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True Greatness.

It is so much the thing now for great men, or notorious men (which is about the same thing) to have trivial stories told of their trivial early lives that I've a mind for a taste of greatness myself. I have always wished to be great, but I never knew how to start. I have tried many different schemes which it seemed to me other great men had successfully worked. Once I thought I had surely found the trail. I would be obscure, meaningless, and occasionally misspell a word, or be decidedly profane. I tried it, and sure enough, it went splendidly. For three weeks I lived a joyous, rarified life, and bought three new hats, each one larger than the last. I saw my articles mentioned in other papers. I heard people wondering to each other what the title of the stuff meant. I heard several newsmen using my original profanity. I even got four dollars for writing them, and (O, joy!) the articles were reviewed at the clubs! "Ah," thought I, "life is worth living after all." I have no doubt that after such a brilliant start, all would have gone well, had I been satisfied. That is the secret of all unhappiness. I was not satisfied. I concluded I would not sign a fictitious name, but would astonish the neighbors by telling them it was I who had written all those "Studies in Ether," and that I was "The Severed Soul" who was responsible for the literary gems people were talking about. I wanted them to know why I strutted and by what good right. Well, hath the prophet said that a strut goeth before a stumble, and a swelled head before a long fall-down. No sooner did my acquaintances and admirers and neighbors discover that the author of "Studies in Ether" lived in their midst, and never even got drunk, to say nothing of going into trances and visiting the moon and the planets and the Hot Place—no sooner did I write one of those things that I did not know the meaning of myself, and put my illustrious family name to it, than everyone, with one accord and in one place, said the articles were utterly stupid, and that they had always known I would not turn out well. However, I had the comfort of knowing that the scheme worked well for awhile; and sometime when I am in a strange place and get hard up I shall work it again.

Then I have tried being dissatisfied with everything and everybody, and saying that the wealthy were wretches and did not know a good thing when they saw it, (in a moral sense,) and that only the poor and incapable were good, and none were the salt of the earth but those who were hard-up and without a recommendation from their last employer. The trouble with that scheme was, that it would work only with those who could do me no good. One Denver paper promised to give me three columns of space every day, but couldn't pay me for it. Inmates of the penitentiary were unanimous in saying that it was great stuff, and they had always thought that way. But times were pretty good, and I had so many chances to get work that I gave it up. But it is a great scheme if you work it at the right time.

Then I have tried the long hair dodge and the absent minded racket, and the advertising plan. I must say that the advertising pays. I never knew it to fail. It is a money maker, and if it is rightly managed, it will always make good what is advertised. You may pose as a hair restorer or a Divine Healer, but if you advertise the thing rightly, you will make a stake. I gave that up for the reason that I want to be great. Simply to make money is not enough for me.

I have a new scheme now, and if it works at all, I shall at least know how

it feels to be great. "In a series of anecdotes, gathered from reliable sources exclusively for myself, and at great expenditure of time and money, (especially time) I shall give glimpses to the public of a side of my life that has hitherto been entirely unknown, save to a few of my most intimate friends and relatives, and which will reveal, as nothing else can reveal, the true greatness of this man," etc. I approach this task in a most unselfish spirit. It will save my biographers so much trouble, and the stories will be authentic, too. Of course I may lie a little once in a while, for the sake of euphony and historic license, but all agree that that is admissible in great men. I have announced my purpose. Now for a beginning.

First, what shall I be? I must be something. Why not be a poet? There is a difficulty about that. About the first thing expected is the poet's first poem, showing marvellous poetic conception. Mine, as I remember it, was something like this:

"How many of our citizens
are drifting away
Through the broad gates of destruction
every day?
All caused by this monstrous drink,
Which will cause them sooner
or later to sink.
If they could see themselves staggering
along the street
Here in the town of Dayton,
So drunk they can hardly creep,
I think they would turn from Satan,
And live better men."

