

TO J.R.M.

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, willful, lusty with life, distinctly at variance with her decorous demeanor. 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-colored 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 quarreled 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 vigor 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 any one else in the County, but the boys had less grammar than most of their poor Cracker neighbors.

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 maneuvered 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, popeyed, 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'lmighty, 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 tomorrow?”

“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 tomorrow,” 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 tomorrow and hot as June,” said Stuart. “Look at Oat 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 plowed cotton fields toward the red horizon. Now that the sun was setting in a welter of crimson behind tin lulls 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 plowing was nearly finished, and the bloody glory of the sunset colored 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 spiraling, 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 plowed in a million curves to keep the rich earth from washing down into the river bottoms.

It was a savagely red land, blood-colored after rains, brick dust in droughts, the best cotton land in the world. It was a pleasant land of white houses, peaceful plowed 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 souging 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 tomorrow 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 we did at the last ball and get Mammy Jincy to come tell our fortunes again.”

“I don’t like Mammy Jincy’s fortunes. You know she said I was going to marry a gentleman with jet-black hair and a long black mustache, and I don’t like black-haired gentlemen.”

“You like ‘em red-headed, don’t you, honey?” grinned Brent
“Now, come on, promise us all the waltzes and the supper.”

“If you’ll promise, we’ll tell you a secret,” said Stuart.

“What?” cried Scarlett, alert as a child at the word.

“Is it what we heard yesterday in Atlanta, Stu? If it is, you know we promised not to tell.”

“Well, Miss Pitty told us.”

“Miss Who?”

“You know, Ashley Wilkes’ cousin who lives in Atlanta, Miss Pittypat Hamilton—Charles and Melanie Hamilton’s aunt.”

“I do, and a sillier old lady I never met in all my life.”

“Well, when we were in Atlanta yesterday, waiting for the home train, her carriage went by the depot and she stopped and talked to us, and she told us there was going to be an engagement announced tomorrow night at the Wilkes ball.”

“Oh, I know about that,” said Scarlett in disappointment. “That silly nephew of hers, Charlie Hamilton, and Honey Wilkes. Everybody’s known for years that they’d get married some time, even if he did seem kind of lukewarm about it.”

“Do you think he’s silly?” questioned Brent. “Last Christmas you sure let him buzz round you plenty.”

“I couldn’t help him buzzing,” Scarlett shrugged negligently. “I think he’s an awful sissy.”

“Besides, it isn’t his engagement that’s going to be announced,” said Stuart triumphantly. “It’s Ashley’s to Charlie’s sister, Miss Melanie!”

Scarlett’s face did not change but her lips went white—like a person who has received a stunning blow without warning and who, in the first moments of shock, does not realize what has

happened. So still was her face as she stared at Stuart that he, never analytic, took it for granted that she was merely surprised and very interested.

“Miss Pitty told us they hadn’t intended announcing it till next year, because Miss Melly hasn’t been very well; but with all the war talk going around, everybody in both families thought it would be better to get married soon. So it’s to be announced tomorrow night at the supper intermission. Now, Scarlett, we’ve told you the secret, so you’ve got to promise to eat supper with us.”

“Of course I will,” Scarlett said automatically.

“And all the waltzes?”

“All.”

“You’re sweet! I’ll bet the other boys will be hopping mad.”

“Let ‘em be mad,” said Brent. “We two can handle ‘em. Look, Scarlett. Sit with us at the barbecue in the morning.”

“What?”

Stuart repeated his request.

“Of course.”

The twins looked at each other jubilantly but with some surprise. Although they considered themselves Scarlett’s favored suitors, they had never before gained tokens of this favor so easily.

Usually she made them beg and plead, while she put them off, refusing to give a Yes or No answer, laughing if they sulked, growing cool if they became angry. And here she had practically promised them the whole of tomorrow—seats by her at the barbecue, all the waltzes (and they'd see to it that the dances were all waltzes!) and the supper intermission. This was worth getting expelled from the university.

Filled with new enthusiasm by their success, they lingered on, talking about the barbecue and the ball and Ashley Wilkes and Melanie Hamilton, interrupting each other, making jokes and laughing at them, hinting broadly for invitations to supper. Some time had passed before they realized that Scarlett was having very little to say. The atmosphere had somehow changed. Just how, the twins did not know, but the fine glow had gone out of the afternoon. Scarlett seemed to be paying little attention to what they said, although she made the correct answers. Sensing something they could not understand, baffled and annoyed by it, the twins struggled along for a while, and then rose reluctantly, looking at their watches.

The sun was low across the new-plowed fields and the tall woods across the river were looming blackly in silhouette. Chimney swallows were darting swiftly across the yard, and

chickens, ducks and turkeys were waddling and strutting and straggling in from the fields.

Stuart bellowed: “Jeems!” And after an interval a tall black boy of their own age ran breathlessly around the house and out toward the tethered horses. Jeems was their body servant and, like the dogs, accompanied them everywhere. He had been their childhood playmate and had been given to the twins for their own on their tenth birthday. At the sight of him, the Tarleton hounds rose up out of the red dust and stood waiting expectantly for their masters. The boys bowed, shook hands and told Scarlett they’d be over at the Wilkeses’ early in the morning, waiting for her. Then they were off down the walk at a rush, mounted their horses and, followed by Jeems, went down the avenue of cedars at a gallop, waving their hats and yelling back to her.

