

第五章

Chapter Five



第二天早晨，阳光照进思嘉的房间，夏天逐步来临，各种花香、树香夹杂着红土潮湿的气味浸入房间。平时思嘉一定会站在窗户前呼吸着新鲜的空气，今天她却无心欣赏这些美景，她正在考虑穿什么衣服才能够吸引住希礼。试了半天都没有找到合适的衣服，她决定让嬷嬷帮忙把腰束得更紧些。嬷嬷端来了一大盘食物，郝家有规定：在参加野餐会之前必须在家吃饱，免得在外面丢人现眼。嬷嬷连哄带骗，但思嘉就是不吃，她认为妈妈在外面也是吃东西的，但嬷嬷说那是已婚女性的权利，而单身女孩不允许那样。最后嬷嬷将媚兰与她对比，这才使思嘉吃下了食物。当思嘉告诉嬷嬷她准备穿绿色花布裙子时，嬷嬷坚决反对，她认为那是下午三点之后才可以穿的衣服，早晨不应该那样袒胸露背。但思嘉以不吃东西威胁，最后嬷嬷不得不让步。思嘉边吃着食物边埋怨着，为什么女孩子在男人面前要那样矫揉造作，同时在思考着用什么策略对待希礼，才能够吸引住他。

嘉乐喝够了白兰地之后解雇了乔纳斯，埃伦则留在家中核对账目，嬷嬷也留下来帮忙，这让思嘉感到快乐。因为野餐会上不会再有人对她指手画脚了。嘉乐骑着马跟在马车旁边，他为三个漂亮的女儿感到骄傲，也早已把与思嘉的谈话忘得一干二净。思嘉觉得父亲是一个可爱却又自私而且不负责任的人。一想到不用多久希礼就会被她占为己有，于是一切都变得很美好，她想象着和希礼的婚礼，自己一辈子都将住在卫家的植物园——十二棵橡树在那儿，和以后的孩子享受着美好的时光，思嘉不停地微笑着。

妹妹苏埃伦不明白思嘉为什么这么高兴，她还在为妈妈没有让她穿思嘉的裙子而生气。

半路上遇到了塔尔顿家的太太小姐们。塔尔顿太太亲自驾着马车，四个女儿坐在马车上，个个都遗传了她的红头发，但颜色却各有特色。塔尔顿太太特别爱马，她相信马通人性，总是穿着骑马装。塔尔顿太太看到嘉乐，立刻大声地打着招呼，除了她家的凯思琳之外似乎没有人喜欢思嘉。塔尔顿太太与嘉乐互相开着玩笑，说着俏皮话，这逗笑了所有人。思嘉很羡慕塔尔顿家的女儿和母亲之间的相处模式——能和妈妈打闹也挺有意思的。

嘉乐问塔尔顿太太为什么没有骑马，塔尔顿太太说她的坐骑内利今天早上产仔了。思嘉又重新将塔尔顿太太与自己的母亲埃伦相比，埃伦从来不管这些动物生产的事情。塔尔顿太太调侃自己的女儿们，说她们像是一群小母马。两人接着又谈到了希礼和媚兰的婚事，这让思嘉受不了了，听到别人谈论希礼的婚事，她还是很难受。但她一想到晚上希礼将会和自己私奔时，便露出欣慰的笑容。塔尔顿太太坚持认为近亲之间不能结婚，不然生出的孩子们都软弱无力，会削弱血统，又和嘉乐谈论着男女之间的繁殖问题，这让嘉乐觉得十分尴尬。他害怕女儿会问他一些奇怪的问题。这时塔尔顿太太的女儿不耐烦起来，希望妈妈能够赶紧赶路。可是嘉乐还是想问塔尔顿太太为何不愿卖马给骑兵连。塔尔顿太太表示不希望将自己那些珍贵的马送给那些不懂得珍惜的家伙，她说无法忍受自己的马被那些人糟蹋。女孩们逐渐不耐烦起来，催促着继续上路，而思嘉也在埋怨着嘉乐，他在一边骑马扫起的尘土过于呛人。嘉乐鞭策马儿，跟着塔尔顿一家飞奔而去。

*I*t was ten o'clock in the morning. The day was warm for April and the golden sunlight streamed brilliantly into Scarlett's room through the blue curtains of the wide windows. The cream-colored walls glowed with light and the depths of the mahogany furniture gleamed deep red like wine, while the floor glistened as if it were glass, except where the rag rugs covered it and they were spots of gay color.

Already summer was in the air, the first hint of Georgia summer when the high tide of spring gives way reluctantly before a fiercer heat. A balmy, soft

warmth poured into the room, heavy with velvety smells, redolent of many blossoms, of newly fledged trees and of the moist, freshly turned red earth. Through the window Scarlett could see the bright riot of the twin lanes of daffodils bordering the graveled driveway and the golden masses of yellow jessamine spreading flowery sprangles modestly to the earth like crinolines. The mockingbirds and the jays, engaged in their old feud for possession of the magnolia tree beneath her window, were bickering, the jays strident, acrimonious, the mockers sweet voiced and plaintive.

Such a glowing morning usually called Scarlett to the window, to lean arms on the broad sill and drink in the scents and sounds of Tara. But, today she had no eye for sun or azure sky beyond a hasty thought, "Thank God, it isn't raining." On the bed lay the apple-green, watered-silk ball dress with its festoons of ecru lace, neatly packed in a large cardboard box. It was ready to be carried to Twelve Oaks to be donned before the dancing began, but Scarlett shrugged at the sight of it. If her plans were successful, she would not wear that dress tonight. Long before the ball began, she and Ashley would be on their way to Jonesboro to be married. The troublesome question was — what dress should she wear to the barbecue?

