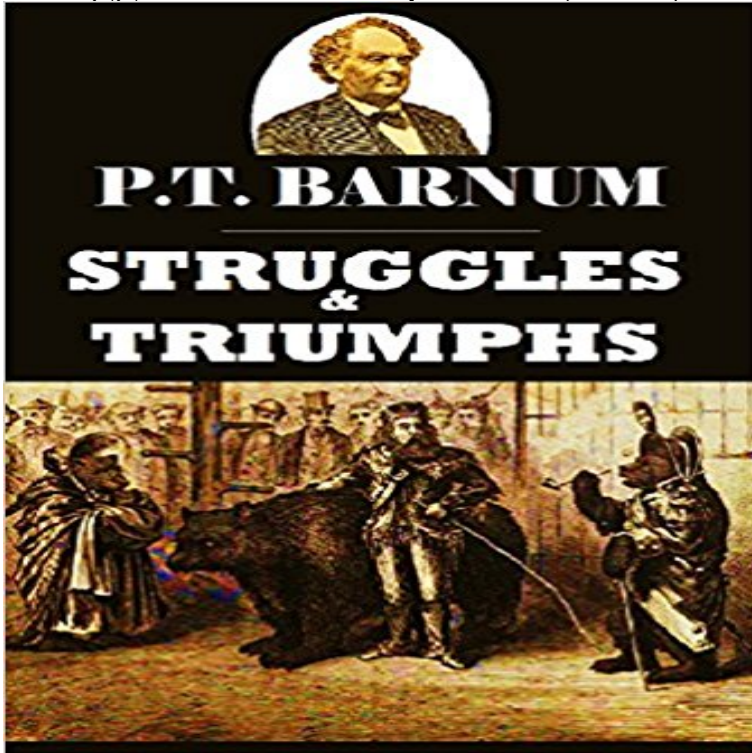


Struggles and Triumphs: Or, Forty Years Recollections of P. T. Barnum



P. T. Barnum (1810 1891) Anarrates his early history as Clerk, Merchant and Editor, and his later career a Showman. Barnum is the greatest showman of all time, the American from Bethel, Connecticut, whose eccentricities and oblique, cynical approach to humanity transformed entertainment into a big, incredibly profitable business. As bachelor, husband (twice), father, and grandfather, Barnum comes to life in these crowded pages, an exceedingly interesting and human man. Here, too, are New York City in all its nineteenth-century color the London of Queen Victoria, and the Paris of Napoleon III. In 1842, Barnum opened the first of the great museums of curiosities and freaks, adding immeasurably to the gaiety of New York life. He exhibited the tiny Charles Sherwood Stratton so successfully that he became, as General Tom Thumb, a world-famous figure. In 1850, Barnum imported Jenny Lind for a concert tour beginning at Castle Garden (later the Aquarium in Battery Park), which more than prefigured the later exploits of S. Hurok. When past sixty, Barnum opened in Brooklyn The Greatest Show on Earth, the first great American traveling circus. In a large majority of cases human life is a struggle, a conflict with opposing obstacles prolonged often through years of difficulties, which test the strength and try the character; too often, unfortunately, prolonged to the end. The history of such a life, candidly and honestly written and portrayed in fitting language, has all the interest of romanceis, in fact, a romance of real life, and ought to abound in lessons of practical wisdom for those who are to follow along the pathway which, though beaten by the countless feet of those who have gone before, is always rugged to every new wayfarer. Such a work is this autobiography of P. T. Barnum, so well known on both sides of the Atlantic for the personal vicissitudes through which he has

passed during a long public career, for his indefatigable energy of character, and for his triumph over obstacles and misfortunes which might well have appalled and discouraged even the sternest battler in the struggle for existence. Retired from the dust of the arena, and resting upon his laurels, he has spent the leisure moments of a green and vigorous old age in recalling the past with its checkered experiences, and drawing from it such lessons as will amuse, interest, and benefit those who are to follow in his footsteps. There is a charm about autobiography which is not possessed by any other branch of literature. A peculiar interest always attaches to any record of an actual, personal life a kindred feeling which constitutes the infinite superiority of reality over romance and in proportion as the experiences of the autobiographer are varied, and the relations in which he places himself to the reader honest and candid, is the interest much or little, and the impressions permanent or transient. Of the various vicissitudes through which Mr. Barnum has passed the whole world more or less knows, and to show how perfectly natural and confidential he is with the public, quoting from the preface what he himself says of his work. It is the matured and leisurely review of almost half a century of work and struggle and final success, in spite of fraud and fire the story of which is blended with amusing anecdotes, funny passages, felicitous jokes, captivating narratives, novel experiences, and remarkable interviews the sunny and sombre so intermingled as not only to entertain, but convey useful lessons to all classes of readers. The delicious egotism which pervades this passage, and which constitutes half the charm of personal revelations, run through the whole work, and more especially is it characterized by Mr. Barnum's strongly marked and thoroughly American individuality. Originally published in 1879, this book has been reformatted for the Kindle and may contain an occasional defect from the original publication or from the reforma

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