

世·界·文·学·经·典·名·著·文·库

GONE WITH THE WIND

THE WIND 第2版

飘

MARGARET MITCHELL



世界图书出版公司

世界文学经典名著名库

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*GONE WITH THE*

*WIND*

【美】M. (R.G.) (R.B.T)

*MITCHELL*



第2版

田德新 注释 贺广贤 审校

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〔美〕 玛格丽特·米契尔

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## 作者简介

玛格丽特·米契尔(1900~1949),出生于美国佐治亚州亚特兰大市。亚特兰大是佐治亚的首府和最大城市,始建于1837年,内战期间曾是南部邦联的铁路、工业和主要物资供应中心。1864年南北两军曾在这里进行过几个月的拉锯战(史称亚特兰大战役),后被北军焚为平地。后来的亚特兰大完全是靠亚特兰大人的双手重建的。所以米契尔从幼年时起,就常听到人们乐此不疲地谈论南北战争和战后重建。这在她心中积累了丰富的感性知识。

长大后,米契尔曾就读于华盛顿女子学校和马萨诸塞州的史密斯学院,专修文学。1922—1926年,她任《亚特兰大日报》社的记者,写了大量关于亚特兰大的报道,其中就有一组是过去南部邦联将领们的专题。记者工作大大扩大了她的视野。再加上她的父亲——曾任亚特兰大的历史学会主席,对她史料方面的帮助,使她的关于南北战争的小说就自然而然地选取了亚特兰大作为主要背景地。

1926年,米契尔因脚蹠受伤辞职。在丈夫的鼓励下,她开始了长达10年的辛苦创作。她先完成了作品的最后一章,然后再把她记忆中最鲜明的画面一节一节地剪贴下来,构成了全书丰富完整的画卷。接着,她又对各章节的衔接——无论是情节、环境还是人物,都又进行了反复的推敲,直至细腻准确、达到了高度真实的地步。其实,小说初稿只用三年的时间就基本完成了,接着,她又用了长达七年的时间反复修改、丰富和完善。正因如此,我们今天看到的这部长达1千多页的小说,读来不仅不觉得冗长、拖沓,反而感到意犹未尽,回味无穷。作者在书中塑造的人物,斯佳丽、巴特勒、阿希礼、玫兰妮,成了全世界读者津津乐道的人物形象;关心两位主人公后来命运的,更是无以数计。

在长达10年的创作时间里,米契尔潜心写作,很少向朋友们提及此事。1935年麦克米伦出版公司的编辑在全国组稿时,曾有人向他们透露了这方面的一点情况,但米契尔本人否认了。因为她不相信一个南方人对于内战的看法会让北方的出版商感兴趣。直至编辑在亚特兰大的最后一天,她才将书稿送去。同年,麦克米伦公司决定出版这部小说。米契尔又花了半年时间进一步核实书中所涉及的历史事件的时间、地点。她

引用美国诗人欧内斯特·道森的诗句，将小说命名为 *Gone with the Wind*（“随风而逝”，汉译名为《飘》）。

1936年这部小说一问世，立即轰动全国，赢得了众多的读者。前6个月销售1百多万册，日售量最多高达5万多册，第1年销售2百多万册。小说获1937年的普里策奖和美国出版商协会奖。根据小说改编、由好莱坞影帝克拉克·盖博和女明星费雯·丽主演的彩色电影《乱世佳人》也获1946年奥斯卡金奖，至今享有盛誉。到1949年，本书已被译为18种语言，在世界上40个国家销售8百多万册，到1988年增加到2千5百多万册以上，平均每年近50万册。

“一夜成名”似乎并未给米契尔带来幸福，反而严重扰乱了她多年的平静生活，使她失去了继续创作的时间和心境，直到1949年因车祸去世。这不能不说是一个遗憾。

## 故事梗概

《飘》是一部以美国南北战争为题材的现实主义长篇小说。它以女主人公斯佳丽的爱情生活为主线，反映了南北战争（1861~1865）以来，南方的战败和重建，通过斯佳丽的经历，揭示了一种敢于面对现实、不向命运低头、坚强不屈的精神，给人以极大的心灵震撼。

