

An aerial photograph showing a railway track cutting through a dense, lush green forest. The track is composed of parallel rails and gravel, and is flanked by dirt paths. The surrounding vegetation is thick and vibrant green, with many palm trees visible. The overall scene is a mix of man-made infrastructure and natural beauty.

***HORATIO JR.  
ALGER***

***THE ERIE  
TRAIN  
BOY***

**Horatio Jr. Alger**

# **The Erie Train Boy**

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# CHAPTER I. — ON THE ERIE ROAD.

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"Papers, magazines, all the popular novels! Can't I sell you something this morning?"

Joshua Bascom turned as the train boy addressed him, and revealed an honest, sunburned face, lighted up with pleasurable excitement, for he was a farmer's son and was making his first visit to the city of New York.

"I ain't much on story readin'," he said, "I tried to read a story book once, but I couldn't seem to get interested in it."

"What was the name of it?" asked Fred, the train boy, smiling.

"It was the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' or some such name. It had pictures into it. Aunt Nancy give it to dad for a birthday present once."

"I have heard of it."

"It was a mighty queer book. I couldn't make head nor tail on't."

"All books are not like that."

"I don't feel like readin'. It's a nuff sight more interestin' lookin' out of the winder at the sights.

"I'm going to York to spend a week," added Joshua, with an air of importance.

"That's where I live," said the train boy.

"Do you? Then you might tell me where to put up. I've got ten dollars. I reckon that ought to keep me a week."

Fred smiled.

"That is more than enough to keep me," he said, "but it costs a stranger considerable to go around. But I shall have

to go my rounds."

It was a train on the Erie road, and the car had just passed Middletown. Joshua was sitting by the window, and the seat beside him was vacant. The train boy had scarcely left the car when a stylishly dressed young man, who had been sitting behind, came forward and accosted Joshua.

"Is this seat engaged?" he asked.

"Not as I know of," answered the young farmer.

"Then with your permission I will take it," said the stranger.

"Why of course; I hain't no objection. He's dreadful polite!" thought Joshua.

"You are from the country, I presume?" said the newcomer as he sank into the seat.

"Yes, I be. I live up Elmira way—town of Barton. Was you ever in Barton?"

"I have passed through it. I suppose you are engaged in agricultural pursuits?"

"Hey?"

"You are a farmer, I take it."

"Yes; I work on dad's farm. He owns a hundred and seventy-five acres, and me and a hired man help him to carry it on. I tell you we have to work."

"Just so! And now you are taking a vacation?"

"Yes. I've come to see the sights of York."

"I think you will enjoy your visit. Ahem! the mayor of New York is my uncle."

"You don't say?" ejaculated Joshua, awestruck.

"Yes! My name is Ferdinand Morris."

"Glad to know you, Mr. Morris. My name is Joshua Bascom."

"Indeed! An aunt of mine married a Bascom. Perhaps we are related."

Joshua was quite elated at the thought that he might in some way be related to the mayor of New York without knowing it, and he resolved to expatiate on that subject when he went back to Barton. He decided that his new acquaintance must be rich, for he was dressed in showy style and had a violet in his buttonhole.

"Be you in business, Mr Morris?" he asked.

"Well, ahem! I am afraid that I am rather an idler. My father left me a quarter of a million, and so I don't feel the need of working."

"Quarter of a million!" ejaculated Joshua. "Why, that's two hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

"Just so," said Morris, smiling.

"That's an awful pile of money! Why, dad's been workin' all his life, and he isn't wuth more'n three thousand dollars at the outside."

"I am afraid three thousand dollars wouldn't last me a very long time," said Morris, with an amused smile.

"Gosh! Where can anybody get such a pile of money? That's what beats me!"

"Business, my young friend, business! Why I've made that amount of money in one day."

"You don't say!"

"Yes, by speculating in Wall Street."

"You must be smart!"



"My teachers didn't seem to think so. But life in the city is very different from life in the country."

"I wish I could make some money."

