you do with it?" asked Tommy.

Then Tommy knew that the little hummer was right about Jacob and for fear he might say something that would show the big boy where the nest was, he left the window and went out on the roof to feed the sparrows.

After that the most of Tommy's pleasure was gone, for every evening when he came home from school Jacob would hunt for the nest, which he felt sure was somewhere in the garden. It was really wonderful how long he was finding it. At last he thought himself of the old apple tree, and one afternoon came and stood at its foot and looked up.

The birdlings were out of the eggs by this time, and it is just possible he might have missed the nest, had not the parent birds, wild at seeing the enemy so near their home, flown at him in fury, vibrating their tiny wings, darting their beaks at him and quivering with rage. Jacob now felt sure that he was close to the nest, and, waving the birds off with one hand, clasped the trunk with the other, preparatory to climbing the tree.

Tommy was in despair when he saw the plight of his friends. He burst out crying, and screamed and yelled at the top of his voice. He made so much noise that

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Mrs. Levi heard the uproar and came out to see what was the matter. As soon as she saw the hummers flying so angrily at Jacob she knew that they were defending their nest, and as she was fond of birds and was particularly anxious for the hummingbirds to feel at home in her garden, she commanded her son to come away from the tree and leave the birds alone.

Then she asked Tommy what he was screaming about. He said he was afraid Jacob was going to steal the nest; then, seeing that she was kind, he told her all his story, how he was so much alone that he made friends of the birds.

Mrs. Levi told him not to be afraid any more, she would protect the nest. Then she told Jacob to bring a step-ladder, and they climbed up and looked at the tiny, squirming hummingbirds in their wee cup of a nest, the parent birds hovering around and feeling very doubtful of the intentions, but seeing that the visitors did not harm the little family, they began to still their cries.

Mrs. Levi kept her promise, and Tommy and his new friend had the pleasure of watching the youngsters grow up and learn to fly. Before very long there were four hummingbirds hovering about the blossoms over the flowers in the garden. The young ones looked so pretty that even Jacob felt glad that he had not killed them when they were babies.

The kind lady did more than protect the hummingbirds. She found so much work for Mrs. Craven that she was enabled to stay with her little boy and sew at home. This went on until one fine day Mr. Craven came back from Alaska safe and sound with his gold. He had been in such a wild, wild place that he had not been able to send letters.

THE GOLDEN BALL HOW THREE YOUNG PRINCES COMPETED FOR A PRIZE POEM

WHEN the sons of King Beneficent were very young they went to school, the Wizard, a man acting as their teacher. One Spring day he called the three young Princes to his cell and spoke to them as follows:

"Princes, I give you greeting. I want each of you to write a poem. To the one who writes the best original poem by tomorrow I shall give this golden ball, and he held out a splendid golden ball that sparkled in the sunlight.

The youngest Prince, Richard, went at once to his room and started in to write, for he was very anxious to win the golden ball. His brothers saw, and flouted him. "Work away, you grind," said they derisively. "Writing poetry is a talent, not drudgery. We shall not work half as hard, and I dare say our poems shall be twice as good." But Richard said nothing and continued his work.

John and James were quite as eager as he to gain the golden ball; this time they were only rivals to Richard, but to each other. John went to his room and James to his. Each of them had already conceived a plan, and they were impatient to start.

As soon as James reached the room he bolted the door on the inside. Then he opened a secret door that led from his room to his father's library. He walked along the passageway until he reached the library. Once there he took down from the topmost shelf the oldest volume of poetry he could find. "Nobody will ever know," said he to himself, "and I must win the golden ball." He copied a poem and replaced the book. Then he went back to his room.

That night the other Prince, John, went into the library. He took down from the topmost shelf the oldest volume of poetry he could find. "Nobody will ever know," said he to himself, "and I must win the golden ball." He copied a poem and replaced the book. Then he went back to his room.

The next day they all handed in their work and awaited the Wizard's decision. It was four days before he sent for them.

"Richard," said he to the youngest Prince, "your poem is not nearly as good as the other two."

"I did my best," said Richard. "More than that you can ask of no man."

"Quite so," said the Wizard Wiseman. "As for your brothers' poems, they are gems, and so evenly balanced in merit that I cannot choose between them. Both are very fine."

"Do not trouble yourself further," said John and James, overjoyed. "We do not care. You can bestow on us the prize in common."

"I said nothing about the prize," rejoined the Wizard. "I merely said that both of your poems were very fine. They ought to be—they were written by one of our most illustrious poets. You copied yours, John; you copied yours, James, and the funniest part of it is that you both copied the same poem. There they are—word for word alike!"

So Richard got the prize after all. "Bey," said the Wizard, as he gave the golden ball to the youngest Prince, "it is a fine thing to be clever, but the man who is too clever often overreaches himself."

And John and James ruefully looked up the word "overreach" in their dictionaries, and said they guessed he was right.

