

# **Bring the Jubilee**

By Ward Moore

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## About Ward Moore

*\_Breathe the Air Again  
Greener Than You Think  
Bring the Jubilee*

This is an original novel—not a reprint—published by FARRAR, STRAUS & YOUNG, INC. The low price of \$2.00 is made possible by large printings of combined editions.

*For*  
*TONY BOUCHER and MICK McCOMAS*  
*who liked this story*

What he will he does, and does so much  
That proof is call'd impossibility  
—*Troilus and Cressida*

It is always the puzzle of the nature of time that brings our thoughts to a standstill. And if time is so fundamental that an understanding of its true nature is for ever beyond our reach, then so also in all probability is a decision in the age-long controversy between determination and free will.

—*The Mysterious Universe by James Jeans*

## ***1. LIFE IN THE TWENTY-SIX STATES***

Although I am writing this in the year 1877, I was not born until 1921. Neither the dates nor the tenses are error—let me explain:

I was born, as I say, in 1921, but it was not until the early 1930's, when I was about ten, that I began to understand what a peculiarly frustrate and disinherited world was about me. Perhaps my approach to realization was through the crayon portrait of Granpa Hodgins which hung, very solemnly, over the mantel.

Granpa Hodgins after whom I was named, perhaps a little grandiloquently, Hodgins McCormick Backmaker, had been a veteran of the War of Southron Independence. Like so many young men he had put on a shapeless blue uniform in response to the call of the ill-advised and headstrong—or martyred—Mr Lincoln. Depending on which of my lives' viewpoints you take.

Granpa lost an arm on the Great Retreat to Philadelphia after the fall of Washington to General Lee's victorious Army of Northern Virginia, so his war ended some six months before the capitulation at Reading and the acknowledgment of the independence of the Confederate States on July 4, 1864. One-armed and embittered, Granpa came home to Wappinger Falls and, like his fellow veterans, tried to remake his life in a different and increasingly hopeless world.

On its face the Peace of Richmond was a just and even generous disposition of a defeated foe by the victor. (Both sides—for different reasons—remembered the mutiny of the Unreconstructed Federals in the Armies of the Cumberland and the Tennessee who, despite defeat at Chattanooga, could not forget Vicksburg or Port Hudson and fought bloodily against the order to surrender.) The South could easily have carved the country up to suit its most fiery patriots, even to the point of detaching the West and making a protectorate of it. Instead the chivalrous Southrons contented themselves with drawing the new boundary along traditional lines. The Mason-Dixon gave them Delaware and Maryland, but they generously returned the panhandle of western Virginia jutting above it. Missouri was naturally included in the Confederacy, but of the disputed territory Colorado and Deseret were conceded to the old Union; only Kansas and California as well as—for obvious defensive reasons—Nevada's tip went to the South.

But the Peace of Richmond had also laid the cost of the war on the beaten North and this was what crippled Granpa Hodgins more than the loss of his arm. The postwar inflation entered the galloping stage during the Vallandigham Administration, became dizzying in the time of President Seymour and precipitated the food riots of 1873 and '74. It was only after the election of President Butler by the Whigs in 1876 and the reorganization and drastic deflation following that money and property became stable, but by this time all normal values were destroyed. Meanwhile the indemnities had to be paid regularly in gold. Granpa and hundreds of thousands like him just never seemed to get back on their feet.



How well I remember, as a small boy in the 1920's and '30s, my mother and father talking bitterly of how the War had ruined everything. They were not speaking of the then fairly recent Emperors' War of 1914-16, but of the War of Southron Independence which still, nearly seventy years later, blighted what was left of the United States.

Nor were they unique or peculiar in this. Men who slouched in the smithy while Father shod their horses, or gathered every month around the postoffice waiting for the notice of the winning lottery numbers to be put up, as often cursed the Confederates or discussed what might have been if Meade had been a better general or Lee a worse one, as they did the new-type bicycles with clockwork auxiliaries to make pedaling uphill easier, or the latest scandal about the French Emperor, Napoleon VI.

I tried to imagine what it must have been like in Granpa Hodgins' day, to visualize the lost past—that strange bright era when, if it could be believed, folk like ourselves and our neighbors had owned their farms outright and didnt pay rent to the bank or give half the crop to a landlord. I searched the wiggling crayon lines that composed Granpa Hodgins' face for some sign that set him apart from his descendants.

“But what did he *do* to lose the farm?” I used to ask my mother.

“Do? Didnt do anything. Couldnt help himself. Go along now and do your chores; Ive a terrible batch of work to get out.”

How could Granpa's not doing anything result so disastrously? I could not understand this any more than I could the bygone

time when a man could nearly always get a job for wages which would support himself and a family, before the system of indenture became so common that practically the only alternative to pauperism was to sell oneself to a company.

Indenting I understood all right, for there was a mill in Wappinger Falls which wove a shoddy cloth very different from the goods my mother produced on her handloom. Mother, even in her late forties, could have indented there for a good price, and she admitted that the work would be easier than weaving homespun to compete with their product. But, as she used to say with an obstinate shake of her head, "Free I was born and free I'll die."

