The Free Press' Short Story

FREE FROM RUST

ERNEST L. THURSTON

ERRY PATTERSON walked by rusting," smiled Margaret. "You'd the clanking pile driver, dodged surprised, Jerry, how many technical a fortyfoot post that a derrick questions in my line I've had come up in was swinging into position and crossed, connection with these cases where I've with inner trembling a narrow plank that gone out to help. I go home and study formed the sole passage over the dark my old tests, and look up authorities, waters of Elmo Creek. The pleasant, and get in touch with the latest practices tangy scent of sunheated timber filled his in my profession. Why-why I feel all nostrils, save when he passed a concrete sharpened up, aside from the real pleamixer and caught the dank, flat odor of sure of helping where help is needed." wet cement. The racket of construction machinery, the smells, the gangs of growled Jerry, "but that picayune busiworkmen, the half-finished new highway ness would hardly apply to a civil encrossing, over stream and swamp, stir- gineer." red his blood strangely. His head came up and his brown eyes glowed.

Near a group of men dominated by a tall, rangy, sandy-haired individual with rough-brown, weathered features, he waited. The man was Charles Hodgkins, chief engineer of the new highway prolect. He appeared a dynamo of energy as he talked, gesticulated and issued orders. When, abruptly, he broke from keen giance from his cold blue , eyes seemed to the young fellow to X-ray-his very thoughts.

"Well?" he snapped, in the tone of a that bridge. Now that-" man to whom minutes are precious because of so much to be done.

Jerry amiled in a friendly way that brought a twinkle into his eyes and quirked the corners of a firm mouth. "1 suppose," he said, "there's no opening for another young engineer on your staff? I was graduated from Kent Engineering College last February. I've had four summers of field practice. I want to get into harness, sir. My father, James K Patterson, was a civil engineer, and l guess it's in my blood. I can show-"

"I knew your father," interrupted the chief. "A man who got things done; who never spured himself. As for a job .-what would you say when I tell you half-dozen men, some with considerable experience, had applied to me just within the last two days?"

"I see, sir," said Jerry, his smile fad ing. "Sorry to have troubled you." "Won't you look over the work, while you're here," invited the chief, an odd, quizzical look in his eyes.

"Thank you, sir, but I'll be going." answered Jerry. His tall figure slightly drouping, Jerry turned away and again traversed the plank over the water. He tramped by one noisy machine after another, without heeding, and climbed intohis little old runabout.

"Well Old Man," he said to that ancient rattletrap, as he set out for town "that's that."

Jerry had thoroughly enjoyed his engineering training and experience. Now, he had told himself over and over, he was determined to become a field engineer on construction work. As he was needed at home, owing to his father's paralysis resulting from an accident, he range for his automobile Although | ten-ton truck " openings in other lines had been offered, field positions had seemed to be filled As a result Jerry had drifted along, seeking, and allowing himself to be increasingly depressed with each fallure

On the edge of town, Margaret English waved to him from the porch of he home and came running down to She was slender and dark with cheery brown eyes and a friendly man

"Cheer up, Jerry," ahe laughed really is a lovely world in spite of that gloom on your face. And take me out Northrop Read to the lanes farm, will The father's away the mother's sick, and I'm going out to show the small daughter how to prepare the patient's forkt "

"The idea of you doing little picayune things like that," sputtered Jerry, as he awang open his car door, "you with your splendid college training in the preparation of foods. Why waste - "

liked it." laughed Margaret teasingly

"Sure," chuckled Jerry "I had runy visions for forty-eight hours after eating oh, you know what I mean You want some bu dietitlat Doeltion with a hospital or great physiclan. Too bad you couldn't take that city position that was offered you tight after you graduated. Two bad your mother's Carling was trying to dig a living out of Ulness kept you home. It seems

"Away gleons and grouches" laughest Margare. Some day the real position will own. But Jerry I has these tittle helpings here and there I'm so glad I birdlike glance Jerry I saw you choppine up that oak that blew down back of your house. What kept your ay so rust bright and free from rust'

"I get your point lady haughed Jerry "Use of course But "Always the buts" laughed Margaret it for some time

Which one this time?"

He flushed "Use dulls an ax" "Doesn't do so much damage as long |

GOOD SHOES FOR YOUNG AND OLD

B. D. RACHLIN, Acton

"Well and good," half laughed, half

Margaret looked off over the fields for a long minute; then her lips twitched. Jerry. "I see you're loaded."

"Building bridges a part of civil ongineering?" asked Margaret. "About the most interesting."

"The private driveway up to the Lane farmhouse," went on Margaret, "crosses th group and swung towards Jerry, the a wide brook. One side of the little bridge has caved in. I'll have to get out and walk. Mr. Lane is away, trying to find work. They haven't money to fix

"Enough, fair lady," chuckled Jerry.

ing and joking, discussing plans and pros-, where garet scemed hardly to give a thought, hand was needed

boy of the house. I'll fix that to hold an than of the County Hospital" her to that woodlot. Only, it will take garet," exclaimed Je, v. heartily, despite counts."

house and give that small daughter the developed on the highway project?"