WHY FIREFLIES CARRY LANTERNS

HOW THE WICKED NIGHT HAWK WAS EXPOSED AT LAST.

MR. HAWK was a regular pirate. He never worked for his living; as did the other birds, but just took what he wanted from those who did live honestly. No one was safe from his thefts. He grew so bold that he would take things while the owners were looking directly at him, and if they tried to stop him he would beat them terribly. He always went about his burglaries at night, and so at last he came to be called Mr. Night Hawk.

One night he crept into Mr. Turkey's smokehouse and stole four hams. The next night he stole a whole bag of cornmeal from Mr. Woodpecker's pantry. A little while later he robbed poor little Miss Jenny Wren of three mince pies. The whole neighborhood was aroused at these three bold burglaries, and Mr. Woodpecker, Mr. Turkey and Miss Wren all met at Mr. Rooster's store one even-

ing it came to leaving the front door open. It did not seem so, but "My door," said Mrs. Robin to Mr. Robin, "just suppose that dreadful Mr. Night Hawk should come in our door. It would be perfectly awful. I am sure I should have hysterics. It gives me the creeps just to think of it."

Mr. Robin at once said if she felt that way about it, he would keep the door shut and locked; and it wouldn't make a bit of difference, anyway, for all the other birds would have their doors open, and Mr. Night Hawk could go in one of them and get caught.

All the other birds felt the same way when it came to their doors. They shut and double-barred their front doors, each thinking that all the rest had their doors open, waiting to catch Mr. Night Hawk. The only one that had an open door was Mr. Owl, who had proposed the plan. He did not have the slightest idea of catching Mr. Hawk, but he just left his door open for the looks of the thing. He sat on a little chair behind his door, fast asleep, and in the middle of the night Mr. Night Hawk crept in and tried to steal the



MR. HAWK STOLE MR. ROOSTER'S OVERSHOES, MR. TURKEY'S UMBRELLA AND MR. WOODPECKER'S MACKINTOSH.

ing to talk it over. It happened to be raining, and they left their things in a back room, as Mr. Rooster said the damp was bad for the dried apples. While they were talking about Mr. Night Hawk's shocking behavior, Mr. Hawk himself crept in the back window and stole Mr. Rooster's overshoes, Mr. Turkey's umbrella and Mr. Woodpecker's mackintosh. Then everyone decided that something must be done at once.

Everyone agreed that Mr. Owl was the wisest of the birds, and so to Mr. Owl the rest of the birds all went to find out how to catch Mr. Night Hawk. Mr. Owl thought about it for a great while, and finally he said the best and easiest way he could imagine was for all to leave their front doors wide open and sit all night behind the door. Mr. Night Hawk would be sure to go in one of these open doors looking for something to steal, and then the owner could slam the door shut, lock it and catch Mr. Night Hawk. This went away satisfied. But that night, sounded like a fine plan, and everyone

Hawk crept in and tried to steal the cuckoo clock on the parlor mantelpiece; but he knocked off two large vases, which broke with a great crash and awoke Mr. Owl.

"Who is that in my parlor?" cried Mr. Owl, stretching and rubbing his eyes. "It is Mr. Hawk," answered Mr. Night Hawk. "I just came in to borrow your dictionary. I want to write to my rich uncle, who is very ill, and I want to use very choice language. I saw the door open and I walked right in."

"Oh, help yourself, by all means," said Mr. Owl, and sat down behind the front door again to wait for Mr. Night Hawk. Mr. Hawk crept in, took the dictionary under his arm and walked out, thanking Mr. Owl very kindly.

In the morning Mr. Owl was fearfully angry when he found his best two parlor vases broken and his cuckoo clock, opera glasses and great-grandmother's picture in a gold frame all gone, not to speak of

the dictionary. He went straight to Mr. Crow's house and called him all kinds of names. "Give me back my great-grandmother's picture in the gold frame, your black, dictionary-borrowing rascal," cried he.

Mr. Crow was astonished, and he became very angry when he found that someone had been using his name in order to steal things. "It must have been Mr. Night Hawk," he said. "Never mind, I'll fix him. I never stole a cuckoo clock in my life!"

"It would, indeed, have been more like you to have kicked me out and taken the whole house," said Mr. Owl, and he went home angrier than ever.

When the other birds heard that Mr. Crow was going to fix Mr. Night Hawk, they all came to him and promised to pay him well if he would only put a stop to Mr. Night Hawk's thieving. Mr. Crow said that he would do that if he wore out all of his shoes, his gum boots and his carpet slippers doing it. For a long time he spent every day in searching for Mr. Night Hawk, but without ever catching a glimpse of him. At last he came to the conclusion that the only way to do was to hunt at night, when Mr. Night Hawk was in the habit of going about robbing folks. Mr. Crow was sitting on his perch smoking his pipe when he decided on this, and put on a big fly in on his knee. Mr. Crow caught it at once.

"Gracious!" said he, "I never in my life saw such a big fly. I think you would make a good cough drop," and he opened his mouth very wide.