What dress would best set off her charms and make her most irresistible to Ashley? Since eight o'clock she had been trying on and rejecting dresses, and now she stood dejected and irritable in lace pantalets, linen corset cover and three billowing lace and linen petticoats. Discarded garments lay about her on the floor, the bed, the chairs, in bright heaps of color and straying ribbons.

The rose organdie with long pink sash was becoming, but she had worn it last summer when Melanie visited Twelve Oaks and she'd be sure to remember it. And might be catty enough to mention it. The black bombazine, with its puffed sleeves and princess lace collar, set off her white skin superbly, but it did make her look a trifle elderly. Scarlett peered anxiously in the mirror at her sixteen-year-old face as if expecting to see wrinkles and sagging chin muscles. It would never do to appear sedate and elderly before Melanie's sweet youthfulness. The lavender barred muslin was beautiful with those wide insets of lace and net about the hem, but it had never suited her type. It would suit Carreen's delicate profile and wishy-washy expression perfectly, but Scarlett

felt that it made her look like a schoolgirl. It would never do to appear schoolgirlish beside Melanie's poised self. The green plaid taffeta, frothing with flounces and each flounce edged in green velvet ribbon, was most becoming, in fact her favorite dress, for it darkened her eyes to emerald. But there was unmistakably a grease spot on the front of the basque. Of course, her brooch could be pinned over the spot, but perhaps Melanie had sharp eyes. There remained varicolored cotton dresses which Scarlett felt were not festive enough for the occasion, ball dresses and the green sprigged muslin she had worn yesterday. But it was an afternoon dress. It was not suitable for a barbecue, for it had only tiny puffed sleeves and the neck was low enough for a dancing dress. But there was nothing else to do but wear it. After all she was not ashamed of her neck and arms and bosom, even if it was not correct to show them in the morning.

As she stood before the mirror and twisted herself about to get a side view, she thought that there was absolutely nothing about her figure to cause her shame. Her neck was short but rounded and her arms plump and enticing. Her breasts, pushed high by her stays, were very nice breasts. She had never had to sew tiny rows of silk ruffles in the lining of her basques, as most sixteen-year-old girls did, to give their figures the desired curves and fullness. She was glad she had inherited Ellen's slender white hands and tiny feet, and she wished she had Ellen's height, too, but her own height pleased her very well. What a pity legs could not be shown, she thought, pulling up her petticoats and regretfully viewing them, plump and neat under pantalets. She had such nice legs. Even the girls at the Fayetteville Academy had admitted as much. And as for her waist — there was no one in Fayetteville, Jonesboro or in three counties, for that matter, who had so small a waist.

The thought of her waist brought her back to practical matters. The green muslin measured seventeen inches about the waist, and Mammy had laced her for the eighteen-inch bombazine. Mammy would have to lace her tighter. She pushed open the door, listened and heard Mammy's heavy tread in the downstairs hall. She shouted for her impatiently, knowing she could raise her voice with impunity, as Ellen was in the smokehouse, measuring out the day's food to Cookie.

“Some folks thinks as how Ah kin fly,” grumbled Mammy, shuffling up the stairs. She entered puffing, with the expression of one who expects battle and welcomes it. In her large black hands was a tray upon which food smoked, two large yams covered with butter, a pile of buckwheat cakes dripping syrup, and a large slice of ham swimming in gravy. Catching sight of Mammy’s burden, Scarlett’s expression changed from one of minor irritation to obstinate belligerency. In the excitement of trying on dresses she had forgotten Mammy’s ironclad rule that, before going to any party, the O’Hara girls must be crammed so full of food at home they would be unable to eat any refreshments at the party.

“It’s no use. I won’t eat it. You can just take it back to the kitchen.”

Mammy set the tray on the table and squared herself, hands on hips.

“Yas’m, you is! Ah ain’ figgerin’ on havin’ happen whut happen at dat las’ barbecue w’en Ah wuz too sick frum dem chittlins Ah et ter fetch you no tray befo’ you went. You is gwine eat eve’y bite of dis.”

“I am not! Now, come here and lace me tighter because we are late already. I heard the carriage come round to the front of the house.”

Mammy’s tone became wheedling.

“Now, Miss Scarlett, you be good an’ come eat jes’a lil. Miss Carreen an’ Miss Suellen done eat all dey’n.”

“They would,” said Scarlett contemptuously. “They haven’t any more spirit than a rabbit. But I won’t! I’m through with trays. I’m not forgetting the time I ate a whole tray and went to the Calverts’ and they had ice cream out of ice they’d brought all the way from Savannah, and I couldn’t eat but a spoonful. I’m going to have a good time today and eat as much as I please.”

At this defiant heresy, Mammy’s brow lowered with indignation. What a young miss could do and what she could not do were as different as black and white in Mammy’s mind; there was no middle ground of deportment between. Suellen and Carreen were clay in her powerful hands and harkened respectfully to her warning. But it had always been a struggle to teach Scarlett that most of her natural impulses were unladylike. Mammy’s victories over Scarlett were hard-won and represented guile unknown to the white mind.

