

GONE WITH THE WIND

Original by Margaret Mitchell

Retold by Pauline Francis





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Introduction

Margaret Mitchell was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in the United States in 1900. She grew up listening to stories about the American Civil War (1861–65). This war had broken out when a Confederacy of southern states broke away from the United States. By the time the Confederacy collapsed, and slavery was abolished, almost 700,000 soldiers had died – but the United States survived as one nation.

After her marriage in 1925, Margaret wrote down many of these stories, which she turned into a novel.

Gone with the Wind is a love story set against the war and the following Reconstruction Era (1865–77). Its one thousand pages tell the story of spirited Scarlett O’Hara, the spoiled daughter of a rich cotton plantation (and slave) owner, brought up on a plantation called Tara. She is secretly in love with Ashley Wilkes, the fiancé of her friend, Melanie. During the terrible years of the war, it is thanks to Scarlett that Tara survives. When the war is over, Scarlett, still in love with Ashley, has to face the many struggles that life continues to bring, which she does, helped by Rhett Butler.

Although criticised for its racist language, the author uses the language of the time of these events.

Gone with the Wind was published in 1936. It sold over ten million copies, won the Pulitzer Prize, and was

translated into more than eighteen languages. It was also made into a very successful film. A few years ago, it was voted the second most popular novel in the US.

It was Margaret Mitchell's only novel and it has never been out of print. She died in 1949.

CHAPTER ONE

The Secret

On a bright April afternoon in 1861, Scarlett O'Hara was sitting with the Tarletan twins on the porch of Tara, her father's cotton plantation in Georgia. At sixteen, she made a pretty picture: her skin was magnolia-white, always protected from the fierce sun. Her eyes were green, with a touch of hazel, and her hair and eyebrows dark. Her new green flowered muslin dress billowed over wooden hoops, its fitted waist showing her figure to perfection.

Her hands, so daintily folded on her lap, did not reveal Scarlett's true nature. Her manners had been forced upon her by her gentle mother and her nurse, Mammy. But her eyes could not hide her true self. They flashed with impatience and wilfulness.

Talk turned to the coming war. The boys said it would start any day.

'You know that's just talk,' Scarlett said, bored. 'Anyway, I've heard that the Yankees in the north are too scared of us to fight. If you say war once again, I'm going into the house.'

She meant it too. Scarlett O'Hara could not bear any conversation that was not about *her*.

But she smiled as she spoke, showing her dimples and fluttering her eyelashes. The twins were enchanted.