

Writers Workshop

In this column are printed selected samples of the best from among the short essays produced by the students of Dr. Pacey's "Creative Writing" Class. They are selected on basis of their quality and genuine representation of the students' work. It is hoped that they at once give notice to the creative talent at work on the campus, and add to the feature material that is carried in The Brunswickan.

(Kay MacCallum)

The long mournful whistle of the midnight train drifted through the open window and awoke Margaret MacDonald. For the past four nights she had been awakened by the same sound: a sound that had become a symbol of liberation to her ever since Jim had received the government job in Port Cristie. After fourteen years, the MacDonalds were leaving the Northwest Territories.

Fourteen long, uncertain years, thought Margaret as she shivered in the quiet chill of the night. Jim had taken her to Ramsay as a bride. Somehow the thoughts of leaving the northern wilderness made up for their hard times, everything was behind them now; they were leaving in ten days. There was a twenty-five hundred dollar award awaiting Jim for his valuable research, plus a grant equivalent to six months' salary to establish them in Port Cristie.

Winter had already set in when they arrived on the first of December. They had sold most of their furniture so the immediate task was to furnish their five room apartment. Margaret was sewing drapes on her new electric machine when Jim arrived at the apartment waving his award check. She examined it almost reverently and said, "We'll save it for building our home, won't we, Jim?"

Jim smiled mysteriously. "Put on your old 'coon coat, dear," he said, "it's cold out and we're taking a ride on the street car. I've got something to show you."

After fourteen years away from heavy traffic, Margaret felt confused and dizzy when Jim hurried her off the car and towards a large store. She scarcely noticed the rich display of fur coats in the window. But Jim stopped directly in front of a glassed-in platinum blonde mannikin wearing a magnificent Canadian beaver coat. "That'd look good on you, Marg," he said.

"Well, maybe someday, dear, we

"Today," interrupted Jim. Come on in and we'll look at skins."

"Jim MacDonald! Have you taken leave of your senses? Of all the things we can't afford right now!"

"I got a new top coat, didn't I? And you've been wearing that old 'coon ever since our first winter up north."

"It still keeps me warm. Besides, you've got an important job and I... well, I don't need a new coat... at least, not a fur one."

Jim took her hand. "I want the best for you, Marg, I always have. Up to now I've been pretty poor and you haven't said a word. We're taking this check and getting you a fur coat. If you won't choose the skins, I will."

There were tears in Margaret's eyes as she followed Jim into the fur shop.

Two weeks later, on a snowy Saturday morning, Boulter Furriers delivered Margaret's new Canadian beaver coat to her. She was standing in front of the living room mirror with it on when Jim came home to find no lunch ready.

"Keep it on," he told her. "I'm taking you down to the Cambrian Room for lunch."

Sunday morning, the sun shone brightly, making tiny dazzling diamonds on the surface of the newly fallen snow. Jim glowed with pride as Margaret put on her shimmering new coat for church. The minister of Central United Church, Dr. Bill Crayton, had been Jim's room-mate during their senior year at college.

After the service, Bill introduced Margaret and Jim to a good many of the congregation. After they had gone, the three friends lingered in the vestibule talking to two of the leading women of the church; Agatha Downe, an influential widow and her best friend, Millicent Adams, the wife of a prosperous banker. Agatha was tall and slender, and very regal in her bearing. She had fair skin en-

hanced by flawless make-up. Her black hair, greying at the temples, was waved becomingly off her face, accentuating her straight nose and arched brows.

Her black eyes bespoke shrewdness but they were overpowered by the warmth of her smile. She was wearing a silver mink coat which seemed perfect for her beauty.

Mrs. Adams was not so tall as Agatha and inclined to be stout. She was stylishly dressed and rather pretty but did not have the gracious manner of her friend. Margaret felt uncomfortably that she was appraising her critically and she was relieved when Mrs. Adams ended their talk of the Northwest Territories abruptly, telling Agatha that they should be on their way.

The following Wednesday morning, about ten-thirty, Margaret's house work was interrupted by a phone call.

"This is Agatha Downe calling," she heard. "I'm having a dozen of my friends over for tea this afternoon. I'd like you to meet them, Margaret. Could I pick you up about three? They won't be coming till four or after and we can chat awhile. I'll drive you home again."

Margaret was overwhelmed, she had certainly never expected Agatha Downe to go out of her way to be friendly to her! On week days when Jim worked in the afternoon he didn't come home to lunch, so she left him a note on the kitchen table. Agatha arrived just before three o'clock. She looked even more stunning than Margaret had remembered her.

Her home was large and tastefully furnished. She showed Margaret through before the other ladies arrived. She told her she had designed everything herself from the patterns in the heavy window drapes to the furniture in the Chinese style bedroom which her eighteen-year-old daughter Betty occupied.