“Ef you doan care ‘bout how folks talks ‘bout dis fainbly, Ah does,” she

rumbled. "Ah ain' gwine stand by an' have eve'ybody at de pahty sayin' how you ain' fotched up right. Ah has tole you an' tole you dat you kin allus tell a lady by dat she eat lak a bird. An' Ah ain' aimin' ter have you go ter Mist' Wilkes' an' eat lak a fe'el han' an' gobble lak a hawg."

"Mother is a lady and she eats," countered Scarlett.

"W'en you is mahied, you kin eat, too," retorted Mammy. "W'en Miss Ellen yo' age, she never et nuthin' w'en she went out, an' needer yo' Aunt Pauline nor yo' Aunt Eulalie. An' dey all done mahied. Young misses whut eats heavy mos' gener'ly doan never ketch husbands."

"I don't believe it. At that barbecue when you were sick and I didn't eat beforehand, Ashley Wilkes told me he **LIKED** to see a girl with a healthy appetite."

Mammy shook her head ominously.

"Whut gempmums says an' whut dey thinks is two diffunt things. An' Ah ain' noticed Mist' Ashley axing fer ter mahy you."

Scarlett scowled, started to speak sharply and then caught herself. Mammy had her there and there was no argument. Seeing the obdurate look on Scarlett's face, Mammy picked up the tray and, with the bland guile of her race, changed her tactics. As she started for the door, she sighed.

"Well'm, awright. Ah wuz tellin' Cookie w'ile she wuz a-fixin' dis tray. 'You kin sho tell a lady by whut she **DOAN** eat,' an' Ah say ter Cookie. 'Ah ain' seed no w'ite lady who et less'n Miss Melly Hamilton did las' time she wuz visitin' Mist' Ashley'— Ah means, visitin' Miss India."

Scarlett shot a look of sharp suspicion at her, but Mammy's broad face carried only a look of innocence and of regret that Scarlett was not the lady Melanie Hamilton was.

"Put down that tray and come lace me tighter," said Scarlett irritably. "And I'll try to eat a little afterwards. If I ate now I couldn't lace tight enough."

Cloaking her triumph, Mammy set down the tray.

"Whut mah lamb gwine wear?"

"That," answered Scarlett, pointing at the fluffy mass of green flowered muslin. Instantly Mammy was in arms.

"No, you ain'. It ain' fittin' fer mawnin'. You kain show yo' buzzum befo'

three o'clock an' dat dress ain' got no neck an' no sleeves. An' you'll git freckled sho as you born, an' Ah ain' figgerin' on you gittin' freckled affter all de buttermilk Ah been puttin' on you all dis winter, bleachin' dem freckles you got at Savannah settin' on de beach. Ah sho gwine speak ter yo' Ma 'bout you."

"If you say one word to her before I'm dressed I won't eat a bite," said Scarlett coolly. "Mother won't have time to send me back to change once I'm dressed."

Mammy sighed resignedly, beholding herself outguessed. Between the two evils, it was better to have Scarlett wear an afternoon dress at a morning barbecue than to have her gobble like a hog.

"Hole onter sumpin' an' suck in yo' breaf," she commanded.

Scarlett obeyed, bracing herself and catching firm hold of one of the bedposts. Mammy pulled and jerked vigorously and, as the tiny circumference of whalebone-girdled waist grew smaller, a proud, fond look came into her eyes.

"Ain' nobody got a wais' lak mah lamb," she said approvingly. "Eve'y time Ah pulls Miss Suellen littler dan twenty inches, she up an' faint."

"Pooh!" gasped Scarlett, speaking with difficulty. "I never fainted in my life."

"Well, 'twouldn' do no hahm ef you wuz ter faint now an' den," advised Mammy. "You is so brash sometimes, Miss Scarlett. Ah been aimin' ter tell you, it jes' doan look good de way you doan faint 'bout snakes an' mouses an' sech. Ah doan mean round home but w'en you is out in comp'ny. An' Ah has tole you an'—"

"Oh, hurry! Don't talk so much. I'll catch a husband. See if I don't, even if I don't scream and faint. Goodness, but my stays are tight! Put on the dress."

Mammy carefully dropped the twelve yards of green sprigged muslin over the mountainous petticoats and hooked up the back of the tight, low-cut basque.

"You keep yo' shawl on yo' shoulders w'en you is in de sun, an' doan you go takin' off yo' hat w'en you is wahm," she commanded. "Elsewise you be comin' home lookin' brown lak Ole Miz Slattery. Now, you come eat, honey, but doan eat too fas'. No use havin' it come right back up agin."

Scarlett obediently sat down before the tray, wondering if she would be

able to get any food into her stomach and still have room to breathe. Mammy plucked a large towel from the washstand and carefully tied it around Scarlett's neck, spreading the white folds over her lap. Scarlett began on the ham, because she liked ham, and forced it down.

"I wish to Heaven I was married," she said resentfully as she attacked the yams with loathing. "I'm tired of everlastingly being unnatural and never doing anything I want to do. I'm tired of acting like I don't eat more than a bird, and walking when I want to run and saying I feel faint after a waltz, when I could dance for two days and never get tired. I'm tired of saying, 'How wonderful you are!' to fool men who haven't got one-half the sense I've got, and I'm tired of pretending I don't know anything, so men can tell me things and feel important while they're doing it. . . . I can't eat another bite."

"Try a hot cake," said Mammy inexorably.

"Why is it a girl has to be so silly to catch a husband?"