There are other things that present fewer difficulties than the greatness of the poet. Let's see. Famous explorer. They are quite the thing now. I suppose Andree would be all the rage if he would come back. But that's it. I would have to come back from somewhere. I believe, too, that famous explorers usually run away from beautiful, luxurious homes and wealthy, indulgent parents, steam yachts, Angora Billy-goats, French nurses, and so on. That won't do for me. My father was a poor chump of a man who thought he should always do his duty, no matter where it led him, and he didn't believe much in French nurses and steam yachts. Then, what else is there? Novelist, preacher, actor, inventor, successful politician (United States president!), scientist, modern journalist, naval or military hero, murderer, safe-cracker—Ah, now I have it. Just the thing! I'll be a military hero! It does not require strong mental traits, and precocity is entirely unnecessary. All that is needed is a fight. Either one side or the other is sure to be whipped, and the one who does the whipping is the one whose name shall be written on history's honored page, alongside that of the Father-of-his-country. I'll be a military hero. The incidents of my birth and rearing will cut absolutely no figure. My Puritan blood is of no advantage. On the contrary, a little pirate and smuggler's blood would be no disadvantage; quite otherwise, I think. But neither one is a necessity. The most commonplace people in the world have become great military heroes. In my youth I need have no "big, honest, searching brown eyes, that seem to be ever soft with wonder, ever troubled over the world's sorrow, ever ready to flash at an ignoble deed or disgraceful act." Neither will "features of beauty for one so young" be necessary. "In my youth," I will not need to be "a sturdy, young athlete, whose feats of strength and physical powers were known through all the settlement." Stonewall Grant, or some great general, used to be taken to the field of battle in his bed. (My private opinion about that has always been that he was too lazy to get up. If I had been on his staff he wouldn't have worked me that

way.) No, nor I would not have to be able "to seat a mettlesome charger with admirable grace and self-control." Think how fat and unwieldy Shafter was! Happy thought when I chose "military hero." I have chosen so well that I almost believe I shall make a successful politician. But I will not stop to change now, I have chosen.

Now for the first anecdote.

An incident occurring very early in the life of Jigadier Brindle Smoke is indicative of his marked ability to retain the utmost composure under trying circumstances. When he was less than a year old, his mother was about to start from their country home to the city. The weather was very cold, so before seating herself in the carriage, she wrapped little Smoke very carefully in heavy, warm coverings, sufficient to exclude every harsh blast of the stormy wind from the pile of her heart (and likewise to keep him from getting croup and keeping her awake nights.) The child was handed to her after she had taken her seat in the old family conveyance, (which was used on other occasions for hauling corn) and she took him and held him carefully against her bosom. The babe scarcely stirred during the long ride, and the mother's heart beat with pride whenever she thought about it. (He couldn't have stirred if he had wanted to.) Finally the city was reached and the fond mother left the carriage, and with her babe at her bosom, entered the inn. "My blessed baby boy," she murmured, as she began removing the blankets from around him and piled them up on the kitchen bench, "let me kiss him." And she stooped to touch him with her lips as she opened the blanket. But she started back suddenly, for a pair of fat, red feet were disclosed, instead of the expected freckled face. Little Smoke's mother reversed him at once, to find him peacefully sucking his thumb and gently snoring. She had carried him bottom side up clear from the farm, and he didn't know the difference. Such was his power of making the best of things when he was a baby.

The Jig Always Slept Soundly.

The Jigadier's ability to sleep soundly in time of great danger has always been noticeable even from early childhood. His parents were making a journey over the prairie at a time when the hero had not yet reached his second year. The team that was taking them to their destination—a dance, I think, or a camp meeting—became fractious, and finally ran away. The future fighter of battles was asleep in his mother's arms. The team, after running for some distance, turned suddenly, upsetting the vehicle and throwing the party out very roughly. The shock threw the baby from his mother's arms, and he was rudely rolled along the prairie for a distance of fifteen yards. As soon as convenient his mother picked him up, and unrolled his coverings to discover the nature of his injuries. He was strangely quiet, and the mother's heart—as well as her back and ribs—ached. But a single glance at the babe reassured her. He was sound asleep, and had not even removed his thumb from his mouth. Such composure at so early an age was, indeed, remarkable, and spoke volumes for his future career.

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