With the help of Myron Lane, a Jerry piece, replacing defective timbers and gravel. Good work, Jerry." While he worked he suddenly discovered to cheer a fellow up.

tion to projects within easy home crutsing | came running out "She'll hold up a

The two started back at once, but when they reached the bridge, Margaret made him stop. She insisted on seeing the repairs, despite the falling dusk She finde her companion explain how the este bracing took up strain. Her quick understanding and approval made Jerry trel warm and grateful. He was feeling groud of that piece of work

When he stopped at her home the gir looked up into his face to ask "Jerry is Chief fledgeins a good man to work

The best man hereabouts, since Father's time ' he responded earnestly

"Then smiled Margaret 'don't let bun lorget you. Thank you so much for you: help Good night She "an ! mean ' mulleted Jerry as

he drove on, "that I'm to go over every I'm days and ask for a job lie'd kick me off the works about the third visit The matter passed from his mind, for the moment, as other thoughts filtered "You are my cake the other might and in Margaret was a sly one. He chuckled as he recalled how she had casually mentioned two other needs tamilies to whom his engineering knowledge might be of value it, a simple way. At the At

kinson's for crample a falling branch of an oak torn loose in a summer tempest had damaged a house gable. Well engineers were taught framing. Old Mr his wet and socky garden. Jerry thought perhaps he could help in some simple

Some problem arising out of his bridge repairs sent him to digging out his engincering texts that night. He pored over a bear on bridges until bedfine "Whee!" he 'chuckled "There gols

The next day while working on the Atkinson's roof, an idea occurred to him celating to Chief Hodgkins. He debated

"Well, why not" he told himself "I'll be doing what Margaret suggested " The next day Jerry rattled over to the construction work at Elmo Creek He sought out the chief, who eyed him indifferently and nodded curtly, without

speaking, when he approached. "Mr. Hodgkins--" Jerry reddened uncomfortably-"I'm out to keep the rust mind if I stood around and watched the work from day to day? I'd pick up a lot

to keep from under foot and-"

away. "Go ahead." A bit disturbed by the man's curtness, Jerry moved to the far end of the construction area and spent the morning watching one process after another. Now and then, when he could do so without interfering with the men's duties, he asked questions on points that troubled

Thereafter he reported frequently and apent long hours on the job. The force appeared rather puzzled as to just what his position was. He gathered, from a chance remark, that he was taken for some sort; of state inspector. Daily his questions became keener, and his delving into his books more thorough. Once he even dared to ask the chief a question that puzzled him greatly.

to the point, and then turned abruptly faster, towering high, and walked away.

Only once, in weeks did Jerry really help in the work. That instance occurred when he was watching the pile driver at the final span of the creek crossing. An enormous timber had been raised high in air and swung around the working platform, when its fastening slipped. Down on upstream for a hundred yards, then "Might as well fire away." laughed crashed the great pile, hitting the edge swerved and wedged across the channel. of the platform and whirling around backing up the water still higher and

towards the gnng of workers. One man attempted to block it, and was tossed to one side like a straw, Jerry something else. The barge had carried leaped forward, grasped a crowbar, stuck away the cement seating of the approach it upright in the flooring in the path of to the channel span. Already water was the whirling log, and leaped overboard to seething in, beginning its work of underavoid the spinning timber that threat- mining. ened every man near by. The great log crashed against the metal bar, half over- of men on his side were clearly leaderrode it, and then settled back, stopped in less, for the sub-foreman was making no its tracks. f

"Your point pricks me; nay, prods me. man," said Chief Hodgkins, who had come nor would orders carry. Jerry saw, Mine is going in for art, what is yours While you show 'em how to make apple been near enough to note the occurrence. that Hodgens had swung about and that doing?" ple and French pastries, I'll fix that | Jerry felt well repaid by that; yet it his long legs were bearing him swiftly "He wants to be a writer." bridge. I've ideas about bracing for small out fanned the flame of desire. He had towards an automobile. To get around - Bridge. And is he doing anything in thought, weeks before, that he wanted by the road would take the man the that line?" Margaret turned the subject. They a staff position. Now he realized that better part of an hour. rode on by lovely fields and farms, laugh- he wanted to be in engineering any-

peets and exchanging now and then the He devoted more time to observation more serious thoughts as real friends do. and to study, yet not all his time. Mar-Incidentally. Jerry's experience with garet had seen to that, with one sugges- best thing, but he was the only one who

dot ano. "You may have all the time you need," Perhaps Margaret guessed. She went it by magic. He had no time to measure, sub-editor, who altered Tennyson's line

composter of fifteen years. Jerry secured "Mrs Lane, You see, they needed gravel the side, due his toes into crevices in the equipment he required, and the two in a hurry, tons of it, and near at hand 'the broken cement work, and with water set to work. They worked hard. Really The Lanes have a gravel pit. Engineers tugging almost to his shoulders, helped only two or three of the old timbers and came up and looked it over and when place it supports had rutted out. Jerry went over they found your bridge would hold their. Moments like hours passed in struggle the little bridge nevertheless, piece by great trucks they contracted for the Shivering, soaked to the skin, Jerry

over the renewed bridge and up the road- were protecting the construction against the framework slipped into place way to the house "She's ready and fit, the extra high raging tide, for Elmo Creek "Bully work, fellows," gasped Jerry, had limited his efforts to secure a posi- if I do say it " he chuckled as Margaret, was a tidal stream, close to the bay., He climbing out . You did nobly I'll tell