In Granpa Hodgins' day, if one could believe the folktales or family legends, men and women married young and had large families; there might have been five generations between him and me instead of two. And many uncles, aunts, cousins, brothers and sisters. Now late marriages and only children were the rule.

If it hadn't been for the War—This was the basic theme stated with variations suited to the particular circumstance. If it hadn't been for the War the most energetic young men and women would not turn to emigration; visiting foreigners would not come as to a slum; and the great powers would think twice before sending troops to restore order every time one of their citizens was molested. If it hadn't been for the War the detestable buyer from Boston—detestable to my mother, but rather fascinating to me with his brightly colored vest and smell of soap and hair tonic—would not have come regularly to offer her a miserable price for her weaving.

“Foreigner!” she would always exclaim after he left; “sending good cloth out of the country.”

Once my father ventured, “He’s only doing what he’s paid for.”

“Trust a Backmaker to stand up for foreigners. Like father, like son; suppose you’d let the whole thieving crew in if you had your way.”

So was first hinted the scandal of Grandfather Backmaker. No enlarged portrait of him hung anywhere, much less over the mantel. I got the impression my father’s father had been not only a foreigner by birth, but a shady character in his own right, a man who kept on believing in the things for which Granpa Hodgins fought after they were proved wrong. I don’t know how I learned that Grandfather Backmaker had made speeches advocating equal rights for Negroes or protesting the mass lynchings so popular in the North, in contrast to the humane treatment accorded these non-citizens in the Confederacy. Nor do I remember where I heard he had been run out of several places before finally settling in Wappinger Falls or that all his life people had muttered darkly at his back, “Dirty Abolitionist!”—a very deep imprecation indeed. I only know that as a consequence of this taint my father, a meek, hardworking, worried little man, was completely dominated by my mother who never let him forget that a Hodgins or a McCormick was worth dozens of Backmakers.

I must have been a sore trial to her for I showed no sign of proper Hodgins gumption, such as she displayed herself and which surely kept us all—though precariously—free. For one thing I was remarkably unhandy and awkward, of little use in

the hundred necessary chores around our dilapidated house. I could not pick up a hammer at her command to do something about fixing the loose weatherboards on the east side without mashing my thumb or splitting the aged, unpainted wood. I could not hoe the kitchen garden without damaging precious vegetables and leaving weeds intact. I could shovel snow in the winter at a tremendous rate for I was strong and had endurance, but work requiring manual dexterity baffled me. I fumbled in harnessing Bessie, our mare, or hitching her to the cart for my father's trips to Poughkeepsie, and as for helping him on the farm or in his smithy I'm afraid my efforts drove that mild man nearest to a temper he ever came. He would lay the reins on the plowhorse's back or his hammer down on the anvil and say mournfully:

"Better see if you can help your mother, Hodge. You're only in my way here."

On only one score did I come near pleasing Mother: I learned to read and write early, and exhibited some proficiency. But even here there was a flaw; she looked upon literacy as something which distinguished Hodginses and McCormicks from the ruck who had to make their mark, as an accomplishment which might somehow and unspecifiedly lead away from poverty. I found reading an end in itself, which probably reminded her of my father's laxity or Grandfather Backmaker's subversion.

"Make something of yourself, Hodge," she admonished me often. "You can't change the world"—an obvious allusion to Grandfather Backmaker—"but you can do something with it as it is if you try hard enough. There's always some way out."

Yet she did not approve of the postoffice lottery, on which so many pinned their hopes of escape from poverty or indenture. In this she and my father were agreed; both believed in hard work rather than chance.

Still, chance could help even the steadiest toiler. I remember the time a minibile—one of the small, trackless locomotives—broke down not a quarter of a mile from Father's smithy. This was a golden, unparalleled, unbelievable opportunity. Minibiles, like any other luxury, were rare in the United States though they were common enough in prosperous countries like the German Union or the Confederacy. We had to rely for our transportation on the never-failing horse or on the railroads, wornout and broken down as they were. For decades the great issue in Congress was the never completed Pacific transcontinental line, though British America had one and the Confederate States seven. (Sailing balloons, economical and fairly common, were still looked upon with some suspicion.) Only a rare millionaire with connections in Frankfurt, Washington-Baltimore or Leesburg could afford to indulge in a costly and complicated minibile requiring a trained driver to bounce it over the rutted and chuckholed roads. Only an extraordinarily adventurous spirit would leave the tar-surfaced streets of New York or its sister city of Brooklyn, where the minibiles' solid rubber tires could at worst find traction on the horse or cable-car rails, for the morasses or washboard roads which were the only highways north of the Harlem River.

When one did, the jolting, jouncing and shaking inevitably broke or disconnected one of the delicate parts in its complex

mechanism. Then the only recourse—apart from telegraphing back to the city if the traveler broke down near an instrument—was to the closest blacksmith. Smiths rarely knew much of the principles of the minibiles, but with the broken part before them they could fabricate a passable duplicate and, unless the machine had suffered severe damage, put it back in place. It was customary for such a craftsman to compensate himself for the time taken away from horseshoeing or spring-fitting—or just absently chewing on an oatstraw—by demanding exorbitant remuneration, amounting to perhaps twenty-five or thirty cents an hour, thus avenging his rural poverty and self-sufficiency upon the effete wealth and helplessness of the urban excursionist.