作者对本书的命名是 *Gone with the Wind*，意为“随风而逝”。语意出自书中一位重要人物——阿希礼之口。他是站在没落的南方农奴主的立场上，无限惋惜地慨叹战前南方的一切——贵族式的华服美食、骑马跳舞、野宴欢会；金银满柜、良田百顷、车水马龙、黑奴成群的热闹富足；自由自在、悠闲宁静、轻松舒适的田园生活；以及南方传统的道德观念等等——一切与旧的生活方式有关的林林总总，都随着那一场战争，“随风而逝”了。这一主旨，由阿希礼概括点出，再由斯佳丽一点一滴地去切实体会和经历，给读者留下了深刻的印象。作者不仅站在有钱的南方农奴主的立场上描写了这场战争，同时也表明了她在看待这段历史的个人心态。

故事是从1861年开始的。自从1860年共和党人林肯当选总统以来，南部各蓄奴州相继宣布脱离联邦，成立了“南部邦联”，总统戴维斯。“脱离联邦”、“州权”、“战争”，这样的口号一浪高过一浪，象摧征的战鼓，擂得南方男儿们热血沸腾。但我们的女主人公——塔拉庄园的斯佳丽小姐，对此却连一点儿兴趣也没有；她感兴趣的是让她的众多情人为她着迷。4月的一天下午，花枝招展的斯佳丽同两个正追求她的小伙子——塔尔顿家的双胞胎兄弟聊天，忽然听说阿希礼要订婚了，心如刀绞。斯佳丽向来能叫小伙子们围着她众星捧月般地狂热追求，唯独阿希礼例外。阿希礼对她以扑闪扑闪的长睫毛和时隐时现的小酒窝送去的阵阵秋波，只是报以礼貌性的微笑；阿希礼看她的眼神，也总象是越过她，看到别的遥远的地方去了。阿希礼温文尔雅的风度和与众不同的个性，使斯佳丽倾倒并暗恋于他。可现在，阿希礼却要和他的表妹玫兰妮订婚了！斯佳丽不相信自己会不如玫兰妮迷人，更不相信阿希礼会不爱自己。她决心在第二天的大烧烤野宴上，找机会向阿希礼当面表白，并争取说服他同自己私奔。



第二天，男人们热衷的话题仍是战争。特别是有一位姓巴特勒的，竟敢大放厥词，称战则南方必败，引起众人不快。而阿希礼，只是守在玫兰妮身边。为了引起阿希礼的充分注意，斯佳丽轻而易举地把在场所有的未婚男子——从长着几根稀稀拉拉黄胡子的老肯尼迪，到情场上毫无经验、害羞的小伙子查尔斯，都吸引得围着她团团转。可阿希礼对她的当面表白，仍予以充满绅士风度的拒绝。斯佳丽恼羞成怒，打了阿希礼一个耳光，又抓起桌上的一只小瓷碗朝壁炉狠狠地砸了过去。不料这一砸，却为她引来了另一位非同寻常的“知己”——瑞特·巴特勒，就是刚才那位不受欢迎的巴特勒先生。这位巴特勒出身名门，却以叛逆自居，公开蔑视并嘲讽南方上流社会公认的那一套道德准则。他很欣赏斯佳丽的勇气，而斯佳丽却认为他窥到了自己最丢人的一幕。

正在这时，“萨姆特要塞打起来了”的消息传来，战争爆发了！为了报复阿希礼，斯佳丽以闪电般的速度与玫兰妮的哥哥、爱害羞的查尔斯订了婚，并赶在阿希礼与玫兰妮“5·1”婚礼的前一天，与查尔斯结了婚。

婚后，查尔斯应征入伍，接着又很快病死。留给斯佳丽的，是遗腹子小韦德和“寡妇”的身份。当然，还有他的亚特兰大亲戚——皮蒂姑妈、玫兰妮和一些财产。阿希礼走了，附近的年青人都走了，斯佳丽消沉沮丧，情绪低落到了极点。这时，收到皮蒂姑妈和玫兰妮的来信，她带着孩子来到了亚特兰大。

在亚特兰大，她参加了医院对伤兵的义务护理工作，心情有所好转。但“寡妇”的身份迫使她远离一切娱乐活动。在一次为医院举行的募捐舞会上，斯佳丽终于冲破清规，穿着丧服同瑞特步入了舞池。瑞特现在成了亚特兰大鼎鼎大名的穿越北军封锁线的“英雄”，但他那冷嘲热讽的脾气却丝毫未改。此后，他们经常出入社交场合，又成了人们攻击议论的对象。只有玫兰妮不仅不参加对他们的围攻，还常常为他们辩护。只是斯佳丽仍然无法忘怀阿希礼。