"Ah specs it's kase gempmums doan know whut dey wants. Dey jes' knows whut dey thinks dey wants. An' givin' dem whut dey thinks dey wants saves a pile of mizry an' bein' a ole maid. An' dey thinks dey wants mousy lil gals wid bird's tastes an' no sense at all. It doan make a gempmum feel lak mahyin' a lady ef he suspicions she got mo' sense dan he has."

"Don't you suppose men get surprised after they're married to find that their wives do have sense?"

"Well, it's too late den. Dey's already mahied. 'Sides, gempmums specs dey wives ter have sense."

"Some day I'm going to do and say everything I want to do and say, and if people don't like it I don't care."

"No, you ain'," said Mammy grimly. "Not while Ah got breaf. You eat dem cakes. Sop dem in de gravy, honey."

"I don't think Yankee girls have to act like such fools. When we were at Saratoga last year, I noticed plenty of them acting like they had right good sense and in front of men, too."

Mammy snorted.

"Yankee gals! Yas'm, Ah guess dey speaks dey minds awright, but Ah ain' noticed many of dem gittin' proposed ter at Saratoga."

“But Yankees must get married,” argued Scarlett. “They don’t just grow. They must get married and have children. There’s too many of them.”

“Men mahys dem fer dey money,” said Mammy firmly.

Scarlett sopped the wheat cake in the gravy and put it in her mouth. Perhaps there was something to what Mammy said. There must be something in it, for Ellen said the same things, in different and more delicate words. In fact, the mothers of all her girl friends impressed on their daughters the necessity of being helpless, clinging, doe-eyed creatures. Really, it took a lot of sense to cultivate and hold such a pose. Perhaps she had been too brash. Occasionally she had argued with Ashley and frankly aired her opinions. Perhaps this and her healthy enjoyment of walking and riding had turned him from her to the frail Melanie. Perhaps if she changed her tactics — But she felt that if Ashley succumbed to premeditated feminine tricks, she could never respect him as she now did. Any man who was fool enough to fall for a simper, a faint and an “Oh, how wonderful you are!” wasn’t worth having. But they all seemed to like it.

If she had used the wrong tactics with Ashley in the past — well, that was the past and done with. Today she would use different ones, the right ones. She wanted him and she had only a few hours in which to get him. If fainting, or pretending to faint, would do the trick, then she would faint. If simpering, coquetry or empty-headedness would attract him, she would gladly play the flirt and be more empty-headed than even Cathleen Calvert. And if bolder measures were necessary, she would take them. Today was the day!

There was no one to tell Scarlett that her own personality, frighteningly vital though it was, was more attractive than any masquerade she might adopt. Had she been told, she would have been pleased but unbelieving. And the civilization of which she was a part would have been unbelieving too, for at no time, before or since, had so low a premium been placed on feminine naturalness.

As the carriage bore her down the red road toward the Wilkes plantation, Scarlett had a feeling of guilty pleasure that neither her mother nor Mammy was with the party. There would be no one at the barbecue who, by delicately lifted brows or out-thrust underlip, could interfere with her plan of action. Of

course, Suellen would be certain to tell tales tomorrow, but if all went as Scarlett hoped, the excitement of the family over her engagement to Ashley or her elopement would more than overbalance their displeasure. Yes, she was very glad Ellen had been forced to stay at home.

Gerald, primed with brandy, had given Jonas Wilkerson his dismissal that morning, and Ellen had remained at Tara to go over the accounts of the plantation before he took his departure. Scarlett had kissed her mother good-by in the little office where she sat before the tall secretary with its paper-stuffed pigeonholes. Jonas Wilkerson, hat in hand, stood beside her, his sallow tight-skinned face hardly concealing the fury of hate that possessed him at being so unceremoniously turned out of the best overseer's job in the County. And all because of a bit of minor philandering. He had told Gerald over and over that Emmie Slattery's baby might have been fathered by any one of a dozen men as easily as himself — an idea in which Gerald concurred — but that had not altered his case so far as Ellen was concerned. Jonas hated all Southerners. He hated their cool courtesy to him and their contempt for his social status, so inadequately covered by their courtesy. He hated Ellen O'Hara above anyone else, for she was the epitome of all that he hated in Southerners.

Mammy, as head woman of the plantation, had remained to help Ellen, and it was Dilcey who rode on the driver's seat beside Toby, the girls' dancing dresses in a long box across her lap. Gerald rode beside the carriage on his big hunter, warm with brandy and pleased with himself for having gotten through with the unpleasant business of Wilkerson so speedily. He had shoved the responsibility onto Ellen, and her disappointment at missing the barbecue and the gathering of her friends did not enter his mind; for it was a fine spring day and his fields were beautiful and the birds were singing and he felt too young and frolicsome to think of anyone else. Occasionally he burst out with "Peg in a Low-backed Car" and other Irish ditties or the more lugubrious lament for Robert Emmet, "She is far from the land where her young hero sleeps."

He was happy, pleasantly excited over the prospect of spending the day shouting about the Yankees and the war, and proud of his three pretty daughters in their bright spreading hoop skirts beneath foolish little lace parasols. He gave no thought to his conversation of the day before with Scarlett, for it had

completely slipped his mind. He only thought that she was pretty and a great credit to him and that, today, her eyes were as green as the hills of Ireland. The last thought made him think better of himself, for it had a certain poetic ring to it, and so he favored the girls with a loud and slightly off-key rendition of "The Wearin' o' the Green."