"Oh, please, my dear sir, do not eat me, I beg of you," cried the fly. "My family would miss me dreadfully."

"That is just what I want for not having you life insured," said Mr. Crow, calmly.

"But I am the King of Flies," said his prisoner, "and if you will only let me go I and my people will do anything for you."

"Will you help me catch Mr. Night Hawk?" asked Mr. Crow, beginning to be interested.

"Of course, we will," promised the fly. "If you will tell us how to help you."

"You must help me look for him at night," said Mr. Crow. "For I have looked for a long while in the daytime myself." The fly promised and Mr. Crow let him go.

The next night 17,000 flies took out their lanterns and helped Mr. Crow look for Mr. Night Hawk. He was carrying off a pair of lace curtains from Mrs. Goose's house when some of the flies found him. "Here he is, Mr. Crow!" they shouted; "here he is," and Mr. Night Hawk was so frightened that he dropped the lace curtains and flew away as fast as he could.

After that he could not go anywhere at night but some of the flies carrying lanterns would see him and shout: "Here he is, Mr. Crow!" After a while he was so tired of being chased that he decided to steal more with Mr. Crow looking for him in the daytime and the flies with lanterns looking for him at night. He had to stop stealing altogether, and as he was too lazy to work, he lived on fish which he caught, diving into the water after them. Then the birds changed his name from Mr. Night Hawk to Mr. Fish Hawk, and you will know they were sure to see him with the help of their lanterns.

You can often see them in summer evenings, and although they are now called Fish Hawks, you will know they were sure to see him with the help of their lanterns.

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THE BLACK BEAR AND WOODCUTTER

HOW BRUIN PAID HIS HONEST DEBTS WITH A LITTLE INTEREST

ONCE upon another time the Black Bear that lived in a cave close to the Gray Wolf's old home did a funny thing. But I'd better tell something else first.

After the wolf had led the dogs to the Black Bear's cave and had been killed by his own trickery, the Black Bear would never let any more wolves move into his neighborhood. He didn't like wolves, anyway. He hated men, too, and stayed away from where they and their guns were.

One day a man who smelled differently from the hunters came by. He carried an axe, a saw and a dinner bucket. The Black Bear watched him come up the path in the woods and could have caught him and killed him, but he didn't seem to want to. He didn't even growl as the man passed close to the cave and the saw teeth rang against a little tree.

The bear came out and watched the man swinging on up through the woods, but he did not follow. That evening he saw the man's camp, and he knew he did not disturb him. The next morning he let the man see him, and the man just looked quietly and went on about his business. The Black Bear kept saying to himself:

"How foolish of me to show the man where I stay; for he will come and bring others to kill me. The Black Bear, so he believed the man was a friend and different from other men. He often sat or lay or stood at the door of his house and watched the man work, and the man always walked by as if there was no bear there. Except when one evening he threw the Black Bear a bit of bread left from his dinner.

One day about noon a big storm came up. The wind blew a perfect hurricane. Big trees were hurled to the ground, crashing their way through the other trees and breaking the smaller trees like pipe stems. Near the door of the Black Bear's house stood the little tree against which the woodcutter's saw had run on the first morning he had gone by. Not far away stood the giant oak by the door of the old wolf den. The wind caught the big oak and broke off its stem near the root, as if it had been a leafy pine.

The Black Bear was sitting just inside his cave, worrying about the woodcutter. Hearing the pop of the breaking oak, he bounded out to see what was the matter. At exactly that second, the big tree struck the little tree near the Black Bear's door and broke it. The little tree, in falling, caught the Black Bear's foot and pinned it close against the side of the rock-right against his own stony door jamb.

The Black Bear hauled and tugged and made the poor, crushed foot hurt a good deal more than it would have hurt—just as little children do things sometimes. But he was fast. The big tree had fallen like a monster bridge across the little gully and had pinned the little tree, and pinned the Black Bear down, so they had just where they were.

Oh, how the Black Bear suffered! His paw felt like the toothache, only worse, because the saw was bigger than the biggest jaw tooth you ever saw. All afternoon he lay and whined and bit severely at the little tree. But it seemed that the big tree kept pressing on all the harder. And the Black Bear became angrier every minute.

Then it began to grow dark, and he heard somebody coming. He was afraid—what Black Bear wouldn't be afraid!—and when he was unable to fight? And he was angry at the whole world, the wind, the trees—everything. So, when he saw it was the woodcutter coming along, he quail being afraid; but he sprang backward and growled, and showed his teeth and snarled.

The woodcutter stopped and looked at the Black Bear. Then, carefully keeping out of reach of the big black paw that was not fastened down, he worked away with the axe until the foot was free. Then he started to run. But the bear's anger was gone now, and he didn't want to hurt the man. Still, he couldn't understand why the woodcutter was so good to him. He was not the kind of man the Black Bear had heard of. He would remember the woodcutter.