1863年夏，葛底斯堡传来可怕的消息，许多和斯佳丽一起长大的青年战死了，活着的也没有足够的给养。阿希礼圣诞节回来休假，瘦削、褴褛，进一步证实了瑞特的某些“胡言乱语”并非虚妄。斯佳丽心中又燃起了对阿希礼爱的烈焰。可阿希礼在临行前，仅在她的额上轻轻吻了一下，拜托她代为照顾玫兰妮。斯佳丽被他眼中的痛苦绝望所惊骇，不由答应了。

1864年，战况越来越糟。更叫斯佳丽不能接受的是，玫兰妮怀孕了。

同时，前线又传来阿希礼失踪的消息。后经瑞特帮忙，才打听到他是被俘了。7月，亚特兰大被围，人们纷纷逃离。斯佳丽听说母亲生病了，也想回塔拉去。可是，临产的玫兰妮不能旅行。斯佳丽答应过阿希礼照顾玫兰妮，只好也留了下来。围城一个多月，天天炮声不断，度日如年。接着，战斗打到塔拉那边去了，亚特兰大城里陷入一片沉寂，使斯佳丽更加觉得心急如焚。9月1日，南军撤离亚特兰大，北佬就要进城了。可玫兰妮恰巧也在这一天分娩了。没有医生帮忙，根本不懂接生的斯佳丽从清晨直忙到深夜。这时，城里到处一片混乱，火光冲天。斯佳丽在瑞特的帮助下，弄到了一辆破马车，带着玫兰妮和惊恐万状的孩子们，连夜不顾一切地逃回塔拉。

可是塔拉早已面目全非了。家里的存棉被烧，田野荒芜；母亲去世，父亲痴呆，两个妹妹重病在床。家里只剩下了三个没了主心骨的黑奴。生活的重担一下子全部落在了19岁的斯佳丽肩上。为了让全家大小12口人活下去，她不得不坚强起来，放下小姐架子，亲自下大田，咬着牙摘棉花，干粗活。甚至还开枪打死过一个北佬士兵。然而，时常光临塔拉的，除了抢劫作恶的北佬外，还是饥饿。斯佳丽日夜紧张，常作一个可怕的怪梦，梦见自己被黑暗的巨魔追逐，周围全是大雾，她在迷雾中拼命地奔跑、挣扎，但就是找不到生路。这个恶梦成了她此后多年的一块心病，常常使她惊醒、颤栗、彻夜难眠……

次年4月，南军投降，战争结束了。正值春耕大忙时节，斯佳丽顾不上伤感与怀旧，一心恢复生产，重振塔拉庄园。接着，每天都陆陆续续地有些南军士兵路过塔拉返乡。阿希礼也捎信来说他快回来了。有一位被她们救活的重病濒危的士兵威尔，无家可归，康复后他就留在了塔拉。威尔精明能干，任劳任怨，使斯佳丽觉得心头的重担轻了许多。9月，阿希礼终于活着回来了。

但是，塔拉的困窘状况并未好转。又加上曾被斯佳丽家开除过的“下流坯”工头，现在大权在握的乔纳森暗中使坏，塔拉又因付不起高额附加税而走投无路了。斯佳丽忽然想起了瑞特，尽管他曾在逃离亚特兰大那天夜里把她们扔在半路上。为了塔拉，斯佳丽决心不惜一切代价。她只身来到亚特兰大，不料瑞特却因涉嫌侵吞国库巨款而被捕入狱了。斯佳丽从他那里分文未得，反遭他羞辱嘲弄。

斯佳丽在寒风冷雨的街上踽踽独行。她又冷又饿，伤心绝望。忽然，她碰见了妹妹的老情人肯尼迪。肯尼迪告诉她，自己现在开了一家铺子，手头颇有一小笔钱。斯佳丽一听到“钱”就来了精神，她诱骗老肯尼迪，