Scarlett, looking at him with the affectionate contempt that mothers feel for small swaggering sons, knew that he would be very drunk by sundown. Coming home in the dark, he would try, as usual, to jump every fence between Twelve Oaks and Tara and, she hoped, by the mercy of Providence and the good sense of his horse, would escape breaking his neck. He would disdain the bridge and swim his horse through the river and come home roaring, to be put to bed on the sofa in the office by Pork who always waited up with a lamp in the front hall on such occasions.

He would ruin his new gray broadcloth suit, which would cause him to swear horribly in the morning and tell Ellen at great length how his horse fell off the bridge in the darkness — a palpable lie which would fool no one but which would be accepted by all and make him feel very clever.

Pa is a sweet, selfish, irresponsible darling, Scarlett thought, with a surge of affection for him. She felt so excited and happy this morning that she included the whole world, as well as Gerald, in her affection. She was pretty and she knew it; she would have Ashley for her own before the day was over; the sun was warm and tender and the glory of the Georgia spring was spread before her eyes. Along the roadside the blackberry brambles were concealing with softest green the savage red gulches cut by the winter's rains, and the bare granite boulders pushing up through the red earth were being draped with sprangles of Cherokee roses and compassed about by wild violets of palest purple hue. Upon the wooded hills above the river, the dogwood blossoms lay glistening and white, as if snow still lingered among the greenery. The flowering crab trees were bursting their buds and rioting from delicate white to deepest pink and, beneath the trees where the sunshine dappled the pine straw, the wild honeysuckle made a varicolored carpet of scarlet and orange and rose. There was a faint wild fragrance of sweet shrub on the breeze and the world smelled good enough to eat.

“I’ll remember how beautiful this day is till I die,” thought Scarlett. “Perhaps it will be my wedding day!”

And she thought with a tingling in her heart how she and Ashley might ride swiftly through this beauty of blossom and greenery this very afternoon, or tonight by moonlight, toward Jonesboro and a preacher. Of course, she would have to be remarried by a priest from Atlanta, but that would be something for Ellen and Gerald to worry about. She quailed a little as she thought how white with mortification Ellen would be at hearing that her daughter had eloped with another girl’s fiance, but she knew Ellen would forgive her when she saw her happiness. And Gerald would scold and bawl but, for all his remarks of yesterday about not wanting her to marry Ashley, he would be pleased beyond words at an alliance between his family and the Wilkes.

“But that’ll be something to worry about after I’m married,” she thought, tossing the worry from her.

It was impossible to feel anything but palpitating joy in this warm sun, in this spring, with the chimneys of Twelve Oaks just beginning to show on the hill across the river.

“I’ll live there all my life and I’ll see fifty springs like this and maybe more, and I’ll tell my children and my grandchildren how beautiful this spring was, lovelier than any they’ll ever see.” She was so happy at this thought that she joined in the last chorus of “The Wearin’ o’ the Green” and won Gerald’s shouted approval.

“I don’t know why you’re so happy this morning,” said Suellen crossly, for the thought still rankled in her mind that she would look far better in Scarlett’s green silk dancing frock than its rightful owner would. And why was Scarlett always so selfish about lending her clothes and bonnets? And why did Mother always back her up, declaring green was not Suellen’s color? “You know as well as I do that Ashley’s engagement is going to be announced tonight. Pa said so this morning. And I know you’ve been sweet on him for months.”

“That’s all you know,” said Scarlett, putting out her tongue and refusing to lose her good humor. How surprised Miss Sue would be by this time tomorrow morning!



"Susie, you know that's not so," protested Carreen, shocked. "It's Brent that Scarlett cares about."

Scarlett turned smiling green eyes upon her younger sister, wondering how anyone could be so sweet. The whole family knew that Carreen's thirteen-year-old heart was set upon Brent Tarleton, who never gave her a thought except as Scarlett's baby sister. When Ellen was not present, the O'Haras teased her to tears about him.

"Darling, I don't care a thing about Brent," declared Scarlett, happy enough to be generous. "And he doesn't care a thing about me. Why, he's waiting for you to grow up!"

Carreen's round little face became pink, as pleasure struggled with incredulity.

"Oh, Scarlett, really?"

"Scarlett, you know Mother said Carreen was too young to think about beaux yet, and there you go putting ideas in her head."

"Well, go and tattle and see if I care," replied Scarlett. "You want to hold Sissy back, because you know she's going to be prettier than you in a year or so."

"You'll be keeping civil tongues in your heads this day, or I'll be taking me crop to you," warned Gerald. "Now whist! Is it wheels I'm hearing? That'll be the Tarletons or the Fontaines."

As they neared the intersecting road that came down the thickly wooded hill from Mimosa and Fairhill, the sound of hooves and carriage wheels became plainer and clamorous feminine voices raised in pleasant dispute sounded from behind the screen of trees. Gerald, riding ahead, pulled up his horse and signed to Toby to stop the carriage where the two roads met.

"'Tis the Tarleton ladies," he announced to his daughters, his florid face abeam, for excepting Ellen there was no lady in the County he liked more than the red-haired Mrs. Tarleton. "And 'tis herself at the reins. Ah, there's a woman with fine hands for a horse! Feather light and strong as rawhide, and pretty enough to kiss for all that. More's the pity none of you have such hands," he added, casting fond but reproving glances at his girls. "With Carreen afraid of the poor beasts and Sue with hands like sadirons when it comes to reins and

you, Puss —”

“Well, at any rate I’ve never been thrown,” cried Scarlett indignantly. “And Mrs. Tarleton takes a toss at every hunt.”