Throughout the tea, Margaret could not help but marvel at Agatha. It was plain to be seen that she was a natural leader among her friends. She was charming from her neat hair-do to her stylish bronze kidskin pumps. She told Margaret to tell them all about her life in the Northwest Territories as if she were a heroine.

Among the ladies at tea that afternoon were the nucleus of Port Cristie society. There was Eileen Davis, the short attractive blonde who burst into the gathering with a glowing account of the recent two weeks she and her husband had spent in Bermuda. She seemed annoyed when Agatha told her she could tell them all about it after they'd discussed the Northwest Territories with Margaret.

Then there was Barbara Collings the aloof wife of Port Cristie's leading doctor. She seemed bored by the whole affair.

"Really, Agatha," she said, "you couldn't have picked a worse day for a tea-party. I had to cancel two appointments."

Agatha, gracious as always, said, "But I thought today would be the best day when you're leaving for the South the first of the week. And I knew you'd want to meet Margaret."

"The trip's all off," said Mrs. Collings. "Reg says he can't leave for a couple of weeks and I want to be home for Christmas, so I decided we wouldn't go. We'll have to be content with a report of the Davises' trip to Bermuda."

"Bermuda has it all over Florida," said Eileen. "Honestly, Barbara, you've never lived till you've been there. And the styles! I picked up a beaver jacket that goes beautifully with my new rust suit."

"Oh, is that the magnificent matched beaver up there on Agatha's bed?" asked one of the ladies.

"Why that's Margaret's," said Agatha enthusiastically.

"Anything bulky would never go in Bermuda," continued Eileen. "Bob tried to talk me into getting mink. He says it's so much richer but I already have my squirrel and when I could get a jacket for next to nothing and beaver does look good..."

"I would certainly never buy furs in Bermuda," announced Millicent Adams who arrived at that moment.

"How do you think my sun-tan looks?" asked Eileen of no one in particular.

"Oh, is that what's different about you," replied Millicent dryly, "I thought you'd bleached your hair again."

Eileen glared at Margaret as Millicent sat down beside her. Millicent talked to Margaret as if they were old friends; told her she intended to have her and Jim over to dinner very soon. "Agatha needn't think she is going to monopolize you," she laughed. Somehow Margaret felt that Millicent was scrutinizing every detail of her clothing and make up just as she had on Sunday morning.

Next to Agatha, Margaret liked Constance Stuart best. She was the wife of the editor of the "Port Cristie Daily Star" and was herself the editor of the women's page. After tea, she told Margaret that she would like to do an article on some of her experiences in the North.

Barbara Collings interjected that she thought a report of Eileen's trip to Bermuda would make more attractive reading in the winter.

"I'll leave that to the fashion columnist," smiled Constance.

Eileen laughed harshly. Katharine Small, a tall, pale woman who scarcely spoke a word throughout the tea was the first lady to leave. She said she had to give two music lessons right after dinner. Agatha told Margaret afterwards that Mr. Small had died two years before and Katharine had returned to teaching music in order to put her son through Med school.

By five o'clock the ladies had nearly all left. Millicent Adams was the last to leave, telling Margaret she'd be giving her a call soon. Agatha asked Margaret if she would stay and mark the hem in her new cocktail dress. Margaret found herself completely bewitched by her hostess and at a quarter to six she reluctantly announced that she would have to return home to get dinner for Jim.

There were soft rose coloured lights burning in Agatha's room. She went to the bed to get her coat and for a moment she felt her eyes had deceived her. There was nothing on the bed except a rather moth eaten old beaver coat. "Agatha," she called downstairs, "I can't find my coat."

They looked everywhere and then Agatha phoned every lady who had been there that afternoon but everyone said she had her own coat. The two maids and the cook

were questioned but they seemed to know absolutely nothing about it. Agatha's daughter was the only person outside of the guests for tea who had come to the house all afternoon.

Margaret told Agatha she would have to get home or Jim would be terribly worried. She was afraid she was going to cry.

"I am going to hire a good private detective," Agatha told her. "I'm sure we can find your coat. I can't understand it, nothing like this has ever happened to me before. That beautiful coat!" She, too, was close to tears.

Jim had dinner all ready when Margaret reached home. He seemed comparatively unperturbed but she was unable to eat. "Oh Jim," she sobbed over her untouched dinner, "the most beautiful thing I've ever had and you worked so hard to get it for me. It was your whole award!"

"You'll get it back," he reassured her.

But Margaret didn't get it back. Agatha's efforts were all to no avail. The coat had disappeared and even the city's leading detective agency could not find it.