并在两个星期后成了肯尼迪太太。塔拉得救了。

肯尼迪太太很快发现，丈夫其实根本不善理财。她决心取代他。这时，瑞特·巴特勒又来了，还讽刺地不肯等他两星期。他是靠疏通了华盛顿的“私人朋友”才使自己刚刚获释的。斯佳丽过够了穷日子，她再也不要挨饿了。她背着肯尼迪向瑞特借钱，买下了城外的一家锯木厂，象男人那样辛苦经营起来，也象男人那样开始大把赚钱。即使后来怀了身孕，也不停止工作。这在亚特兰大又引起了众议纷纷。但斯佳丽一心扑在赚钱上，根本不予理睬。为了赶在生产前能多赚些钱，她又买下了一个木材厂。每日经营两个厂的生意，直忙到晚上才回家。这时，亚特兰大的社会治安情况很糟，街上到处都有无赖、醉鬼、流浪汉，刚被解放、涌到城里又无所事事的黑人们也常惹事生非；城外更不安全。人们都劝她不要外出，可斯佳丽依然不管不顾，我行我素。这时只有瑞特一个人能理解她，常常在路上“偶然碰到”她，帮她赶车。瑞特还警告过她少给三K党惹麻烦。

后来，斯佳丽将阿希礼一家迁回到亚特兰大，拜托阿希礼照管她的一个木材厂。玫兰妮在亚特兰大很有声望，她家很快成了守旧派人物的中心。斯佳丽生下女儿爱拉后，又亲自出马管理她的木材厂，她甚至雇用犯人为她干活，因为阿希礼管理的那个厂子老是赔钱。这时，亚特兰大的社会治安越来越糟了，妇人们吓得白天都不敢出门。一次，斯佳丽傍晚赶车回家时，被一黑一白两个坏人劫持，幸亏她家过去的一个黑奴及时相救，才幸免于难。当天夜里，三K党出击了。阿希礼和肯尼迪也在其中。可是，他们陷入了北军的埋伏。多亏瑞特巧计相救，才转危为安。可阿希礼受伤、肯尼迪在交火中毙命了。没过多久，巴特勒向她求婚，她不顾众人的反对，又成了巴特勒太太。

他们在新奥尔良度了蜜月。婚后，巴特勒对她的一切物质欲求都尽量满足，让斯佳丽彻底摆脱了恶梦的困扰。一时间，斯佳丽觉得心满意足，又生下了小女儿邦妮。巴特勒对邦妮也是无限宠爱。一天，斯佳丽从木材厂回来，突然宣布要和巴特勒分居，可巴特勒却似乎并不显得吃惊。只是他对邦妮用情更深了，凡事有求必应。他以慈父的形象一点一滴地改变着亚特兰大人对他的坏印象。为了女儿的将来，他甚至收敛恶习，捐助慈善事业，还和捉包党坏朋友断了往来。

斯佳丽对阿希礼的感情依然如故。在阿希礼生日的那天下午下班后，二人在一起追忆往事时情不自禁地拥抱，不料被人撞见传得满城风雨。巴特勒恼羞成怒，硬拖着斯佳丽出席了当晚玫兰妮为阿希礼举行的生日晚

会，会后到家强暴了她。然后，他带着孩子离开了亚特兰大，一去无踪。这一次，又是玫兰妮挺身而出，拚命保护斯佳丽，才使她熬过了这一劫难。

斯佳丽又发现自己怀孕了。三个月后，巴特勒回来时，斯佳丽正要把这一消息告诉他，不料却被他的冷嘲热讽所激怒，失足跌下楼梯，摔断了肋骨，孩子也流产了。巴特勒悔恨不已，在玫兰妮面前痛哭忏悔。此后，他再也没有强迫过她，但二人也未重修旧好。小女儿邦妮自从有了一匹自己的小马，常常任性地跳栅栏玩。一次跳时终遭不测。巴特勒伤心欲绝，终日喝得烂醉。斯佳丽也暂离了这伤心之地，直到接到玫兰妮病危的电报才赶回来。

原来，玫兰妮不顾医生的劝告又怀孕了。但她的身体却急剧恶化。临终前，她把照顾小博和阿希礼的重托交给了斯佳丽。斯佳丽看着玫兰妮离去，忽然意识到，这些年来，全因为有玫兰妮的支持和保护，自己才是强大和无所畏惧的。因为，此刻的阿希礼显得那样惊恐，那样软弱无助，使她多年对他的幻想一下子全部破灭了。