"A man must have money to make money. If now you had a little money——"

"I've got ten dollars to pay my expenses."

"Is that all?"

"No; I've got fifteen dollars to buy a shawl and dress for marm, and some shirts for dad. He thought he'd like some boughten shirts. The last marm made for him didn't fit very well."

"You must take good care of your money, Mr. Bascom. I regret to say that we have a great many pickpockets in New York."

"So I've heerd. That's what Jim Duffy told me. He went to York last spring. But I guess Jim was keerless or he wouldn't have been robbed. It would take a smart pickpocket to rob me."

"Then you keep your money in a safe place?"

"Yes, I keep my wallet in my breeches pocket;" and Joshua slapped the right leg of his trousers in a well satisfied way.

"You are right! I see you are a man of the world. You are a sharp one."

Joshua laughed gleefully. He felt pleased at the compliment.

"Yes," he chuckled, "I ain't easy taken in, I tell you, ef I was born in the woods."

"It is easy to see that. You can take care of yourself."

"So I can."

"That comes of being a Bascom. I am glad to know that we are related. You must call on me in New York."

"Where do you live?"

"At the Fifth Avenue Hotel. Just ask for Ferdinand Morris. They all know me there."

"Is that a good place to stop?"

"Yes, if you've got money enough. I pay five dollars a day for my board, and some extras carry it up to fifty dollars a week."

"Gosh all hemlock!" ejaculated Joshua, "I don't want to pay no more'n five dollars a week."

"You can perhaps find a cheap boarding-house for that sum—with plain board, of course."

"That's what I'm used to. I'm willin' to get along without pie."

"You like pie, then?"

"We ginerally have it on the table at every meal, but I can wait till I get home."

"I will see what I can do for you. In fact, all you've got to do is to buy a morning paper, and pick out a boarding-house where the price will suit you. You must come and dine with me some day at the Fifth Avenue Hotel."

"Thank you! You're awful kind, but I'm afraid I ain't dressed up enough for such a stylish place."

"Well, perhaps not, but I might lend you a suit to go to the table in. We are about the same build."

"If you've got an extra suit——"

"An extra suit? Mr. Bascom, I have at least twenty extra suits."

"Gee-whillikens! What do you want with so many clothes?"

"I never wear the same suit two days in succession. But I must bid you good morning, Mr. Bascom. I have a friend in the next car."

Morris rose, and Joshua, feeling much flattered with his polite attentions, resumed his glances out of the window.

"Apples, oranges, bananas!" called the train boy, entering the car with a basket of fruit.

"How much do you charge?" asked Joshua. "I feel kind of hungry, and I haven't ate an orange for an age. Last time I bought one was at the grocery up to hum."

"The large oranges are five cents apiece," said Fred. "I can give you two small ones for the same price."

"I'll take two small ones. It seems a great deal of money, but I'm traveling and that makes a difference."

"Here are two good ones!" said Fred, picking out a couple.

"All right! I'll take 'em!"

Joshua Bascom thrust his hand into his pocket, and then a wild spasm contracted his features. He explored it with growing excitement, and a sickly pallor overspread his face.

"What's the matter?" asked Fred.

"I've been robbed. My wallet's gone!" groaned Joshua in a husky voice.





## CHAPTER II. — A FAIR EXCHANGE.

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"Who can have robbed you?" asked the train boy, sympathetically.

"I dunno," answered Joshua sadly.

"How much have you lost?"

"Twenty-five dollars. No," continued Mr. Bascom with a shade of relief. "I put dad's fifteen dollars in my inside vest pocket."

"That is lucky. So you've only lost ten."

"It was all I had to spend in York. I guess I'll have to turn round and go back."

"But who could have taken it? Who has been with you?"

"Only Mr. Morris, a rich young man. He is nephew to the mayor of New York."

"Who said so?"

"He told me so himself."

"How was he dressed?" asked Fred, whose suspicions were aroused. "Did he wear a white hat?"

"Yes."

"And looked like a swell?"