When they had rounded the curve of the dusty road that hid them from Tara, Brent drew his horse to a stop under a clump of dogwood. Stuart halted, too, and the darky boy pulled up a few paces behind them. The horses, feeling slack reins, stretched down their necks to crop the tender spring grass, and the patient hounds lay down again in the soft red dust and looked up longingly at the chimney swallows circling in the gathering dusk. Brent’s wide ingenuous face was puzzled and mildly indignant.

“Look,” he said. “Don’t it look to you like she would of asked us to stay for supper?”

“I thought she would,” said Stuart. I kept waiting for her to do it, but she didn’t. What do you make of it?”

“I don’t make anything of it But it just looks to me like she might of. After all, it’s our first day home and she hasn’t seen us in quite a spell. And we had lots more things to tell her.”

“It looked to me like she was mighty glad to see us when we came.”

“I thought so, too.”

“And then, about a half-hour ago, she got kind of quiet, like she had a headache.”

“I noticed that but I didn’t pay it any mind then. What do you suppose ailed her?”

“I dunno. Do you suppose we said something that made her mad?”

They both thought for a minute.

“I can’t think of anything. Besides, when Scarlett gets mad, everybody knows it. She don’t hold herself in like some girls do.”

“Yes, that’s what I like about her. She don’t go around being cold and hateful when she’s mad—she tells you about it. But it was something we did or said that made her shut up talking and

look sort of sick. I could swear she was glad to see us when we came and was aiming to ask us to supper.”

“You don’t suppose it’s because we got expelled?”

“Hell, no! Don’t be a fool. She laughed like everything when we told her about it. And besides Scarlett don’t set any more store by book learning than we do.”

Brent turned in the saddle and called to the negro groom.

“Jeems!”

“Suh?”

“You heard what we were talking to Miss Scarlett about?”

“Nawsuh, Mist’ Brent! Huccome you think Ah be spyin’ on w’ite folks?”

“Spying, my God! You darkies know everything that goes on. Why, you liar, I saw you with my own eyes sidle round the corner of the porch and squat in the cape jessamine bush by the wall. Now, did you hear us say anything that might have made Miss Scarlett mad—or hurt her feelings?”

Thus appealed to, Teems gave up further pretense of not having overheard the conversation and furrowed his black brow.

“Nawsuh, Ah din’ notice y’all say anything ter mek her mad. Look ter me lak she sho glad ter see you an’ sho had missed you, an’ she cheep along happy as a bird, tell ‘bout de time y’all got ter

talkin' 'bout Mist' Ashley an' Miss Melly Hamilton gittin' mah'ied. Den she quiet down lak a bird w'en de hawk fly ober."

The twins looked at each other and nodded, but without comprehension.

"Jeems is right. But I don't see why," said Stuart. "My Lord! Ashley don't mean anything to her, 'cept a friend. She's not crazy about him. It's us she's crazy about."

Brent nodded an agreement.

"But do you suppose," he said, "that maybe Ashley hadn't told her he was going to announce it tomorrow night and she was mad at him for not telling her, an old friend, before he told everybody else? Girls set a big store on knowing such things first."

"Well, maybe. But what if he hadn't told her it was tomorrow? It was supposed to be a secret and a surprise, and a man's got a right to keep his own engagement quiet, hasn't he? We wouldn't have known it if Miss Melly's aunt hadn't let it out. But Scarlett must have known he was going to marry Miss Melly sometime. Why, we've known it for years. The Wilkes and Hamiltons always marry their own cousins. Everybody knew he'd probably marry her some day, just like Honey Wilkes is going to marry Miss Melly's brother, Charles."

“Well, I give it up. But I’m sorry she didn’t ask us to supper. I swear I don’t want to go home and listen to Ma take on about us being expelled. It isn’t as if this was the first time.”

“Maybe Boyd will have smoothed her down by now. You know what a slick talker that little varmint is. You know he always can smooth her down.”

“Yes, he can do it, but it takes Boyd time. He has to talk around in circles till Ma gets so confused that she gives up and tells him to save his voice for his law practice. But he ain’t had time to get good started yet. Why, I’ll bet you Ma is still so excited about the new horse that she’ll never even realize we’re home again till She sits down to supper tonight and sees Boyd. And before supper is over she’ll be going strong and breathing fire. And it’ll be ten o’clock before Boyd gets a chance to tell her that it wouldn’t have been honorable for any of us to stay in college after the way the Chancellor talked to you and me. And it’ll be midnight before he gets her turned around to where she’s so mad at the Chancellor she’ll be asking Boyd why he didn’t shoot him. No, we can’t go home till after midnight”

The twins looked at each other glumly. They were completely fearless of wild horses, shooting affrays and the indignation of their neighbors, but they had a wholesome fear of

their red-haired mother's outspoken remarks and the riding crop that she did not scruple to lay across their breeches.

“Well, look,” said Brent. “Let's go over to the Wilkes'. Ashley and the girls'll be glad to have us for supper.”

Stuart looked a little discomfited.

“No, don't let's go there. They'll be in a stew getting ready for the barbecue tomorrow and besides—”

“Oh, I forgot about that,” said Brent hastily. “No, don't let's go there.”

