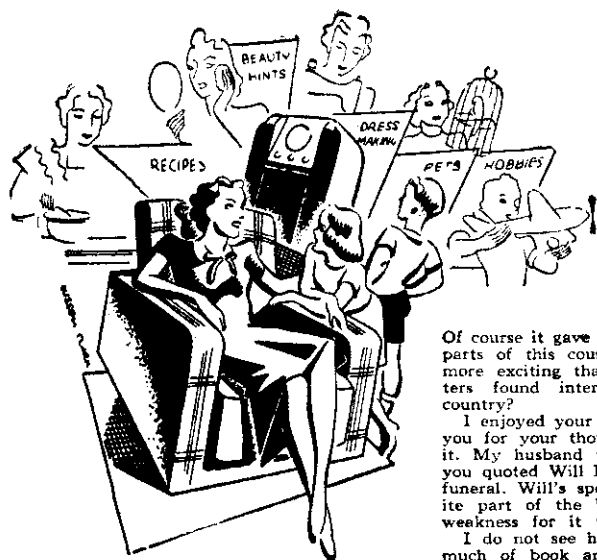


Women and the Home

Radio is the slender wire that brings the world and its affairs into the tiny kitchens and living rooms which hitherto had isolated so many housekeepers in the performance of their duties
—Margaret Bondfield



Little-Known Celebrity A LETTER FROM MARGARET MITCHELL

Of course it gave me great pleasure when other parts of this country read. But what can be more exciting than to know that my characters found interested readers in a far-off country?

I enjoyed your review so much, and I thank you for your thoughtfulness in letting me see it. My husband was as pleased as I because you quoted Will Benteen's remarks at Gerald's funeral. Will's speech is my husband's favourite part of the book, and my father has a weakness for it too.

I do not see how you managed to cram so much of book and atmosphere and character into a twenty minutes' talk. I know I should never have been able to have done it myself.

I am taking the liberty of sending you some articles which have appeared in American newspapers, and I hope you will find them of interest.

With renewed thanks for your wonderful review,

Cordially,

MARGARET MITCHELL MARSH.

* * *

THAT letter aroused our interest, and we set about unearthing some facts about the author and the writing of the book.

Miss Mitchell is now in her thirties. She is small (4ft. 11in.), with dark reddish hair and blue eyes (it's the Irish in her). She is married to John R. Marsh, a former newspaper man, and she herself was for six years on the staff of the *Atlanta Journal*. A sprained ankle

kept her on crutches for three years, and during that time she read voraciously and rapidly. Finally her husband got so tired of bringing home books from the library that he suggested she write a book herself.

Theme of Survival

She says, "I chose the Civil War period to write about because I was raised on it. As a child I listened for hours on Sunday afternoons to stories of fighting in Virginia and Georgia, learning everything except that the Confederates lost the war. I began the book in 1926. I was pretty tired of the realistic fiction of the 'jazz' age, so I thought I'd write about the young days of the kind of people I knew who had survived war and reconstruction. If the novel has a theme, it is that of survival. What makes some people able to come through catastrophes, and others, apparently just as able, strong and brave, go under? I don't know. I only know that the survivors used to call that quality 'gumption.' So I wrote about people who had gumption and people who didn't."

Reluctant Author

Gone With The Wind very nearly did not see the light of a publisher's office.

Not for the usual reason, however. Instead of the eager young author pursuing a publisher, we have the edifying spectacle of the publisher wading through a dog-eared draft (which under normal circumstances would at its most fortunate have been returned with a request for retyping), and then begging the reluctant author to let him publish the work.

To what, one wonders, does the novel owe its extraordinary popularity? Probably to its fullbloodedness. It has the same verve and open-air tang as the cowboy and adventure stories we used to read before we got acclimatised to slick comedies of modern life. And the characters are intensely alive. (That expression is by no means original, but it seems the only way to describe them) For instance, it is remarkable that Rhett Butler, a stock figure of melodrama, complete with black moustache, piercing eyes, and a way with women, should yet seem a most real and credible person. And the characters are given an exciting story and an exciting background. The result is a best-seller.

—M.R.B.

SCENE: Two girls walking away from a theatre outside which "*Gone With The Wind*" is billed in letters two feet high. One says to the other, "It's from an old book, like 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.'"

I NOTICED the above in cartoon form in an Auckland weekly, and realised its truth. We have received a lot of education about the future of *Gone With The Wind*. We know that every Hollywood star with any pretensions was racked with Scarlett fever, and that it took Director George Cukor two years to find Vivien Leigh. We know that the Atlanta bonfire cost \$26,000, and that Victor Fleming almost drove his car over a cliff in order to point out that the whole thing was getting him down. But we don't know very much about the author or the writing of the book.

In *Thrice A Stranger*, Vera Brittain's account of her three American tours, we read: "I hoped for a few minutes' conversation with Margaret Mitchell, a hope shared by our mutual publishers, who had written to her to announce my coming. But when I arrived, I found that the fugitive over-pursued young woman had apparently vanished from the confines of Georgia for the entire week-end. The only traces left of her were her father's handsome white mansion and the old-fashioned yellow apartment house in which she herself lives. Royalties amounting to half a million dollars had apparently caused their owner to cling with greater tenacity to her modest apartment." This, plus her non-appearance at the Tara Costume Ball and the tradition that she appeared at the premiere of *Gone With The Wind* heavily camouflaged in black velvet in order to dodge press photographers (in which she was not completely successful) have built up the legend of Margaret Mitchell's inaccessibility. But that the author is by no means unapproachable is shown by a letter written by her to Miss G. M. Glanville, of Christchurch, who reviewed *Gone With The Wind* in a book talk from 3YA some time ago. This is her letter:

Atlanta,
Georgia.

Dear Miss Glanville,

Your letter of July 10, with the enclosed review of *Gone With The Wind* has just arrived and how I thank you for them both. I cannot tell you how happy I am to learn that Rhett and Scarlett and my other characters have found friends clear across the world. When I was writing my book I never dreamed that it would be read outside of the South.

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