"Yes."

"He got off at the last station. It is he that robbed you."

"But it can't be," said Joshua earnestly. "He told me he was worth quarter of a million dollars, and boarded at the Fifth Avenue Hotel."

"And was nephew of the mayor?"

"Yes."

Fred laughed.

"He is no more the mayor's nephew than I am," he said.  
"He is a confidence man."

"How do you know?" asked Joshua, perplexed.

"That is the way they all act. He saw you were a countryman, and made up his mind to rob you. Did you tell him where you kept your money?"

"Yes, I did. He told me there was lots of pickpockets in New York, and said I ought to be keerful."

"He ought to know."

"Can't I get my money back?" asked Mr. Bascom anxiously.

"I don't think there's much chance. Even if you should see him some time, you couldn't prove that he robbed you."

"I'd like to see him—for five minutes," said the young farmer, with a vengeful light in his eyes.

"What would you do?"

"I'd give him an all-fired shakin' up, that's what I'd do."

Looking at Mr. Bascom's broad shoulders and muscular arms, Fred felt that he would be likely to keep his word in a most effectual manner.

"I don't know what to do," groaned Joshua, relapsing into gloom.

As he spoke he slid his hand into his pocket once more, and quickly drew it out with an expression of surprise. He held between two fingers a handsome gold ring set with a neat stone.

"Where did that come from?" he asked.

"Didn't you ever see it before?" inquired the train boy.

"Never set eyes on it in my life."

"That's a joke!" exclaimed Fred with a laugh.

"What's a joke?"

"Why, the thief in drawing your wallet from your pocket dropped his ring. You've made an exchange, that is all."

"What is it worth?" asked Joshua, eagerly. "Permit me, my friend," said a gentleman sitting just behind, as he extended his hand for the ring. "I am a jeweler and can probably give you an idea of the value of the ring."

Joshua handed it over readily.

The jeweler eyed it carefully, and after a pause, handed it back.

"My friend," he said, "that ring is worth fifty dollars!"

"Fifty dollars!" ejaculated Joshua, his eyes distended with surprise. "I can't understand it. Cousin Sue has got a gold ring as big as this that only cost three dollars and a half."

"Very likely, but the stone of this is valuable. You've made money out of your pickpocket, if he only took ten dollars from you."

"But he'll come back for it."

The jeweler laughed.

"If he does, tell him where you found it, and ask how it came in your pocket. He won't dare to call for it."

"I'd rather have the ten dollars than the ring."

"I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll advance you twenty-five dollars on the ring, and agree to give it back to you any time within a year on payment of that sum, and suitable interest."

"You can have it, mister," said Joshua promptly.

As he pocketed the roll of bills given him in exchange, his face glowed with returning sunshine.

"By gosh!" he said, "I've made fifteen dollars."

"That' isn't a bad day's work!" said Fred.

"It's more'n I ever earned in a month before," said the young farmer. "I declare it's paid me to come to the city."

"You are lucky! Look out for pickpockets, as they don't always give anything in exchange. Now you can afford to buy some oranges."

"Give me two five-cent oranges and a banana," said Mr. Bascom with reckless extravagance. "I guess I can afford it, now I've made fifteen dollars."

"I wish that pickpocket would rob me," said Fred smiling. "Fifteen dollars would come in handy just now," and his smile was succeeded by a grave look, for money was scarce with the little household of which he was a member.

It is time to speak more particularly of Fred, who is the hero of this story. He was a pleasant-looking, but resolute and manly boy of seventeen, who had now been for some months employed on the Erie road. He had lost a place which he formerly occupied in a store, on account of the failure of the man whom he served, and after some weeks of enforced leisure had obtained his present position. Train boys are required to deposit with the company ten dollars to protect their employer from possible loss, this sum to be returned at the end of their term of service. They are, besides, obliged to buy an official cap, such as those of my readers who have traveled on any line of railroad are familiar with. Fred had been prevented for some weeks from taking the place because he had not the money required as a deposit. At length a gentleman who had confidence in him went with him to the superintendent and supplied the sum, and this removing the last obstacle, Fred Fenton began his



daily runs. He was paid by a twenty per cent, commission on sales. It was necessary, therefore, for him to take in five dollars in order to make one for himself. He had thus far managed to average about a dollar a day, and this, though small, was an essential help to his widowed mother with whom he lived.