They clucked to their horses and rode along in silence for a while, a flush of embarrassment on Stuart's brown cheeks. Until the previous summer, Stuart had courted India Wilkes with the approbation of both families and the entire County. The County felt that perhaps the cool and contained India Wilkes would have a quieting effect on him. They fervently hoped so, at any rate. And Stuart might have made the match, but Brent had not been satisfied. Brent liked India but he thought her mighty plain and tame, and he simply could not fall in love with her himself to keep Stuart company. That was the first time the twins' interest had ever diverged, and Brent was resentful of his brother's attentions to a girl who seemed to him not at all remarkable.

Then, last summer at a political speaking in a grove of oak

trees at Jonesboro, they both suddenly became aware of Scarlett O'Hara. They had known her for years, and, since their childhood, she had been a favorite playmate, for she could ride horses and climb trees almost as well as they. But now to their amazement she had become a grown-up young lady and quite the most charming one in all the world.

They noticed for the first time how her green eyes danced, how deep her dimples were when she laughed, how tiny her hands and feet and what a small waist she had. Their clever remarks sent her into merry peals of laughter and, inspired by the thought that she considered them a remarkable pair, they fairly outdid themselves.

It was a memorable day in the life of the twins. Thereafter, when they talked it over, they always wondered just why they had failed to notice Scarlett's charms before. They never arrived at the correct answer, which was that Scarlett on that day had decided to make them notice. She was constitutionally unable to endure any man being in love with any woman not herself, and the sight of India Wilkes and Stuart at the speaking had been too much for her predatory nature. Not content with Stuart alone, she had set her cap for Brent as well, and with a thoroughness that overwhelmed the two of them.

Now they were both in love with her, and India Wilkes and Letty Munroe, from Lovejoy, whom Brent had been half-heartedly courting, were far in the back of their minds. Just what the loser would do, should Scarlett accept either one of them, the twins did not ask. They would cross that bridge when they came to it. For the present they were quite satisfied to be in accord again about one girl, for they had no jealousies between them. It was a situation which interested the neighbors and annoyed their mother, who had no liking for Scarlett.

“It will serve you right if that sly piece does accept one of you,” she said. “Or maybe she’ll accept both of you, and then you’ll have to move to Utah, if the Mormons’ll have you—which I doubt. ... All that bothers me is that some one of these days you’re both going to get lickered up and jealous of each other about that two-faced, little, green-eyed baggage, and you’ll shoot each other. But that might not be a bad idea either.”

Since the day of the speaking, Stuart had been uncomfortable in India’s presence. Not that India ever reproached him or even indicated by look or gesture that she was aware of his abruptly changed allegiance. She was too much of a lady. But Stuart felt guilty and ill at ease with her. He knew he had made India love him and he knew that she still loved him and, deep in his heart, he

had the feeling that he had not played the gentleman. He still liked her tremendously and respected her for her cool good breeding, her book learning and all the sterling qualities she possessed. But, damn it, she was just so pallid and uninteresting and always the same, beside Scarlett's bright and changeable charm. You always knew where you stood with India and you never had the slightest notion with Scarlett. That was enough to drive a man to distraction, but it had its charm.

“Well, let's go over to Cade Calvert's and have supper. Scarlett said Cathleen was home from Charleston. Maybe she'll have some news about Fort Sumter that we haven't heard.”

“Not Cathleen. I'll lay you two to one she didn't even know the fort was out there in the harbor, much less that it was full of Yankees until we shelled them out. All she'll know about is the balls she went to and the beaux she collected.”

“Well, it's fun to hear her gabble. And it'll be somewhere to hide out till Ma has gone to bed.”

“Well, hell! I like Cathleen and she is fun and I'd like to hear about Caro Rhett and the rest of the Charleston folks; but I'm damned if I can stand sitting through another meal with that Yankee stepmother of hers.”

“Don't be too hard on her, Stuart. She means well.”

“I’m not being hard on her. I feel sorry for her, but I don’t like people I’ve got to feel sorry for. And she fusses around so much, trying to do the right thing and make you feel at home, that she always manages to say and do just exactly the wrong thing. She gives me the fidgets! And she thinks Southerners are wild barbarians. She even told Ma so. She’s afraid of Southerners. Whenever we’re there she always looks scared to death. She reminds me of a skinny hen perched on a chair, her eyes kind of bright and blank and scared, all ready to flap and squawk at the slightest move anybody makes.”

“Well, you can’t blame her. You did shoot Cade in the leg.”

“Well, I was licked up or I wouldn’t have done it,” said Stuart. “And Cade never had any hard feelings. Neither did Cathleen or Raiford or Mr. Calvert. It was just that Yankee stepmother who squalled and said I was a wild barbarian and decent people weren’t safe around uncivilized Southerners.”

“Well, you can’t blame her. She’s a Yankee and ain’t got very good manners; and, after all, you did shoot him and he is her stepson.”

“Well, hell! That’s no excuse for insulting me! You are Ma’s own blood son, but did she take on that time Tony Fontaine shot you in the leg? No, she just sent for old Doc Fontaine to dress it

and asked the doctor what ailed Tony's aim. Said she guessed licker was spoiling his marksmanship. Remember how mad that made Tony?"

Both boys yelled with laughter.

"Ma's a card!" said Brent with loving approval. "You can always count on her to do the right thing and not embarrass you in front of folks."

"Yes, but she's mighty liable to talk embarrassing in front of Father and the girls when we get home tonight," said Stuart gloomily. "Look, Brent. I guess this means we don't go to Europe. You know Mother said if we got expelled from another college we couldn't have our Grand Tour."