斯佳丽冲出了玫兰妮的家，发狂般地一个人在漆黑的夜里狂奔。周围大雾弥漫，正如她恶梦中所预示的那样，她不知要奔到哪里去。希望的灯火那样遥远、那样飘渺。终于，她想清楚了，这些年来，自己真正爱的，是她亲手披在阿希礼身上、使他熠熠生辉的那个美丽的幻影；而真正爱她的，只有瑞特，真正值得她爱的，也是瑞特！瑞特，是她心头希望的灯。

但是，瑞特已经对她彻底心寒，决定永远离开她了。终于，她失去了对阿希礼的爱，也失去了爱她的瑞特。一切，都随风而逝，离她远去了。不得已，斯佳丽又拿出自己对付困难的老法宝，对自己说：“我先不去想它，明天再说。明天，我要回塔拉去，一切都会好的，我一定能想办法把他赢回来。明天，毕竟是新的一天……”

## PART ONE

### CHAPTER I

SCARLETT O'HARA was not beautiful, but men seldom realized it when caught by her charm as the Tarleton twins were. *In her face were too sharply blended the delicate features of her mother, a Coast aristocrat of French descent, and the heavy ones of her florid Irish father*. But it was an arresting face, pointed of chin, square of jaw. Her eyes were pale green without a touch of hazel, starred with bristly black lashes and slightly tilted at the ends. Above them, her thick black brows slanted upward, cutting a startling oblique line in her magnolia-white skin — that skin so prized by Southern women and so carefully guarded with bonnets, veils and mittens against hot Georgia suns.

Seated with Stuart and Brent Tarleton in the cool shade of the porch of *Tara*, her father's plantation, that bright April afternoon of 1861, she made a pretty picture. Her new green flowered-muslin dress spread its twelve yards of billowing material over her hoops and exactly matched the flat-heeled green morocco slippers her father had recently brought her from *Atlanta*. The dress set off to perfection the seventeen-inch waist, the smallest in three counties, and the tightly fitting basque showed breasts well matured for her sixteen years. *But for all the modesty of her spreading skirts, the demureness of hair netted smoothly into a chignon and the quietness of small white hands folded in her lap, her true self was poorly concealed*. The green eyes in the carefully sweet face were turbulent, wilful, lusty with life, distinctly at variance with her decorous demeanour. Her manners had been imposed upon her by her mother's gentle admonitions and the sterner discipline of her mammy; her eyes were her own.

On either side of her, the twins lounged easily in their chairs, squinting at the sunlight through tall mint-garnished glasses as they laughed and talked, their long legs, booted to the knee and thick with saddle muscles, crossed negligently. Nineteen years old, six feet two inches tall, long of bone and hard of muscle, with sunburned faces and deep auburn hair, their eyes merry and arrogant, their bodies clothed in identical blue coats and mustard-coloured breeches, they were as much alike as two bolls of cotton.

Outside, the late afternoon sun slanted down in the yard, throwing into gleaming brightness the dogwood trees that were solid masses of white

blossoms against the background of new green. The twins' horses were hitched in the driveway, big animals, red as their masters' hair; and around the horses' legs quarrelled the pack of lean, nervous *possum*' hounds that accompanied Stuart and Brent wherever they went. A little aloof, as became an aristocrat, lay a black-spotted *carriage dog*', muzzle on paws, patiently waiting for the boys to go home to supper.

Between the hounds and the horses and the twins there was a kinship deeper than that of their constant companionship. They were all healthy, thoughtless young animals, sleek, graceful, high-spirited, the boys as mettlesome as the horses they rode, mettlesome and dangerous but, withal, sweet-tempered to those who knew how to handle them.

Although born to the ease of plantation life, waited on hand and foot since infancy, the faces of the three on the porch were neither slack nor soft. They had the vigour and alertness of country people who have spent all their lives in the open and troubled their heads very little with dull things in books. Life in the north Georgia county of Clayton was still new and, according to the standards of Augusta, Savannah and Charleston, a little crude. The more sedate and older sections of the South looked down their noses at the up-country Georgians, but here in north Georgia, a lack of the niceties of classical education carried no shame, provided a man was smart in the things that mattered. And raising good cotton, riding well, shooting straight, dancing lightly, squiring the ladies with elegance and carrying one's liquor like a gentleman were the things that mattered.

In these accomplishments the twins excelled, and they were equally outstanding in their notorious inability to learn anything contained between the covers of books. Their family had more money, more horses, more slaves than anyone else in the County, but the boys had less grammar than most of their poor *Cracker*' neighbours.