Just before reaching Jersey City, Joshua Bascom appealed to Fred.

"Could you tell me where to stop in York?" he asked. "Some nice cheap place?"

"I know a plain boarding-house kept by a policeman's wife, who lives near us," said Fred. "She would probably board you for five dollars a week."

"By hokey, that's just the place." said Joshua. "If you do it, I'll make it right with you."

"Never mind about that!" said Fred. "All you've got to do is to come with me. It will be no trouble."



# CHAPTER III. — FRED'S RICH RELATION.

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It was seven o'clock when Fred reached home. He and his mother occupied three rooms in a tenement house, at a rental of ten dollars a month. It was a small sum for the city, but as Fred was the chief contributor to the family funds, rent day was always one of anxiety. It so happened that this very day rent was due, and Fred felt anxious, for his mother, when he left home, had but seven dollars towards it.

He opened the door of their humble home, and received a welcoming smile from Mrs. Fenton, a pleasant-looking woman of middle age.

"I am glad to see you back, Fred," she said. "The days seem long without you."

"Have you brought me a picture book, Fred?" asked his little brother.

"No, Bertie, I can't bring you picture books every day. I wish I could."

"Albert has been drawing from his last book," said Mrs. Fenton. "He really has quite a taste for it."

"We must send him to the Cooper Institute Drawing School when he gets older. Did the landlord come, mother?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Fenton, a shade passing over her face.

"What did he say? Did he make any fuss?"

"He was rough and unpleasant. He said he must have his money promptly or we must vacate the rooms."

"Did he take the seven dollars?"

"Yes, he took it and gave me a receipt on account. He said he must have the balance to-morrow."

"I don't see how we can pay it. The company owes me more, but I shan't get paid till Saturday night."

"Don't they advance it to you?"

"It is against the rule. Besides I couldn't get it in time."

"There is a lady in Lexington Avenue owing me four dollars for sewing, but when I went there today I heard that she was out of town."

"It is very provoking to be kept out of your money when you need it so much. If we only had a little money ahead, we could get along well. Something must be done, but I don't know what."

"You might go round to Cousin Ferguson."

"I hate to ask a favor of that man, mother."

"You remember that your poor father owned a small tract of land in Colorado. When Robert Ferguson went out three months since I asked him to look after it, and ascertain whether it was of any value. As I have heard nothing from him, I am afraid it is worthless."

"I will go and ask him, mother. That is a matter of business, and I don't mind speaking to him on that subject. I will go at once."

"Perhaps he may be willing to advance a few dollars on it."

"At any rate I will go."

Robert Ferguson lived in a plain brick house on East Thirty-Ninth Street. He was a down-town merchant, and in possession of a snug competence. Mrs. Fenton was his own cousin, but he had never offered to help her in any way,

though he was quite aware of the fact that she was struggling hard to support her little family. He had a son Raymond who was by no means as plain in his tastes as his father, but had developed a tendency to extravagance which augured ill for his future. He had never cared to cultivate the acquaintance of his poor cousins, and whenever he met Fred treated him with ill-concealed contempt.

It so happened that he was just leaving the house as Fred ascended the steps.

"Good morning, Raymond," said Fred politely.

"Oh, it's you, is it?"

"Yes," answered Fred briefly, for he did not like the style in which his cousin addressed him.

"What do you want round here?"

"I want to see your father."

"I guess he's busy."

"I want to see him on business," said Fred, pulling the bell.

"If you want to borrow any money it's no use. I struck him for ten dollars just now, and he only gave me two."

"Did I say I wanted to borrow any money?"