"Well, hell! We don't care, do we? What is there to see in Europe? I'll bet those foreigners can't show us a thing we haven't got right here in Georgia. I'll bet their horses aren't as fast or their girls as pretty, and I know damn well they haven't got any rye whisky that can touch Father's."

"Ashley Wilkes said they had an awful lot of scenery and music. Ashley liked Europe. He's always talking about it."

"Well—you know how the Wilkes are. They are kind of queer about music and books and scenery. Mother says it's because their grandfather came from Virginia. She says Virginians set

quite a store by such things.”

“They can have ‘em. Give me a good horse to ride and some good licker to drink and a good girl to court and a bad girl to have fun with and anybody can have their Europe. ... What do we care about missing the Tour? Suppose we were in Europe now, with the war coming on? We couldn’t get home soon enough. I’d heap rather go to a war than go to Europe.”

“So would I, any day. ... Look, Brent! I know where we can go for supper. Let’s ride across the swamp to Abel Wynder’s place and tell him we’re all four home again and ready for drill.”

“That’s an idea!” cried Brent with enthusiasm. “And we can hear all the news of the Troop and find out what color they finally decided on for the uniforms.”

“If it’s Zouave, I’m damned if I’ll go in the troop. I’d feel like a sissy in those baggy red pants. They look like ladies’ red flannel drawers to me.”

“Is y’all aimin’ ter go ter Mist’ Wynder’s? ‘Cause ef you is, you ain’ gwine git much supper,” said Jeems. “Dey cook done died, an’ dey ain’ bought a new one. Dey got a fe’el han’ cookin’, an’ de niggers tells me she is de wustest cook in de state.”

“Good God! Why don’t they buy another cook?”

“Huccome po’ w’ite trash buy any niggers? Dey ain’ never

owned mo'n fo' at de mostes'."

There was frank contempt in Jeems' voice. His own social status was assured because the Tarletons owned a hundred negroes and, like all slaves of large planters, he looked down on small farmers whose slaves were few.

"I'm going to beat your hide off for that," cried Stuart fiercely. "Don't you call Abel Wynder 'po' white.' Sure he's poor, but he ain't trash; and I'm damned if I'll have any man, darky or White, throwing off on him. There ain't a better man in this County, or why else did the Troop elect him lieutenant?"

"Ah ain' never figgered dat out, mahseff," replied Jeems, undisturbed by his master's scowl. "Look ter me lak dey'd 'lect all de awficers frum rich gempmum, 'stead of swamp trash."

"He ain't trash! Do you mean to compare him with real white trash like the Slatterys? Abel just ain't rich. He's a small farmer, not a big planter, and if the boys thought enough of him to elect him lieutenant, then it's not for any darky to talk impudent about him. The Troop knows what it's doing."

The troop of cavalry had been organized three months before, the very day that Georgia seceded from the Union, and since then the recruits had been whistling for war. The outfit was as yet unnamed, though not for want of suggestions. Everyone had his

own idea on that subject and was loath to relinquish it, just as everyone had ideas about the color and cut of the uniforms. “Clayton Wild Cats,” “Fire Eaters,” “North Georgia Hussars,” “Zouaves,” “The Inland Rifles” (although the Troop was to be armed with pistols, sabers and bowie knives, and not with rifles), “The Clayton Grays,” “The Blood and Thunderers,” “The Rough and Readys,” all had their adherents. Until matters were settled, everyone referred to the organization as the Troop and, despite the high-sounding name finally adopted, they were known to the end of their usefulness simply as “The Troop.”

The officers were elected by the members, for no one in the County had had any military experience except a few veterans of the Mexican and Seminole wars and, besides, the Troop would have scorned a veteran as a leader if they had not personally liked him and trusted him. Everyone liked the four Tarleton boys and the three Fontaines, but regretfully refused to elect them, because the Tarletons got lickered up too quickly and liked to skylark, and the Fontaines had such quick, murderous tempers. Ashley Wilkes was elected captain, because he was the best rider in the County and because his cool head was counted on to keep some semblance of order. Raiford Calvert was made first lieutenant, because everybody liked Raif, and Abel Wynder, son of a swamp

trapper, himself a small farmer, was elected second lieutenant.

Abel was a shrewd, grave giant, illiterate, kind of heart, older than the other boys and with as good or better manners in the presence of ladies. There was little snobbery in the Troop. Too many of their fathers and grandfathers had come up to wealth from the small farmer class for that. Moreover, Abel was the best shot in the Troop, a real sharpshooter who could pick out the eye of a squirrel at seventy-five yards, and, too, he knew all about living outdoors, building fires in the rain, tracking animals and finding water. The Troop bowed to real worth and moreover, because they liked him, they made him an officer. He bore the honor gravely and with no untoward conceit, as though it were only his due. But the planters' ladies and the planters' slaves could not overlook the fact that he was not born a gentleman, even if their men folks could.

In the beginning, the Troop had been recruited exclusively from the sons of planters, a gentleman's outfit, each man supplying his own horse, arms, equipment, uniform and body servant. But rich planters were few in the young county of Clayton, and, in order to muster a full-strength troop, it had been necessary to raise more recruits among the sons of small farmers, hunters in the backwoods, swamp trappers, Crackers and, in a

very few cases, even poor whites, if they were above the average of their class.

