

**THE STORE BOY;  
OR, THE FORTUNES  
OF BEN BARCLAY**

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The store boy; or, The fortunes of Ben Barclay by Horatio Alger

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**HORATIO ALGER**

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# THE STORE BOY

OR

THE FORTUNES OF BEN BARCLAY

BY

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"Only an Irish Boy," "Bound to Rise,"  
"Strong and Steady," "Julius,  
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# THE STORE BOY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### BEN BARCLAY MEETS A TRAMP.

"GIVE me a ride?"

Ben Barclay checked the horse he was driving and looked attentively at the speaker. He was a stout-built, dark-complexioned man, with a beard of a week's growth, wearing an old and dirty suit, which would have reduced any tailor to despair if taken to him for cleaning and repairs. A loose hat, with a torn crown, surmounted a singularly ill-flavored visage.

"A tramp, and a hard-looking one!" said Ben to himself.

He hesitated about answering, being naturally reluctant to have such a traveling companion.

"Well, what do you say?" demanded the tramp, rather impatiently. "There's plenty of room on that seat, and I'm dead tired."

"Where are you going?" said Ben.

"Same way you are—to Pentonville."

"You can ride," said Ben, in a tone by no means cordial, and he halted his horse till his unsavory companion climbed into the wagon.

They were two miles from Pentonville, and Ben had a prospect of a longer ride than he desired under the circumstances. His companion pulled out a dirty clay pipe from his pocket, and filled it with tobacco, and then explored another pocket for a match. A muttered oath showed that he failed to find one.

"Got a match, boy?" he asked.

"No," answered Ben, glad to have escaped the offensive fumes of the pipe.

"Just my luck!" growled the tramp, putting back the pipe with a look of disappointment. "If you had a match now, I wouldn't mind letting you have a whiff or two."

"I don't smoke," answered Ben, hardly able to repress a look of disgust.

"So you're a good boy, eh? One of the Sunday-school kids that want to be an angel, hey? Pah!" and the tramp exhibited the disgust which the idea gave him.

"Yes, I go to Sunday-school," said Ben, coldly, feeling more and more repelled by his companion.

"I never went to Sunday-school," said his companion. "And I wouldn't. It's only good for milksops and hypocrites." *4 Dope*

"Do you think you're any better for not going?" Ben couldn't help asking.



"I haven't been so prosperous, if that's what you mean. I'm a straightforward man, I am. You always know where to find me. There ain't no piety about me. What are you laughin' at?"

"No offense," said Ben. "I believe every word you say."

"You'd better. I don't allow no man to doubt my word, nor no boy, either. Have you got a quarter about you?"

"No."

"Nor a dime? A dime'll do."

"I have no money to spare."

"I'd pay yer to-morrer."

"You'll have to borrow elsewhere; I am working in a store for a very small salary, and that I pay over to my mother."

"Whose store?"

"Simon Crawford's; but you won't know any better for my telling you that, unless you are acquainted in Pentonville."

"I've been through there. Crawford keeps the grocery store."

"Yes."

"What's your name?"

"Ben Barclay," answered our hero, feeling rather annoyed at what he considered intrusive curiosity.

"Barclay?" replied the tramp, quickly. "Not John Barclay's son?"

It was Ben's turn to be surprised. He was the son of John Barclay, deceased, but how

could his ill-favored traveling companion know that?

"Did you know my father?" asked the boy, astonished.

"I've heerd his name," answered the tramp, in an evasive tone.

"What is your name?" asked Ben, feeling that he had a right to be as curious as his companion.

"I haven't got any visitin' cards with me," answered the tramp, dryly.

"Nor I; but I told you my name."

"All right; I'll tell you mine. You can call me Jack Frost."

"I gave you my real name," said Ben, significantly.

"I've almost forgotten what my real name is," said the tramp. "If you don't like Jack Frost, you can call me George Washington."

Ben laughed.

"I don't think that name would suit," he said. "George Washington never told a lie."

"What d'ye mean by that?" demanded the tramp, his brow darkening.

"I was joking," answered Ben, who did not care to get into difficulty with such a man.

"I'm going to joke a little myself," growled the tramp, as, looking quickly about him, he observed that they were riding over a lonely section of the road lined with woods. "Have you got any money about you?"

Ben, taken by surprise, would have been glad

to answer "No," but he was a boy of truth, and could not say so truly, though he might have felt justified in doing so under the circumstances.

"Come, I see you have. Give it to me right off or it'll be the worse for you."

Now it happened that Ben had not less than twenty-five dollars about him. He had carried some groceries to a remote part of the town, and collected two bills on the way. All this money he had in a wallet in the pocket on the other side from the tramp. But the money was not his; it belonged to his employer, and he was not disposed to give it up without a struggle, though he knew that in point of strength he was not an equal match for the man beside him.

"You will get no money from me," he answered, in a firm tone, though he felt far from comfortable.

"I won't, hey!" growled the tramp. "D'ye think I'm goin' to let a boy like you get the best of me?"

He clutched Ben by the arm, and seemed in a fair way to overcome opposition by superior strength, when a fortunate idea struck Ben. In his vest pocket was a silver dollar, which had been taken at the store, but, proving to be counterfeit, had been given to Ben by Mr. Crawford as a curiosity.

This Ben extracted from his pocket, and flung out by the roadside.