"No, you didn't say so, but I couldn't think of any other business you could have."

Fred did not have occasion to answer, for here the door opened, and the servant stood on the threshold.

"Is Mr. Ferguson at home?" he asked.

"Yes; will you come in?"

Fred followed the girl into the back parlor where Robert Ferguson sat reading the evening paper.

He looked up as Fred entered.

"Good evening, Mr. Ferguson," he said.

"Good evening, Frederick," said his relative coldly.

"My mother asked me to call and inquire whether you heard anything of father's land in Colorado."

"Ahem!" coughed Mr. Ferguson. "I hope she built no day dreams on its possible value."

"No sir; but she hoped it might be worth something—even a small sum would be of value to us."

"The fact is, these Western lands are worth little or nothing."

"Father used to say that some time or other the land would be worth a good sum."

"Then I don't think much of your father's judgment. Why, I don't believe you could give it away. Let me see, how much was there?"

"A hundred and twenty-five acres."

"How did you father get possession of it?"

"There was a man he took care of in his sickness, who gave it to him out of gratitude."

Robert Ferguson shrugged his shoulders.

"It would have been better if he had given him the same number of dollars," he said.

"Then you don't think it worth as much as that?"

"No, I don't."

Fred looked disappointed. In their darkest days, he and his mother had always thought of this land as likely some time to bring them handsomely out of their troubles, and make a modest provision for their comfort. Now there seemed to be an end to this hope.

"I would have sent your mother word before," said Robert Ferguson, "but as the news was bad I thought it would keep. I don't see what possessed your father to go out to Colorado."

"He was doing poorly here, and some one recommended him to try his chances at the West."

"Well, he did a foolish thing. If a man improves his opportunities here he needn't wander away from home to earn a living. That's my view."

"Then," said Fred slowly, "you don't think the land of any value?"

"No, I don't. Of course I am sorry for your disappointment, and I am going to show it. Let your mother make over to me all claim to this land, and I will give her twenty-five dollars."

"That isn't much," said Fred soberly.

"No, it isn't much, but it's better than nothing, and I shall lose by my bargain."

Fred sat in silence thinking over this proposal. The land was the only property his poor father had left, and to sell it for twenty-five dollars seemed like parting with a birthright for a mess of pottage.

On the other hand twenty-five dollars would be of great service to them under present circumstances.

"I don't know what to say," he answered slowly.

"Oh, well, it is your lookout. I only made the offer as a personal favor."

Mr. Ferguson resumed the perusal of his paper, and thus implied that the interview was over.

"Cousin Ferguson," said Fred, with an effort, "our rent is due to-day, and we are a little short of the money to meet it. Could you lend me three dollars till Saturday night?"

"No," answered Robert Ferguson coldly. "I don't approve of borrowing money. As a matter of principle I decline to lend. But if your mother agrees to sell the land she shall have twenty-five dollars at once."

Fred rose with a heavy heart.

"I will tell mother what you propose," he said. "Good evening!"

"Good evening!" rejoined Mr. Ferguson without raising his eyes from the paper.

"Twenty-five dollars would be very acceptable just now," said Mrs. Fenton thoughtfully, when Fred reported the offer of his rich relative.

"But it wouldn't last long, mother."

"It would do us good while it lasted."

"You are right there, mother, but I have no doubt the land is worth a good deal more."

"What makes you think so? Cousin Ferguson——"

"Wouldn't have made the offer he did if he hadn't thought so, too."

"He might have done it to help us."

"He isn't that kind of a man. No, mother, it is for our interest to hold on to the land till we know more about it."

"How shall we manage about the rent?"

Fred looked troubled.

"Something may turn up to-morrow. When the landlord comes, ask him to come again at eight o'clock, when I shall be home."

"Very well, Fred."

Mrs. Fenton was so much in the habit of trusting to her son that she dismissed the matter with less anxiety than Fred felt. He knew very well that trusting for something to turn up is a precarious dependence, but there seemed nothing better to do.