These latter young men were as anxious to fight the Yankees, should war come, as were their richer neighbors; but the delicate question of money arose. Few small farmers owned horses. They carried on their farm operations with mules and they had no surplus of these, seldom more than four. The mules could not be spared to go off to war, even if they had been acceptable for the Troop, which they emphatically were not. As for the poor whites, they considered themselves well off if they owned one mule. The backwoods folks and the swamp dwellers owned neither horses nor mules. They lived entirely off the produce of their lands and the game in the swamp, conducting their business generally by the barter system and seldom seeing five dollars in cash a year, and horses and uniforms were out of their reach. But they were as fiercely proud in their poverty as the planters were in their wealth, and they would accept nothing that smacked of charity from their rich neighbors. So, to save the feelings of all and to bring the Troop up to full strength, Scarlett's father, John Wilkes, Buck Munroe, Jim Tarleton, Hugh Calvert, in fact every large planter in the County with the one exception of Angus Macintosh, had contributed money to completely outfit the Troop, horse and man.

The upshot of the matter was that every planter agreed to pay for equipping his own sons and a certain number of the others, but the manner of handling the arrangements was such that the less wealthy members of the outfit could accept horses and uniforms without offense to their honor.

The Troop met twice a week in Jonesboro to drill and to pray for the war to begin. Arrangements had not yet been completed for obtaining the full quota of horses, but those who had horses performed what they imagined to be cavalry maneuvers in the field behind the courthouse, kicked up a great deal of dust, yelled themselves hoarse and waved the Revolutionary-war swords that had been taken down from parlor walls. Those who, as yet, had no horses sat on the curb in front of Bullard's store and watched their mounted comrades, chewed tobacco and told yarns. Or else engaged in shooting matches. There was no need to teach any of the men to shoot. Most Southerners were born with guns in their hands, and lives spent in hunting had made marksmen of them all.

From planters' homes and swamp cabins, a varied array of firearms came to each muster. There were long squirrel guns that had been new when first the Alleghenies were crossed, old muzzle-loaders that had claimed many an Indian when Georgia was new, horse pistols that had seen service in 1812, in the

Seminole wars and in Mexico, silver-mounted dueling pistols, pocket derringers, double-barreled hunting pieces and handsome new rifles of English make with shining stocks of fine wood.

Drill always ended in the saloons of Jonesboro, and by nightfall so many fights had broken out that the officers were hard put to ward off casualties until the Yankees could inflict them. It was during one of these brawls that Stuart Tarleton had shot Cade Calvert and Tony Fontaine had shot Brent. The twins had been at home, freshly expelled from the University of Virginia, at the time the Troop was organized and they had joined enthusiastically; but after the shooting episode, two months ago, their mother had packed them off to the state university, with orders to stay there. They had sorely missed the excitement of the drills while away, and they counted education well lost if only they could ride and yell and shoot off rifles in the company of their friends.

“Well, let’s cut across country to Abel’s,” suggested Brent. “We can go through Mr. O’Hara’s river bottom and the Fontaine’s pasture and get there in no time.”

“We ain’ gwine git nothin’ ter eat ‘cept possum an’ greens,” argued Jeems.

“You ain’t going to get anything,” grinned Stuart “Because

you are going home and tell Ma that we won't be home for supper."

"No, Ah ain'!" cried Jeems in alarm. "No, Ah ain'! Ah doan git no mo' fun outer havin' Miss Beetriss lay me out dan y'all does. Fust place she'll ast me huccome Ah let y'all git expelled agin. An' nex' thing, huccome Ah din' bring y'all home ternight so she could lay you out An' den she'll light on me lak a duck on a June bug, an' fust thing Ah know Ah'll be ter blame fer it all. Ef y'all doan tek me ter Mist' Wynder's, Ah'll lay out in de woods all night an' maybe de patterollers git me, 'cause Ah heap ruther de patterollers git me dan Miss Beetriss when she in a state."

The twins looked at the determined black boy in perplexity and indignation.

"He'd be just fool enough to let the patterollers get him and that would give Ma something else to talk about for weeks. I swear, darkies are more trouble. Sometimes I think the Abolitionists have got the right idea."

"Well, it wouldn't be right to make Jeems face what we don't want to face. We'll have to take him. But, look, you impudent black fool, if you put on any airs in front of the Wynder darkies and hint that we all the time have fried chicken and ham, while they don't have nothing but rabbit and possum, I'll—I'll tell Ma.

And we won't let you go to the war with us, either."

"Airs? Me put on airs fo' dem cheap niggers? Nawsuh, Ah got better manners. Ain' Miss Beetriss taught me manners same as she taught y'all?"

"She didn't do a very good job on any of the three of us," said Stuart. "Come on, let's get going."

He backed his big red horse and then, putting spurs to his side, lifted him easily over the split rail fence into the soft field of Gerald O'Hara's plantation. Brent's horse followed and then Jeems', with Jeems clinging to pommel and mane. Jeems did not like to jump fences, but he had jumped higher ones than this in order to keep up with his masters.

As they picked their way across the red furrows and down the hill to the river bottom in the deepening dusk, Brent yelled to his brother:

"Look, Stu! Don't it seem like to you that Scarlett *would* have asked us to supper?"

"I kept thinking she would," yelled Stuart "Why do you suppose ..."