By spring time, Margaret had got over the idea of ever finding her coat. Jim rarely talked of the beautiful matched skins she had worn only three times but she knew he was as sad over the loss as she.

The people of Port Cristie could not seem to do enough for the MacDonalds. All that summer they spent almost every week-end at the cottages of their friends. They were no longer strangers in town; Margaret and Jim were living the kind of life they had dreamed about back in Ramsay.

Slowly the memory of the beaver coat ceased to trouble them and it became almost a myth. She wouldn't let him even think of buying her another fur coat the next winter, so she bought a becoming tailor made English coat which Millicent Adams told her was exactly right for her.

The next summer, for her birthday, Jim told her that he intended to take her to an out of town furrier's to choose skins for another fur coat. They went to a small shop in Riviere Verte where Jim was attending a convention. Margaret stated quite emphatically that she did not want another beaver coat but when the little French proprietor brought out some matched beaver skins, she weakened. Jim looked the pelts over while Margaret held a soft piece to her and stared into the mirror. "Just like my other one," she murmured.

ed. Suddenly she screamed. There, on the underside of the pelt was a Forestry crest and inside were the initials M. R. M... the very mark Boulter's had stamped on each pelt she had chosen almost two years ago in Port Cristie. There were twelve matched beaver skins all bearing Jim's forestry crest with her initials stamped across the logs in the centre. The little Frenchman was aghast.

Jim's colleagues at the convention recommended a lawyer by the name of Hutchinson; they said he was renowned as a criminal investigator. Within two days, the furs were declared to be the ones sold to the MacDonalds by the expert at Boulter's. The little Riviere Verte Frenchman who was thoroughly scared at the thoughts of becoming involved in a legal entanglement cooperated in every way; he volunteered the names and whereabouts of his agents.

The lawyer accompanied Jim and Margaret back home. Agatha Downe was the first to be told of the good news. She was overjoyed. The day after their return she invited them and Lawyer Hutchinson to dinner. She showed him through the house, where the coat had been and told him all she knew about the ladies who had been at the fateful tea. She told him the same three servants were still with her.

"Sophie, the cook," she said, "has been with me for twelve years. I've had Maxine and Amy for nearly five. They're sisters and marvellous workers. They've certainly never given me any reason to believe they are dishonest."

The lawyer visited the detective agency that Agatha had hired to find the coat. They had an accurate record of the interviews with each lady who had been at tea on the day the coat was stolen. The facts they had concerning the women coincided with what Agatha had told him. Each lady held a respected place in the community.

Through the police files and various other sources, he obtained a record of every fur coat that had been reported stolen for the past ten years in Port Cristie and within a radius of thirty miles. Every stolen coat that had been bought at Boulter's had been worth at least a thousand dollars. There were records of coats that had been stolen from the lockers of nurses and university students; a sixty-five hundred dollar mink had been stolen from the check room at the Blue Heron Club; a sable stole had disappeared while the

(Continued on Page Seven)

YOU ARE ALWAYS WELCOME AT
HERBY'S MUSIC STORE
306 Queen Street
FREDERICTON'S BRIGHT AND CHEERY MUSIC CENTRE



BMOC*

* Big Man On the Campus!

The man who smokes a pipe rates high with the Campus Queens... especially when he smokes PICOBAC.

You'll find the fragrance of PICOBAC is as pleasing to others as it is mild and cool for you.

Picobac
ALSO GOOD FOR ROLLING YOUR OWN

PICOBAC is Burley Tobacco - the coolest, mildest tobacco ever grown

Writers Workshop

(Continued from Page 5)

owner attended a debut of her daughter. furs, like Margaret's, before the insurance could send their agent the first premium.

It was Rev. Bill Crayton indirectly responsible for the lawyer the mission was having dinner with Hutchinson who wished to talk to her about the insurance. They talked of every detail involved in the plan and when dinner was over, Hutchinson had a definite plan had begun to form in the mind of the lawyer.

One afternoon, a week later, Margaret had just returned from a bridge party at Stuart's when Jim arrived. "I've got an apartment breathless, coat," he panted, "wants us to come to once. I guess he has pretty well settled."

The lawyer looked strangely at Margaret when they arrived. For a moment he puffed furiously on a pipe, then he said, "I realize the one to do this. I believe myself, Mrs. MacDonald."

Margaret was pale. She knew who stole the coat.

"Yes and it seems fit that my friend, Mrs. Downe, should be the one to do this. I believe myself, Mrs. MacDonald."

Dr. Crayton told Margaret that no one here knew anything at all about the coat. It seems she with a certain Keith now sells pelts to B

YOU CAN RELAX



with



PLAIN ENDS - W CORK TIP