

THE AUTHORIZED TEXT

THE GREAT GATSBY



F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

WITH NOTES AND PREFACE BY MATTHEW J. BRUCCOLI



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THE GREAT GATSBY



BY F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

NOVELS

THE LAST TYCOON (*unfinished*)
with a foreword by Edmund Wilson and notes by the author
TENDER IS THE NIGHT
THE GREAT GATSBY
THE BEAUTIFUL AND DAMNED
THIS SIDE OF PARADISE

STORIES

BITS OF PARADISE
uncollected stories by F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald
THE BASIL AND JOSEPHINE STORIES
edited with an introduction by Jackson R. Bryer and John Kuehl
THE PAT HOBBY STORIES
with an introduction by Arnold Gingrich
TAPS AT REVEILLE
SIX TALES OF THE JAZZ AGE AND OTHER STORIES
with an introduction by Frances Fitzgerald Smith
FLAPPERS AND PHILOSOPHERS
with an introduction by Arthur Mizener
THE STORIES OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD
a selection of 28 stories, with an introduction by Malcolm Cowley
BABYLON REVISITED AND OTHER STORIES
THE SHORT STORIES OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD
edited and with a preface by Matthew J. Bruccoli

STORIES AND ESSAYS

AFTERNOON OF AN AUTHOR
with an introduction and notes by Arthur Mizener
THE FITZGERALD READER
with an introduction by Arthur Mizener

LETTERS

THE LETTERS OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD
with an introduction by Andrew Turnbull
LETTERS TO HIS DAUGHTER
with an introduction by Frances Fitzgerald Smith
DEAR SCOTT/DEAR MAX
edited by John Kuehl and Jackson Bryer

AND A COMEDY

THE VEGETABLE
with an introduction by Charles Scribner III

THE GREAT GATSBY



F. Scott Fitzgerald

Preface and notes
by Matthew J. Bruccoli

A Scribner Classic

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Preface



What little I've accomplished has been by the most laborious and uphill work, and I wish now I'd *never* relaxed or looked back—but said at the end of *The Great Gatsby*: "I've found my line—from now on this comes first. This is my immediate duty—without this I am nothing."

—F. Scott Fitzgerald

The Great Gatsby does not proclaim the nobility of the human spirit; it is not politically correct; it does not reveal how to solve the problems of life; it delivers no fashionable or comforting messages. It is just a masterpiece.

The best reason to read literature is for pleasure. One gauge of F. Scott Fitzgerald's achievement is that many admiring readers are unaware of the complexity of *The Great Gatsby* because the novel is a pleasure to read. It is therefore necessary to invoke his 1922 pre-*Gatsby* declaration: "I want to write something *new*—something extraordinary and beautiful and simple + intricately patterned." Masterpieces are not accidents. Geniuses know what they

are doing or trying to do. They need luck, but knowing how to use the luck is an essential element of a writer's equipment.

F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896–1940) was a romantic and even tragic figure: a brilliant writer who achieved success with his first novel (*This Side of Paradise*, 1920), participated in the glamorous expatriate life in France during the Nineteen-Twenties, and then experienced a series of personal and professional blows during the Thirties. The Fitzgerald legend has attracted readers to his work; but his words matter—not the mostly distorted and inaccurate anecdotes of dissipation. Between 1920 and 1940 he published four novels, including *Tender Is the Night*; a play; 160 short stories; and essays. He was writing a superb Hollywood novel, *The Last Tycoon*, when he died. Assessing his career for his daughter Scottie he wrote from Hollywood at a low point in 1939: “I am not a great man, but sometimes I think the impersonal and objective quality of my talent, and the sacrifices of it, in pieces, to preserve its essential value has some sort of epic grandeur.”

Fitzgerald was not the playboy of American literature, although certain fans like to think that he was an irresponsible writer. He was an alcoholic—as were other major American writers—but he was a serious writer and a hard worker. He did not scribble *The Great Gatsby* drunk. The novel had a three-year process of evolution, and Fitzgerald tested his material in the short stories that preceded *The Great Gatsby*. The gestation of the characters and themes can be readily observed in “Dice, Brass Knuckles & Guitar” (1923), “The ‘Sensible Thing’ ” (1924), and particularly “Winter Dreams” (1922). “Absolution” (1924) was sal-