CHAPTER II

WHEN THE TWINS left Scarlett standing on the porch of Tara and the last sound of flying hooves had died away, she went back to her chair like a sleepwalker. Her face felt stiff as from pain and her mouth actually hurt from having stretched it, unwillingly, in smiles to prevent the twins from learning her secret. She sat down wearily, tucking one foot under her, and her heart swelled up with misery, until it felt too large for her bosom. It beat with odd little jerks; her hands were cold, and a feeling of disaster oppressed her. There were pain and bewilderment in her face, the bewilderment of a pampered child who has always had her own way for the asking and who now, for the first time, was in contact with the unpleasantness of life.

Ashley to marry Melanie Hamilton!

Oh, it couldn't be true! The twins were mistaken. They were playing one of their jokes on her. Ashley couldn't, couldn't be in love with her. Nobody could, not with a mousy little person like Melanie. Scarlett recalled with contempt Melanie's thin childish figure, her serious heart-shaped face that was plain almost to homeliness. And Ashley couldn't have seen her in months. He hadn't been in Atlanta more than twice since the house party he gave last year at Twelve Oaks. No, Ashley couldn't be in love with Melanie, because—oh, she couldn't be mistaken!—because

he was in love with her! She, Scarlett, was the one he loved—she knew it!

Scarlett heard Mammy's lumbering tread shaking the floor of the hall and she hastily untucked her foot and tried to rearrange her face in more placid lines. It would never do for Mammy to suspect that anything was wrong. Mammy felt that she owned the O'Haras, body and soul, that their secrets were her secrets; and even a hint of a mystery was enough to set her upon the trail as relentlessly as a bloodhound. Scarlett knew from experience that, if Mammy's curiosity were not immediately satisfied, she would take up the matter with Ellen, and then Scarlett would be forced to reveal everything to her mother, or think up some plausible lie.

Mammy emerged from the hall, a huge old woman with the small, shrewd eyes of an elephant. She was shining black, pure African, devoted to her last drop of blood to the O'Haras, Ellen's mainstay, the despair of her three daughters, the terror of the other house servants. Mammy was black, but her code of conduct and her sense of pride were as high as or higher than those of her owners. She had been raised in the bedroom of Solange Robillard, Ellen O'Hara's mother, a dainty, cold, high-nosed Frenchwoman, who spared neither her children nor her servants their just punishment for any infringement of decorum. She had been

Ellen's mammy and had come with her from Savannah to the up-country when she married. Whom Mammy loved, she chastened. And, as her love for Scarlett and her pride in her were enormous, the chastening process was practically continuous.

“Is de gempmum gone? Huccome you din' ast dem ter stay fer supper, Miss Scarlett? Ah done tole Poke ter lay two extry plates fer dem. Whar's yo' manners?”

“Oh, I was so tired of hearing them talk about the war that I couldn't have endured it through supper, especially with Pa joining in and shouting about Mr. Lincoln.”

“You ain” got no mo' manners dan a fe'el han', an' affer Miss Ellen an' me done labored wid you. An' hyah you is widout yo' shawl! An' de night air fixin' ter set in! Ah done tole you an' tole you 'bout gittin' fever frum settin' in de night air wid nuthin' on yo' shoulders. Come on in de house, Miss Scarlett.”

Scarlett turned away from Mammy with studied nonchalance, thankful that her face had been unnoticed in Mammy's preoccupation with the matter of the shawl.

“No, I want to sit here and watch the sunset. It's so pretty. You run get my shawl. Please, Mammy, and I'll sit here till Pa comes home.”

“Yo' voice soun' lak you catchin' a cole,” said Mammy

suspiciously.

“Well, I’m not,” said Scarlett impatiently. “You fetch me my shawl.”

Mammy waddled back into the hall and Scarlett heard her call softly up the stairwell to the upstairs maid.

“You, Rosa! Drap me Miss Scarlett’s shawl.” Then, more loudly: “Wuthless nigger! She ain’ never whar she does nobody no good. Now, Ah got ter climb up an’ git it mahseff.”

Scarlett heard the stairs groan and she got softly to her feet. When Mammy returned she would resume her lecture on Scarlett’s breach of hospitality, and Scarlett felt that she could not endure prating about such a trivial matter when her heart was breaking. As she stood, hesitant, wondering where she could hide until the ache in her breast subsided a little, a thought came to her, bringing a small ray of hope. Her father had ridden over to Twelve Oaks, the Wilkes plantation, that afternoon to offer to buy Dilcey, the broad wife of his valet, Pork. Dilcey was head woman and midwife at Twelve Oaks, and, since the marriage six months ago, Pork had deviled his master night and day to buy Dilcey, so the two could live on the same plantation. That afternoon, Gerald, his resistance worn thin, had set out to make an offer for Dilcey.

Surely, thought Scarlett, Pa will know whether this awful

story is true. Even if he hasn't actually heard anything this afternoon, perhaps he's noticed something, sensed some excitement in the Wilkes family. If I can just see him privately before supper, perhaps I'll find out the truth—that it's just one of the twins' nasty practical jokes.

It was time for Gerald's return and, if she expected to see him alone, there was nothing for her to do except meet him where the driveway entered the road. She went quietly down the front steps, looking carefully over her shoulder to make sure Mammy was not observing her from the upstairs windows. Seeing no broad black face, turbaned in snowy white, peering disapprovingly from between fluttering curtains, she boldly snatched up her green flowered skirts and sped down the path toward the driveway as fast as her small ribbon-laced slippers would carry her.