“And breaks a collar bone like a man,” said Gerald. “No fainting, no fussing. Now, no more of it, for here she comes.”

He stood up in his stirrups and took off his hat with a sweep, as the Tarleton carriage, overflowing with girls in bright dresses and parasols and fluttering veils, came into view, with Mrs. Tarleton on the box as Gerald had said. With her four daughters, their mammy and their ball dresses in long cardboard boxes crowding the carriage, there was no room for the coachman. And, besides, Beatrice Tarleton never willingly permitted anyone, black or white, to hold reins when her arms were out of slings. Frail, fine-boned, so white of skin that her flaming hair seemed to have drawn all the color from her face into its vital burnished mass, she was nevertheless possessed of exuberant health and untiring energy. She had borne eight children, as red of hair and as full of life as she, and had raised them most successfully, so the County said, because she gave them all the loving neglect and the stern discipline she gave the colts she bred. “Curb them but don’t break their spirits,” was Mrs. Tarleton’s motto.

She loved horses and talked horses constantly. She understood them and handled them better than any man in the County. Colts overflowed the paddock onto the front lawn, even as her eight children overflowed the rambling house on the hill, and colts and sons and daughters and hunting dogs tagged after her as she went about the plantation. She credited her horses, especially her red mare, Nellie, with human intelligence; and if the cares of the house kept her busy beyond the time when she expected to take her daily ride, she put the sugar bowl in the hands of some small pickaninny and said: “Give Nellie a handful and tell her I’ll be out terrectly.”

Except on rare occasions she always wore her riding habit, for whether she rode or not she always expected to ride and in that expectation put on her habit upon arising. Each morning, rain or shine, Nellie was saddled and walked up and down in front of the house, waiting for the time when Mrs. Tarleton could spare an hour away from her duties. But Fairhill was a difficult plantation to

manage and spare time hard to get, and more often than not Nellie walked up and down riderless hour after hour, while Beatrice Tarleton went through the day with the skirt of her habit absently looped over her arm and six inches of shining boot showing below it.

Today, dressed in dull black silk over unfashionably narrow hoops, she still looked as though in her habit, for the dress was as severely tailored as her riding costume and the small black hat with its long black plume perched over one warm, twinkling, brown eye was a replica of the battered old hat she used for hunting.

She waved her whip when she saw Gerald and drew her dancing pair of red horses to a halt, and the four girls in the back of the carriage leaned out and gave such vociferous cries of greeting that the team pranced in alarm. To a casual observer it would seem that years had passed since the Tarletons had seen the O'Haras, instead of only two days. But they were a sociable family and liked their neighbors, especially the O'Hara girls. That is, they liked Suellen and Carreen. No girl in the County, with the possible exception of the empty-headed Cathleen Calvert, really liked Scarlett.

In summers, the County averaged a barbecue and ball nearly every week, but to the red-haired Tarletons with their enormous capacity for enjoying themselves, each barbecue and each ball was as exciting as if it were the first they had ever attended. They were a pretty, buxom quartette, so crammed into the carriage that their hoops and flounces overlapped and their parasols nudged and bumped together above their wide leghorn sun hats, crowned with roses and dangling with black velvet chin ribbons. All shades of red hair were represented beneath these hats, Hetty's plain red hair, Camilla's strawberry blonde, Randa's coppery auburn and small Betsy's carrot top.

"That's a fine bevy, Ma'm," said Gerald gallantly, reining his horse alongside the carriage. "But it's far they'll go to beat their mother."

Mrs. Tarleton rolled her red-brown eyes and sucked in her lower lip in burlesqued appreciation, and the girls cried, "Ma, stop making eyes or we'll tell Pa!" "I vow, Mr. O'Hara, she never gives us a chance when there's a handsome man like you around!"

Scarlett laughed with the rest at these sallies but, as always, the freedom

with which the Tarletons treated their mother came as a shock. They acted as if she were one of themselves and not a day over sixteen. To Scarlett, the very idea of saying such things to her own mother was almost sacrilegious. And yet — and yet — there was something very pleasant about the Tarleton girls' relations with their mother, and they adored her for all that they criticized and scolded and teased her. Not, Scarlett loyally hastened to tell herself, that she would prefer a mother like Mrs. Tarleton to Ellen, but still it would be fun to romp with a mother. She knew that even that thought was disrespectful to Ellen and felt ashamed of it. She knew no such troublesome thoughts ever disturbed the brains under the four flaming thatches in the carriage and, as always when she felt herself different from her neighbors, an irritated confusion fell upon her.

Quick though her brain was, it was not made for analysis, but she half-consciously realized that, for all the Tarleton girls were as unruly as colts and wild as March hares, there was an unworried single-mindedness about them that was part of their inheritance. On both their mother's and their father's side they were Georgians, north Georgians, only a generation away from pioneers. They were sure of themselves and of their environment. They knew instinctively what they were about, as did the Wilkeses, though in widely divergent ways, and in them there was no such conflict as frequently raged in Scarlett's bosom where the blood of a soft-voiced, overbred Coast aristocrat mingled with the shrewd, earthy blood of an Irish peasant. Scarlett wanted to respect and adore her mother like an idol and to rumple her hair and tease her too. And she knew she should be altogether one way or the other. It was the same conflicting emotion that made her desire to appear a delicate and high-bred lady with boys and to be, as well, a hoyden who was not above a few kisses.