Such a golden opportunity befell my father, as I said, during the fall of 1933, when I was twelve. The driver had made his way to the smithy, leaving the owner of the minibile marooned and fuming in the enclosed passenger seat. A hasty visit convinced Father, who could repair a clock or broken rake with equal dexterity, that his only course was to bring the machine to the forge where he could heat and straighten a part not easy to disassemble. (The driver, the owner, and Father all repeated the name of the part often enough, but so inept have I been with “practical” things all my life that I couldn’t recall it ten minutes, much less thirty years later.)

“Hodge, run and get the mare and ride over to Jones’s. Don’t try to saddle her—go bareback. Ask Mr Jones to kindly lend me his team.”

“I’ll give the boy a quarter dollar for himself if he’s back with the team in twenty minutes,” added the owner of the minibile, sticking his head out of the window.

I won’t say I was off like the wind, for my life’s work has given me a distaste for exaggeration or hyperbole, but I moved faster than I ever had before. A quarter, a whole shining silver quarter, a day’s full wage for the boy who could find odd jobs, half the day’s pay of a grown man who wasn’t indented or worked extra hours—all for myself, to spend as I wished!

I ran all the way back to the barn, led Bessie out by her halter and jumped on her broad back, my enthralling daydream growing and deepening each moment. With my quarter safely got I could perhaps persuade my father to take me along on his next trip to Poughkeepsie; in the shops there I could find some yards of figured cotton for Mother, or a box of cigars to which Father was partial but rarely bought for himself, or an unimagined something for Mary McCutcheon, some three years older than I, with whom it had so recently become disturbing as well as imperative to wrestle—in secret of course so as not to show oneself unmanly in sporting with a weak girl instead of another boy.

It never even occurred to me, as it would have to most, to invest in an eighth of a lottery ticket. Not only were my parents sternly against this popular gamble, but I myself felt a strangely puritanical aversion to meddling with my fortune.

Or I could take the entire quarter into Newman’s Book and Clock Store. Here I could not afford one of the latest English or Confederate books—even the novels I disdained cost fifty cents

in their original and thirty in the pirated United States' edition—but what treasures there were in the twelve-and-a-half cent reprints and the dime classics!

With Bessie's legs moving steadily beneath me I pored over in my imagination Mr Newman's entire stock, which I knew by heart from examinations lulled by the steady ticking of his other, and no doubt more salable, merchandise. My quarter would buy two reprints, but I would read them in as many evenings and be no better off than before until their memory faded and I could read them again. Better to invest in paperbacked adventure stories giving sharp, breathless pictures of life in the West or rekindling the glories of the War. True, they were written almost entirely by Confederate authors and I was, perhaps thanks to Granpa Hodgins and my mother, a devout partisan of the lost cause of Sheridan and Sherman and Thomas. But patriotism couldn't steel me against the excitement of the Confederate paperbacks; literature simply ignored the boundary stretching to the Pacific.

I had finally determined to invest all my twenty-five cents, not in five paperbound volumes but in ten of the same in secondhand or shopworn condition, when I suddenly realized that I had been riding Bessie for some considerable time. I looked around, rather dazed by the abrupt translation from the dark and slightly musty interior of Newman's store to the bright countryside, to find with dismay that Bessie hadn't taken me to the Jones farm after all but on some private tour of her own in the opposite direction.

I'm afraid this little anecdote is pointless—it was momentarily pointed enough for me that evening, for in addition to the loss



of the promised quarter I received a thorough whacking with a willow switch from my mother after my father had, as usual, dolefully refused his parental duty—except perhaps that it shows how in pursuing the dream I could lose the reality.

My feeling that books were a part of life, and the most important part, was no passing phase. Other boys in their early teens dreamed of going to the wilds of Dakotah, Montana or Wyoming, indenting to a company run by a young and beautiful woman—this was also a favorite paperback theme—discovering the loot hidden by a gang, or emigrating to Australia or the South African Republic. Or else they faced the reality of indenture, carrying on the family farm, or petty trade. I only wanted to be allowed to read.

I knew this ambition, if that is the proper word, to be outrageous and unheard of. It was also practically impossible. The school at Wappinger Falls, a survival from the days of compulsory attendance and an object of doubt in the eyes of the taxpayers, taught as little as possible as quickly as possible. Parents needed the help of their children to survive or to build up a small reserve in the illusory hope of buying free of indenture. Both my mother and my teachers looked askance at my longing to persist past an age when my contemporaries were making themselves economically useful.

Nor, even supposing I had the fees, could the shabby, fusty Academy at Poughkeepsie—originally designed for the education of the well-to-do—provide what I wanted. Not that I was clear at all as to just what this was; I only knew that commercial arithmetic, surveying, or any of the other subjects taught there, were not the answer to my desires.

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