It was for this precise reason that Stuart and Brent were idling on the porch of Tara this April afternoon. They had just been expelled from the University of Georgia, the fourth university that had thrown them out in two years; and their older brothers, Tom and Boyd, had come home with them, because they refused to remain at an institution where the twins were not welcome. Stuart and Brent considered their latest expulsion a fine joke, and Scarlett, who had not willingly opened a book since leaving the Fayetteville Female Academy the year before, thought it just as amusing as they did.

'I know you two don't care about being expelled, or Tom either,' she said. 'But what about Boyd? *He's kind of set on getting an education*', and you two have pulled him out of the University of Virginia and Alabama and South Carolina and now Georgia. He'll never get finished at this rate.'

'Oh, he can read law in Judge Parmalee's office over in Fayetteville,' answered Brent carelessly. 'Besides, it don't matter much. We'd have had to come home before the term was out anyway.'

'Why?'

‘The war, goose! The war’s going to start any day, and you don’t suppose any of us would stay in college with a war going on, do you?’

‘You know there isn’t going to be any war,’ said Scarlett, bored. ‘It’s all just talk. Why, Ashley Wilkes and his father told Pa just last week that our commissioners in Washington would come to — to — an — amicable agreement with *Mr. Lincoln*’ about *the Confederacy*’. And anyway, the Yankees are too scared of us to fight. There won’t be any war, and I’m tired of hearing about it.’

‘Not going to be any war!’ cried the twins indignantly, as though they had been defrauded.

‘Why, honey, of course there’s going to be a war,’ said Stuart. ‘The Yankees may be scared of us, but after the way *General Beauregard*’ shelled them out of *Fort Sumter*’ day before yesterday, they’ll have to fight or stand branded as cowards before the whole world. Why, the Confederacy ——’

Scarlett made a mouth of bored impatience.

‘If you say “war” just once more, I’ll go in the house and shut the door. I’ve never gotten so tired of any one word in my life as “war”, unless it’s “secession”. Pa talks war morning, noon and night, and all the gentlemen who come to see him shout about Fort Sumter and States’ Rights and Abe Lincoln till I get so bored I could scream! And that’s all the boys talk about, too, that and their old Troop. There hasn’t been any fun at any party this spring because the boys can’t talk about anything else. I’m mighty glad Georgia waited till after Christmas before it seceded or it would have ruined the Christmas parties, too. If you say “war” again, I’ll go in the house.’

She meant what she said, for she could never long endure any conversation of which she was not the chief subject. But she smiled when she spoke, consciously deepening her dimple and fluttering her bristly black lashes as swiftly as butterflies’ wings. The boys were enchanted, as she had intended them to be, and they hastened to apologize for boring her. They thought none the less of her for her lack of interest. Indeed, they thought more. War was men’s business, not ladies’, and they took her attitude as evidence of her femininity.

Having manœuvred them away from the boring subject of war, she went back with interest to their immediate situation.

‘What did your mother say about you two being expelled again?’

The boys looked uncomfortable, recalling their mother’s conduct three months ago when they had come home, by request, from the University of Virginia.

‘Well,’ said Stuart, ‘she hasn’t had a chance to say anything yet. Tom and us left home early this morning before she got up, and Tom’s laying out over at the Fontaines’ while we came over here.’

Didn’t she say anything when you got home last night?

‘We were in luck last night. Just before we got home that new stallion Ma got in Kentucky last month was brought in, and the place was in a stew.’

The big brute—he's a grand horse, Scarlett; you must tell your pa to come over and see him right away—he'd already bitten a hunk out of his groom on the way down here and he'd trampled two of Ma's darkies who met the train at Jonesboro. And just before we got home, he'd about kicked the stable down and half-killed Strawberry, Ma's old stallion. When we got home, Ma was out in the stable with a sackful of sugar smoothing him down and doing it mighty well, too. The darkies were hanging from the rafters, pop-eyed, they were so scared, but Ma was talking to the horse like he was folks and he was eating out of her hand. There ain't nobody like Ma with a horse. And when she saw us she said: "In Heaven's name, what are you four doing home again? *You're worse than the plagues of Egypt!*" And then the horse began snorting and rearing and she said: "Get out of here! Can't you see he's nervous, the big darling? I'll tend to you four in the morning!" So we went to bed, and this morning we got away before she could catch us and left Boyd to handle her.'