"Where's Ellen this morning?" asked Mrs. Tarleton.

"She's after discharging our overseer and stayed home to go over the accounts with him. Where's himself and the lads?"

"Oh, they rode over to Twelve Oaks hours ago — to sample the punch and see if it was strong enough, I dare say, as if they wouldn't have from now till tomorrow morning to do it! I'm going to ask John Wilkes to keep them

overnight, even if he has to bed them down in the stable. Five men in their cups are just too much for me. Up to three, I do very well but —”

Gerald hastily interrupted to change the subject. He could feel his own daughters snickering behind his back as they remembered in what condition he had come home from the Wilkeses’ last barbecue the autumn before.

“And why aren’t you riding today, Mrs. Tarleton? Sure, you don’t look yourself at all without Nellie. It’s a stentor, you are.”

“A stentor, me ignorant broth of a boy!” cried Mrs. Tarleton, aping his brogue. “You mean a centaur. Stentor was a man with a voice like a brass gong.”

“Stentor or centaur, ’tis no matter,” answered Gerald, unruffled by his error. “And ’tis a voice like brass you have, Ma’m, when you’re urging on the hounds, so it is.”

“That’s one on you, Ma,” said Betty. “I told you you yelled like a Comanche whenever you saw a fox.”

“But not as loud as you yell when Mammy washes your ears,” returned Mrs. Tarleton. “And you sixteen! Well, as to why I’m not riding today, Nellie foaled early this morning.”

“Did she now!” cried Gerald with real interest, his Irishman’s passion for horses shining in his eyes, and Scarlett again felt the sense of shock in comparing her mother with Mrs. Tarleton. To Ellen, mares never foaled nor cows calved. In fact, hens almost didn’t lay eggs. Ellen ignored these matters completely. But Mrs. Tarleton had no such reticences.

“A little filly, was it?”

“No, a fine little stallion with legs two yards long. You must ride over and see him, Mr. O’Hara. He’s a real Tarleton horse. He’s as red as Hetty’s curls.”

“And looks a lot like Betty, too,” said Camilla, and then disappeared shrieking amid a welter of skirts and pantalets and bobbing hats, as Betty, who did have a long face, began pinching her.

“My fillies are feeling their oats this morning,” said Mrs. Tarleton. “They’ve been kicking up their heels ever since we heard the news this morning about Ashley and that little cousin of his from Atlanta. What’s her name? Melanie? Bless the child, she’s a sweet little thing, but I can never

remember either her name or her face. Our cook is the broad wife of the Wilkes butler, and he was over last night with the news that the engagement would be announced tonight and Cookie told us this morning. The girls are all excited about it, though I can't see why. Everybody's known for years that Ashley would marry her, that is, if he didn't marry one of his Burr cousins from Macon. Just like Honey Wilkes is going to marry Melanie's brother, Charles. Now, tell me, Mr. O'Hara, is it illegal for the Wilkes to marry outside of their family? Because if —"

Scarlett did not hear the rest of the laughing words. For one short instant, it was as though the sun had ducked behind a cool cloud, leaving the world in shadow, taking the color out of things. The freshly green foliage looked sickly, the dogwood pallid, and the flowering crab, so beautifully pink a moment ago, faded and dreary. Scarlett dug her fingers into the upholstery of the carriage and for a moment her parasol wavered. It was one thing to know that Ashley was engaged but it was another to hear people talk about it so casually. Then her courage flowed strongly back and the sun came out again and the landscape glowed anew. She knew Ashley loved her. That was certain. And she smiled as she thought how surprised Mrs. Tarleton would be when no engagement was announced that night — how surprised if there were an elopement. And she'd tell neighbors what a sly boots Scarlett was to sit there and listen to her talk about Melanie when all the time she and Ashley — She dimpled at her own thoughts and Betty, who had been watching sharply the effect of her mother's words, sank back with a small puzzled frown.

"I don't care what you say, Mr. O'Hara," Mrs. Tarleton was saying emphatically. "It's all wrong, this marrying of cousins. It's bad enough for Ashley to be marrying the Hamilton child, but for Honey to be marrying that pale-looking Charles Hamilton —"

"Honey'll never catch anybody else if she doesn't marry Charlie," said Randa, cruel and secure in her own popularity. "She's never had another beau except him. And he's never acted very sweet on her, for all that they're engaged. Scarlett, you remember how he ran after you last Christmas —"

"Don't be a cat, Miss," said her mother. "Cousins shouldn't marry, even second cousins. It weakens the strain. It isn't like horses. You can breed a mare

to a brother or a sire to a daughter and get good results if you know your blood strains, but in people it just doesn't work. You get good lines, perhaps, but no stamina. You —"

"Now, Ma'm, I'm taking issue with you on that! Can you name me better people than the Wilkes? And they've been intermarrying since Brian Boru was a boy."