The dark cedars on either side of the graveled drive met in an arch overhead, turning the long avenue into a dim tunnel. As soon as she was beneath the gnarled arms of the cedars, she knew she was safe from observation from the house and she slowed her swift pace. She was panting, for her stays were laced too tightly to permit much running, but she walked on as rapidly as she could. Soon she was at the end of the driveway and out on the main road, but she did not stop until she had rounded a curve that put a large

clump of trees between her and the house.

Flushed and breathing hard, she sat down on a stump to wait for her father. It was past time for him to come home, but she was glad that he was late. The delay would give her time to quiet her breathing and calm her face so that his suspicions would not be aroused. Every moment she expected to hear the pounding of his horse's hooves and see him come charging up the hill at his usual breakneck speed. But the minutes slipped by and Gerald did not come. She looked down the road for him, the pain in her heart swelling up again.

“Oh, it can't be true!” she thought. “Why doesn't he come?”

Her eyes followed the winding road, blood-red now after the morning rain. In her thought she traced its course as it ran down the hill to the sluggish Flint River, through the tangled swampy bottoms and up the next hill to Twelve Oaks where Ashley lived. That was all the road meant now—a road to Ashley and the beautiful white-columned house that crowned the hill like a Greek Temple.

“Oh, Ashley! Ashley!” she thought, and her heart beat faster.

Some of the cold sense of bewilderment and disaster that had weighted her down since the Tarleton boys told her their gossip was pushed into the background of her mind, and in its place

crept the fever that had possessed her for two years.

It seemed strange now that when she was growing up Ashley had never seemed so very attractive to her. In childhood days, she had seen him come and go and never given him a thought. But since that day two years ago when Ashley, newly home from his three years' Grand Tour in Europe, had called to pay his respects, she had loved him. It was as simple as that.

She had been on the front porch and he had ridden up the long avenue, dressed in gray broadcloth with a wide black cravat setting off his frilled shirt to perfection. Even now, she could recall each detail of his dress, how brightly his boots shone, the head of a Medusa in cameo on his cravat phi, the wide Panama hat that was instantly in his hand when he saw her. He had alighted and tossed his bridle reins to a pickaninny and stood looking up at her, his drowsy gray eyes wide with a smile and the sun so bright on his blond hair that it seemed like a cap of shining silver. And he said, "So you've grown up, Scarlett." And, coming lightly up the steps, he had kissed her hand. And his voice! She would never forget the leap of her heart as she heard it, as if for the first time, drawling, resonant, musical.

She had wanted him, in that first instant, wanted him as simply and unreasoningly as she wanted food to eat, horses to

ride and a soft bed on which to lay herself.

For two years he had squired her about the County, to balls, fish fries, picnics and court days, never so often as the Tarleton twins or Cade Calvert, never so importunate as the younger Fontaine boys, but, still, never the week went by that Ashley did not come calling at Tara.

True, he never made love to her, nor did the clear gray eyes ever glow with that hot light Scarlett knew so well in other men. And yet—and yet—she knew he loved her. She could not be mistaken about it. Instinct stronger than reason and knowledge born of experience told her that he loved her. Too often she had surprised him when his eyes were neither drowsy nor remote, when he looked at her with a yearning and a sadness which puzzled her. She *knew* he loved her. Why did he not tell her so? That she could not understand. But there were so many things about him that she did not understand.

He was courteous always, but aloof, remote. No one could ever tell what he was thinking about, Scarlett least of all. In a neighborhood where everyone said exactly what he thought as soon as he thought it, Ashley's quality of reserve was exasperating. He was as proficient as any of the other young men in the usual County diversions, hunting, gambling, dancing and

politics, and was the best rider of them all; but he differed from all the rest in that these pleasant activities were not the end and aim of life to him. And he stood alone in his interest in books and music and his fondness for writing poetry.

Oh, why was he so handsomely blond, so courteously aloof, so maddeningly boring with his talk about Europe and books and music and poetry and things that interested her not at all—and yet so desirable? Night after night, when Scarlett went to bed after sitting on the front porch in the semi-darkness with him, she tossed restlessly for hours and comforted herself only with the thought that the very next time he saw her he certainly would propose. But the next time came and went, and the result was nothing—nothing except that the fever possessing her rose higher and hotter.

She loved him and she wanted him and she did not understand him. She was as forthright and simple as the winds that blew over Tara and the yellow river that wound about it, and to the end of her days she would never be able to understand a complexity. And now, for the first time in her life, she was facing a complex nature.

For Ashley was born of a line of men who used their leisure for thinking, not doing, for spinning brightly colored dreams that

had in them no touch of reality. He moved in an inner world that was more beautiful than Georgia and came back to reality with reluctance. He looked on people, and he neither liked nor disliked them. He looked on life and was neither heartened nor saddened. He accepted the universe and his place in it for what they were and, shrugging, turned to his music and books and his better world.

Why he should have captivated Scarlett when his mind was a stranger to hers she did not know. The very mystery of him excited her curiosity like a door that had neither lock nor key. The things about him which she could not understand only made her love him more, and his odd, restrained courtship only served to increase her determination to have him for her own. That he would propose some day she had never doubted, for she was too young and too spoiled ever to have known defeat. And now, like a thunderclap, had come this horrible news. Ashley to marry Melanie! It couldn't be true!