'Do you suppose she'll hit Boyd?' Scarlett, like the rest of the County, could never get used to the way small Mrs. Tarleton bullied her grown sons and laid her riding-crop on their backs if the occasion seemed to warrant it.

Beatrice Tarleton was a busy woman, having on her hands not only a large cotton plantation, a hundred negroes and eight children, but the largest horse-breeding farm in the state as well. She was hot-tempered and easily plagued by the frequent scrapes of her four sons, and while no one was permitted to whip a horse or a slave, she felt that a lick now and then didn't do the boys any harm.

'Of course she won't hit Boyd. She never did beat Boyd much because he's the oldest and besides he's the runt of the litter,' said Stuart, proud of his six feet two. 'That's why we left him at home to explain things to her. God!mighty, Ma ought to stop licking us! We're nineteen and Tom's twenty-one, and she acts like we're six years old.'

'Will your mother ride the new horse to the Wilkes *barbecue* to-morrow?'

'She wants to, but Pa says he's too dangerous. And, anyway, the girls won't let her. They said they were going to have her go to one party at least like a lady, riding in the carriage.'

'I hope it doesn't rain to-morrow,' said Scarlett. 'It's rained nearly every day for a week. There's nothing worse than a *barbecue* turned into an indoor picnic.'

'Oh, it'll be clear to-morrow and hot as June,' said Stuart. 'Look at that sunset. I never saw one redder. You can always tell weather by sunsets.'

They looked out across the endless acres of Gerald O'Hara's newly ploughed cotton fields toward the red horizon. Now that the sun was setting in a welter of crimson behind the hills across the Flint River, the warmth of the April day was ebbing into a faint but balmy chill.

Spring had come early that year, with warm quick rains and sudden



frothing of pink peach blossoms and dogwood dappling with white stars the dark river swamp and far-off hills. Already the ploughing was nearly finished, and the bloody glory of the sunset coloured the fresh-cut furrows of red Georgia clay to even redder hues. The moist hungry earth, waiting upturned for the cotton seeds, showed pinkish on the sandy tops of furrows, vermilion and scarlet and maroon where shadows lay along the sides of the trenches. The whitewashed brick plantation house seemed an island set in a wild red sea, a sea of spiralling, curving, crescent billows petrified suddenly at the moment when the pink-tipped waves were breaking into surf. For here were no long, straight furrows, such as could be seen in the yellow clay fields of the flat middle Georgia country or in the lush black earth of the coastal plantations. The rolling foothill country of north Georgia was ploughed in a million curves to keep the rich earth from washing down into the river bottoms.

It was a savagely red land, blood-coloured after rains, brick-dust in droughts, the best cotton land in the world. It was a pleasant land of white houses, peaceful ploughed fields and sluggish yellow rivers, but a land of contrasts, of brightest sun-glare and densest shade. The plantation clearings and miles of cotton fields smiled up to a warm sun, placid, complacent. At their edges rose the virgin forests, dark and cool even in the hottest noons, mysterious, a little sinister, the soughing pines seeming to wait with an age-old patience, to threaten with soft sighs: 'Be careful! Be careful! We had you once. We can take you back again.'

To the ears of the three on the porch came the sounds of hooves, the jingling of harness chains and the shrill careless laughter of negro voices, as the field hands and mules came in from the fields. From within the house floated the soft voice of Scarlett's mother, Ellen O'Hara, as she called to the little black girl who carried her basket of keys. The high-pitched childish voice answered 'Yas'm,' and there were sounds of footsteps going out the back way toward the smokehouse where Ellen would ration out the food to the home-coming hands. There was the click of china and the rattle of silver as Pork, the valet-butler of Tara, laid the table for supper.

At these last sounds, the twins realized it was time they were starting home. But they were loath to face their mother and they lingered on the porch of Tara, momentarily expecting Scarlett to give them an invitation to supper.

'Look, Scarlett. About tomorrow,' said Brent. 'Just because we've been away and didn't know about the barbecue and the ball, that's no reason why we shouldn't get plenty of dances to-morrow night. You haven't promised them all, have you?'

'Well, I have! How did I know you all would be home? I couldn't risk being a *wallflower*" just waiting on you two.'

'You a wallflower!' The boys laughed uproariously.

'Look, honey. You've got to give me the first waltz and *Stu*' the last one and you've got to eat supper with us. We'll sit on the stair landing like