

Bootstrap

To begin an enterprise or recover from a setback without any outside help; to succeed only on one's own effort or abilities.

Wiktionary

The term is sometimes attributed to Rudolf Erich Raspe's story "The Surprising Adventures of Baron Munchausen", where the main character pulls himself (and his horse) out of a swamp by his hair.



Baron Munchausen

O. Herbig 1892

http://redstateeclectic.typepad.com/redstate_commentary/2010/11/sustainability-isnt-sustainable.html