Oranges

TOMATOES

Sweet and Juicy

Nice Size, per dozen

and protecting with brush mattremes "All right," snapped Hodgkins, turning cement work that might easily be undermined by the inrush of waters as the tide reached its height. Pinally he quietly. crossed the falsework on which the main channel span was to be built. Beyond he found several men under a sub-foreman,

> "Look there!" shricked a workman, pointing towards the bay entrance. Jerry stared and gasped. One barge

at other points in the work ---

of a string that had anchored offshore, had broken loose and was coming up the creek channel. "The falsework!" yelped the foreman

Jerry realized that the empty boat, riding high, would crash right through the temporary framework across the channel. He saw a commotion down the line. Fom a group the chief broke loose and ran The chief answered him clearly and toward him; but the boat was coming

"Get back!" shricked Jerry to the dazed men near him. Crash! Crackle - crackle - crash

Straight through the falsework the barge plowed. Tumblers hurtled through the air and shot across the spot where the forming ugly swirls.

Jerry and the returning workmen saw telephone Margaret the good news.

Jerry looked about. The little group move, simply staring. Across the wide "Quick thought and quick action, young gap of churning waters help could not

Jerry wondered what he should do. In every week was the matter was absolutely none of his business, but it was an emergency his emergency. He might not do the Chief Hodgkins came out. To that Mar- tion after another as to where a helping could direct something, He swung about. "Get busy you," he snapped "Hustle When Jerry saw the small bridge his A few evenings later Margaret called as you've never hustled before. You two

eves sparkled. He studied it with in- up to tell him of another need and all bags with that sand and gravel terest. "If I can borrow an ax, a saw, a then to add, "The most wonderful thing The rest of you hustle some of that timber shall I say, something to her? few spikes, a horse and chain, and the has come to me, Jerry. I'm to be dieti- over here. We'll make a framework to. Mistress. No, muse try persuasive slip over that break, and pack in the methods first clephant" he declared. "I can cut tim- "Not a bit more than you deserve, Mar- filled bags. Quick! Every instant

time. If you're through early, I won't the longing it stirred within him for his. The men sprang to work at his com-' mand Wood spikes, tools, appeared as laughed Margaret. "I'll do things at the on ... You know that sink hole that accurately. His eyes judged, his voice ... Half a league, half a league, half a snapped commands, his hands helped in league onward," into "A league and "I do, but how do you?" demanded the labor. As soon as the first section of half onward."

worked on. The last section was the eleverly bracing the whole structure. That was like Margaret, Jerry thought, worst, for the tide pulled more flercely there, and it was harder for him to secure he was whistling cheerly, something he Several days later, following a two-day proper footing. Once or twice he barely had not done in the last three months. Inshore gule, Jerry went down to the escaped being swept away. All at once As dusk was falling he drove his car creek crossing to see how the engineers another figure dropped beside him, and

Peaches

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ths. for

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Flavor

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8c

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Delicious Flavor

Sweet and

of worth-while knowledge. I'll promise found men bracing temporary structures, your chief how-" He stopped, staring. for Chief Hodgkins, dripping wet, stood

"I-I'd no business to interfere, sir."

getting out bags and small timber for use take my car over there and go around and pick up yours; then get home and get dry. I'll make it right with you for this work."

> 'A don't want that," objected Jerry. " want to work under you. No matter about a staff position. Any position-just as workman or foreman-just a trial." "There has been one for you-for some

"When," went on the chief engineer, 'a man, as a kindness, mends a farm bridge in a way to hold up an eight-ton truck, he attracts attention. The bracing of that bridge showed headwork. Report

"I'm where I don't gather rust," he "I expect you'll positively dazzle me next time I see you," laughed Margaret

"II'm Then we're pretty much in the same boat. My son, as I said, is soing.

ON THE LARGE SIZE

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IMPERIAL

"Your father's son, Jerry," he said faltered Jerry, "only-only-I sort of felt

I had to save it." "Exactly," laughed the chief. "Now

time," laughed Chief Hodgkins. "Had you pressed when you first saw me, you might have had a trial, but you made a negative approach, as if you expected nothing. You got it. Now you're showing yorrself a determined man. There's another reason, too." He paused, smiling,

to me the first of the week."

"I can get dry over in the tool house, laughed Jerry. "Why not let me stay Jerry stopped at the first public pay station on his way home that night to

happily. "Make it soon."

BOTH ARTISTS

"Yes, quite a lot He writes for money i

in for art and regularly draws on me

Then there was the too-conscientious





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