"And high time they stopped it, for it's beginning to show. Oh, not Ashley so much, for he's a good-looking devil, though even he — But look at those two washed-out-looking Wilkes girls, poor things! Nice girls, of course, but washed out. And look at little Miss Melanie. Thin as a rail and delicate enough for the wind to blow away and no spirit at all. Not a notion of her own. 'No, Ma'm!' 'Yes, Ma'm!' That's all she has to say. You see what I mean? That family needs new blood, fine vigorous blood like my red heads or your Scarlett. Now, don't misunderstand me. The Wilkes are fine folks in their way, and you know I'm fond of them all, but be frank! They are overbred and inbred too, aren't they? They'll do fine on a dry track, a fast track, but mark my words, I don't believe the Wilkes can run on a mud track. I believe the stamina has been bred out of them, and when the emergency arises I don't believe they can run against odds. Dry-weather stock. Give me a big horse who can run in any weather! And their intermarrying has made them different from other folks around here. Always fiddling with the piano or sticking their heads in a book. I do believe Ashley would rather read than hunt! Yes, I honestly believe that, Mr. O'Hara! And just look at the bones on them. Too slender. They need dams and sires with strength —"

"Ah-ah-hum," said Gerald, suddenly and guiltily aware that the conversation, a most interesting and entirely proper one to him, would seem quite otherwise to Ellen. In fact, he knew she would never recover should she learn that her daughters had been exposed to so frank a conversation. But Mrs. Tarleton was, as usual, deaf to all other ideas when pursuing her favorite topic, breeding, whether it be horses or humans.

"I know what I'm talking about because I had some cousins who married each other and I give you my word their children all turned out as popeyed as bullfrogs, poor things. And when my family wanted me to marry a second

cousin, I bucked like a colt. I said, ‘No, Ma. Not for me. My children will all have spavins and heaves.’ Well, Ma fainted when I said that about spavins, but I stood firm and Grandma backed me up. She knew a lot about horse breeding too, you see, and said I was right. And she helped me run away with Mr. Tarleton. And look at my children! Big and healthy and not a sickly one or a runt among them, though Boyd is only five feet ten. Now, the Wilkes —”

“Not meaning to change the subject, Ma’m,” broke in Gerald hurriedly, for he had noticed Carreen’s bewildered look and the avid curiosity on Suellen’s face and feared lest they might ask Ellen embarrassing questions which would reveal how inadequate a chaperon he was. Puss, he was glad to notice, appeared to be thinking of other matters as a lady should.

Betty Tarleton rescued him from his predicament.

“Good Heavens, Ma, do let’s get on!” she cried impatiently. “This sun is broiling me and I can just hear freckles popping out on my neck.”

“Just a minute, Ma’m, before you go,” said Gerald. “But what have you decided to do about selling us the horses for the Troop? War may break any day now and the boys want the matter settled. It’s a Clayton County troop and it’s Clayton County horses we want for them. But you, obstinate creature that you are, are still refusing to sell us your fine beasts.”

“Maybe there won’t be any war,” Mrs. Tarleton temporized, her mind diverted completely from the Wilkeses’ odd marriage habits.

“Why, Ma’m, you can’t —”

“Ma,” Betty interrupted again, “can’t you and Mr. O’Hara talk about the horses at Twelve Oaks as well as here?”

“That’s just it, Miss Betty,” said Gerald. “And I won’t be keeping you but one minute by the clock. We’ll be getting to Twelve Oaks in a little bit, and every man there, old and young, wanting to know about the horses. Ah, but it’s breaking me heart to see such a fine pretty lady as your mother so stingy with her beasts! Now, where’s your patriotism, Mrs. Tarleton? Does the Confederacy mean nothing to you at all?”

“Ma,” cried small Betsy, “Randa’s sitting on my dress and I’m getting all wrinkled.”

“Well, push Randa off you, Betsy, and hush. Now, listen to me, Gerald

O'Hara," she retorted, her eyes beginning to snap. "Don't you go throwing the Confederacy in my face! I reckon the Confederacy means as much to me as it does to you, me with four boys in the Troop and you with none. But my boys can take care of themselves and my horses can't. I'd gladly give the horses free of charge if I knew they were going to be ridden by boys I know, gentlemen used to thoroughbreds. No, I wouldn't hesitate a minute. But let my beauties be at the mercy of back-woodsmen and Crackers who are used to riding mules! No, sir! I'd have nightmares thinking they were being ridden with saddle galls and not groomed properly. Do you think I'd let ignorant fools ride my tender-mouthed darlings and saw their mouths to pieces and beat them till their spirits were broken? Why, I've got goose flesh this minute, just thinking about it! No, Mr. O'Hara, you're mighty nice to want my horses, but you'd better go to Atlanta and buy some old plugs for your clodhoppers. They'll never know the difference."

"Ma, can't we please go on?" asked Camilla, joining the impatient chorus. "You know mighty well you're going to end up giving them your darlings anyhow. When Pa and the boys get through talking about the Confederacy needing them and so on, you'll cry and let them go."

Mrs. Tarleton grinned and shook the lines.

"I'll do no such thing," she said, touching the horses lightly with the whip. The carriage went off swiftly.

"That's a fine woman," said Gerald, putting on his hat and taking his place beside his own carriage. "Drive on, Toby. We'll wear her down and get the horses yet. Of course, she's right. She's right. If a man's not a gentleman, he's no business on a horse. The infantry is the place for him. But more's the pity, there's not enough planters' sons in this County to make up a full troop. What did you say, Puss?"

"Pa, please ride behind us or in front of us. You kick up such a heap of dust that we're choking," said Scarlett, who felt that she could endure conversation no longer. It distracted her from her thoughts and she was very anxious to arrange both her thoughts and her face in attractive lines before reaching Twelve Oaks. Gerald obediently put spurs to his horse and was off in a red cloud after the Tarleton carriage where he could continue his horsy conversation.