Why, only last week, when they were riding home at twilight from Fairhill, he had said: "Scarlett, I have something so important to tell you that I hardly know how to say it."

She had cast down her eyes demurely, her heart beating with wild pleasure, thinking the happy moment had come. Then he had

said: "Not now! We're nearly home and there isn't time. Oh, Scarlett, what a coward I am!" And putting spurs to his horse, he had raced her up the hill to Tara.

Scarlett, sitting on the stump, thought of those words which had made her so happy, and suddenly they took on another meaning, a hideous meaning. Suppose it was the news of his engagement he had intended to tell her!

Oh, if Pa would only come home! She could not endure the suspense another moment. She looked impatiently down the road again, and again she was disappointed. The sun was now below the horizon and the red glow at the rim of the world faded into pink. The sky above turned slowly from azure to the delicate blue-green of a robin's egg, and the unearthly stillness of rural twilight came stealthily down about her. Shadowy dimness crept over the countryside. The red furrows and the gashed red road lost their magical blood color and became plain brown earth. Across the road, in the pasture, the horses, mules and cows stood quietly with heads over the split-rail fence, waiting to be driven to the stables and supper. They did not like the dark shade of the thickets hedging the pasture creek, and they twitched their ears at Scarlett as if appreciative of human companionship.

In the strange half-light, the tall pines of the river swamp, so

warmly green in the sunshine, were black against the pastel sky, an impenetrable row of black giants hiding the slow yellow water at their feet. On the hill across the river, the tall white chimneys of the Wilkes, home faded gradually into the darkness of the thick oaks surrounding them, and only far-off pin points of supper lamps showed that a house was here. The warm damp balminess of spring encompassed her sweetly with the moist smells of new-plowed earth and all the fresh green things pushing up to the air.

Sunset and spring and new-fledged greenery were no miracle to Scarlett. Their beauty she accepted as casually as the air she breathed and the water she drank, for she had never consciously seen beauty in anything but women's faces, horses, silk dresses and like tangible things. Yet the serene half-light over Tara's well-kept acres brought a measure of quiet to her disturbed mind. She loved this land so much, without even knowing she loved it, loved it as she loved her mother's face under the lamp at prayer time.

Still there was no sign of Gerald on the quiet winding road. If she had to wait much longer, Mammy would certainly come in search of her and bully her into the house. But even as she strained her eyes down the darkening road, she heard a pounding

of hooves at the bottom of the pasture hill and saw the horses and cows scatter in fright. Gerald O'Hara was coming home across country and at top speed.

He came up the hill at a gallop on his thick-barreled, long-legged hunter, appearing in the distance like a boy on a too large horse. His long white hair standing out behind him, he urged the horse forward with crop and loud cries.

Filled with her own anxieties, she nevertheless watched him with affectionate pride, for Gerald was an excellent horseman.

"I wonder why he always wants to jump fences when he's had a few drinks," she thought. "And after that fall he had right here last year when he broke his knee. You'd think he'd learn. Especially when he promised Mother on oath he'd never jump again."

Scarlett had no awe of her father and felt him more her contemporary than her sisters, for jumping fences and keeping it a secret from his wife gave him a boyish pride and guilty glee that matched her own pleasure in outwitting Mammy. She rose from her seat to watch him.

The big horse reached the fence, gathered himself and soared over as effortlessly as a bird, his rider yelling enthusiastically, his crop beating the air, his white curls jerking out behind him.

Gerald did not see his daughter in the shadow of the trees, and he drew rein in the road, patting his horse's neck with approbation.

“There's none in the County can touch you, nor in the state,” he informed his mount, with pride, the brogue of County Meath still heavy on his tongue in spite of thirty-nine years in America. Then he hastily set about smoothing his hair and settling his ruffled shirt and his cravat which had slipped awry behind one ear. Scarlett knew these hurried preenings were being made with an eye toward meeting his wife with the appearance of a gentleman who had ridden sedately home from a call on a neighbor. She knew also that he was presenting her with just the opportunity she wanted for opening the conversation without revealing her true purpose.

She laughed aloud. As she had intended, Gerald was startled by the sound; then he recognized her, and a look both sheepish and defiant came over his florid face. He dismounted with difficulty, because his knee was stiff, and, slipping the reins over his arm, stumped toward her.

“Well, Missy,” he said, pinching her cheek, “so, you've been spying on me and, like your sister Suellen last week, you'll be telling your mother on me?”

There was indignation in his hoarse bass voice but also a

wheedling note, and Scarlett teasingly clicked her tongue against her teeth as she reached out to pull his cravat into place. His breath in her face was strong with Bourbon whisky mingled with a faint fragrance of mint. Accompanying him also were the smells of chewing tobacco, well-oiled leather and horses—a combination of odors that she always associated with her father and instinctively liked in other men.

“No, Pa, I’m no tattletale like Suellen,” she assured him, standing off to view his rearranged attire with a judicious air.

Gerald was a small man, little more than five feet tall, but so heavy of barrel and thick of neck that his appearance, when seated, led strangers to think him a larger man. His thickset torso was supported by short sturdy legs, always incased in the finest leather boots procurable and always planted wide apart like a swaggering small boy’s. Most small people who take themselves seriously are a little ridiculous; but the bantam cock is respected in the barnyard, and so it was with Gerald. No one would ever have the temerity to think of Gerald O’Hara as a ridiculous little figure.