

Writers Workshop

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cold than the car and Mrs. Hawkins was hacking above the sour grumble of the organ. About half the pews were occupied, mostly by aged people. Everyone seemed to avoid the shafts of bright sunlight and for the most part sat shivering beneath the gloom of the rear balcony. Michael sat down next his mother and shoved both cold hands into his pockets. Then he counted the gilt organ pipes. There were forty-one. The choir entered singing half heartedly, and then the bald wrinkled minister shuffled in squinting in the dusty light. The choir sang the first hymn while everyone except old Mrs. Hawkins stood up like sticks and looked mutely at their hymnaries. Mrs. Hawkins who once had been the best soprano in the choir now blared from her pew cracking defiantly on every note above D. It isn't going to be any different thought Michael.

Between hymns when everyone prayed Michael moved his feet together then apart over and over, one floor board at a time, lulled by the nasal voice that droned incessantly over his bent head. Michael thought that he could never really like God. How could God be kind and merciful if He would let you torture yourself forever and ever if you were sinful for a few years? Even he, Michael, would not sit still and let anyone torture himself forever — say a million trillion years but not forever. And who wanted to stay in heaven forever and ever and praise a God you were afraid of while your father or your mother perhaps was screaming down in hell? The thought was poignant. He felt tears clouding his eyes and bit his tongue to keep them back. He did not recover his self-possession until the collection was taken. Then he reached hurriedly into his pocket, pulled out a dirty handkerchief and with it a shower of coppers that bounced away under the pews ahead of him. He felt himself to be blushing and bit his tongue so savagely that it brought tears back to his eyes. Mercifully, his father put down an extra dime on the plate.

Next came the children's sermon. The minister always slowly and deliberately took off his glasses when he talked to the children. It reminded Michael of the way his father lit his pipe when they talked "man to man". Why does he take them off thought Michael he can't see anything without them.

"Children"—began Mr. Olgers the minister, while the older folk settled back smiling vacantly. There were no more than a half dozen children in the church but Mr. Olgers talked as though there were very many turning slowly

from left to right when anyone could see that all the children were in the centre pews. Michael looked at Mary. She was snickering behind her psalm book while his father who was sitting grimly erect smothered a yawn and recrossed his thick arms. His mother's face wore a look of painfully bright interest which remained there a full minute after Mr. Olgers had put his spectacles on again. She recovered herself with a start, blinked her eyes and lapsed into her usual placid half attention.

They drove home in silence — even Mary was quiet. The sky had clouded over and thin streamers of snow snaked along the corrugated ice on the road. By supper time the storm windows were vibrating under the buffets of the north wind. The lights went out halfway through the supper and Michael was sent out to the kitchen where the candles were stored. When he returned he placed two candles on the table. His hands shook and when he spoke his voice shook too. He felt his heart racing and the sweat breaking out on the palms of his hands. Much more loudly than he had intended he said, "I don't believe in God. I hate God. I don't care about heaven and I don't want to go to church ever again. It's a waste of time and you can't make me."

His sister drew in her breath with a sharp "ohh" and turned her eyes in pleased anticipation towards his father. His mother half rose, eyes wide, three lines showing on her forehead.

"Now George", she pleaded vaguely. His father was out of his chair though and had him by the arm.

"Come on" said his father. His jaw was tight.

"Don't forget a candle" quavered Michael lips dry with terror.

"Come on" repeated his father taking up a candle however.

When Michael had undressed and was in bed his father came back into the room in the process of lighting his pipe. His blunt square jaw still looked unusually hard but his eyes beneath his level black brows held a determined patience.

"Mike" he said gently. Michael regarded his father warily, said nothing. The house creaked in the wind.

"Mike, you don't want to hurt your mother. She wants to see you grow up to be a man that goes to church that fears the Lord."

"I do fear him" Michael said unhappily "but Mom doesn't like to go to church — why does she want me to go?"

"Mike" said his father stroking the back of Michael's head and leaning slightly backward so that he might perceive any change in his son's wearily calm expression.

"Wouldn't you like to be good and go to heaven and be happy forever?"

"Yes" admitted Michael. "More than anything else Mike?"

"No, not more than anything else. I think I'd rather be like God and know everything."

"Mike, we can't all be Gods." "We can't?"

"No, that is — its not that God couldn't's" his father flushed and puffed furiously at his pipe "but he won't" he finished lamely.

"He won't?" "No." "Why? Why not?"

"You need to read your Bible" retorted his father in rough tones. He rose abruptly and took the Bible from Michael's bureau.

"The answers are all in this" he said shaking the book emphatically before replacing it. "I admit that I myself don't know them all."

Then he strode from the room slamming the door behind him. Michael rose and took the Bible from the bureau. Then he slipped back into bed. Curiously he opened the book at random. He read:

"Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries."

BRUNSWICKAN PARTY — REINSTATED



Part of the crowd that helped to make the Brunswickan Dance a social success are caught on the floor of the Lord Beaverbrook Hotel Ballroom by the photographer. One of the few extra-journalistic projects of the Brunswickan staff, the dance was well-attended, and opened the new term social calendar with a flourish. The dance, discontinued for a number of years, had formerly been one of the highlights in the social agenda at the University. Staff members plan to repeat this year's hit successfully for some time in the future. Proceeds were used for printing the tickets.

M.I.A.U. Ski Meet on Week-End

Skiing in Fredericton reaches its annual peak this week-end with the running of the M.I.A.U. Meet. Although to date the only entries are U. N. B. and St. Francis Xavier University of Antigonish, it is hoped that a definite reply will be forthcoming from Mt. Allison, Acadia, Dalhousie and Nova Scotia Tech immediately. Invitations have also been extended to the Saint John Ski Club and the Edmundston Ski Club.

U. N. B.'s first entry, consisting of Bud Mackley, Bud White, Howie Boucher, Ponder and Dick Ballance is a fairly strong team, but expects a firm challenge from the St. F. X. group. The second team, although seriously under-equipped, is thus far the dark-horse. All members are good skiers and are able to create an upset despite the very serious disadvantage of not having proper skis for cross-country and jumping. The second team members are Waddell, Dick Smith, Bob Neill, Stig Harvor and Ballantyne.

Events

The meet is to commence with a four mile cross-country race Friday at 10 a.m. This event starts and finishes in front of the Lady Beaverbrook Gymnasium. The downhill event scheduled for 2.30 Friday afternoon will take place at the ski club grounds at Royal Roads.

Saturday morning the Slalom race will take place, and in the afternoon the jumpers take over.

Busses will be operated to and from the ski-hill Friday and Saturday at 1.30 p.m.

Alan Mitchell is to officiate as Clerk of the Meet. Among his assistants are Knobby Walsh as starter, and Dave Fair, Sandy Valentine and Malcolm Babin as timers.

Other members of the Ski Club will be assisting in the thousand and one other jobs that go with a ski meet.

Good, exciting competition is anticipated and spectators are cordially invited to attend this 1951 Championship meet.

- Sports Will Be Aplenty This Week-end M.I.A.U. Ski-Meet Friday and Saturday Royal Roads * * * Mt. A. - U. N. B. Hockey Game First Inter-collegiate Match Friday Night York Arena

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