

spiracy to reestablish by armed force the régime of Arias was discovered. Not one American reader in a thousand recognized the importance of the news. What difference does it make who lords it over that miniature country?

The significance begins to emerge when one is reminded that Arias, former head of a nation that stretches on both sides of the Panama Canal, is one of the most outspoken pro-Falangists and pro-fascists in this hemisphere. While Panamanian ambassador to Italy, Arias became most friendly with Mussolini who arranged several interviews for him with Hitler. In 1940 he returned to Panama and took over the reins of government with the help of local Falangists. Almost immediately he ordered the arrest of all persons known or suspected of opposition to falangism or active sympathy with democracy. He announced a New Order for Panama based on "corporatism" *à la* Mussolini and even put through a phony "plebiscite" that gave him "unanimous" endorsement.

Thereafter the doors of Panama were opened wide for "refugees," who arrived in droves with Spanish passports and quickly found work around the Canal locks, as engineers in waterworks and electric

power plants and at other strategic points. The United States government could scarcely remain indifferent about the whole business, and perhaps was not too astonished when a convenient revolution overthrew Arias, and a friendly democratic government was established, in 1942.

Simultaneous pro-fascist upsurges in two countries vital to the safety of the Canal is certainly no coincidence. That the greater American public remained indifferent to the events is an indication of how far away we are still, psychologically, from our Good and not-so-Good Neighbors. —STEPHEN NAFT

#### CELEBRITY UNLIMITED

OUR present-day world grows more "celebrities" per acre than at any time in the past, and this fertility is especially notable in our United States. Big Names fill the headlines, crowd the magazines and jam the airwaves. In every subdivision of human endeavor there are legions of "well-knowns" and "celebrateds" and "authorities."

Industrious autograph collectors — some of whom can fill a book a day with famous signatures caught on the fly — confirm my own impression that nearly every week produces its crop of new stars,

leaders, heroes and "outstanding" this-or-thats.

Can it be that our epoch is blessed with more greatness than any that preceded? Is the stuff of which heroes are made perhaps more abundant than in the benighted past?

Unfortunately the answer is No. The truth is simply that celebrities can now be grown, so to speak, by new hot-house processes in this technological age, with the help of radio, movies, "quickie" books, syndicate features, Sunday spreads and a thousand other artificial aids to fame.

In the dark ages a few generations ago men and women had to achieve greatly and over a long period of time before the tidings of their gifts reached the populace. Too often, indeed, death overtook the hero before his passport to celebrity had been visaed by public opinion. Today, on the contrary, notorious celebrity is as likely as not to overtake a man long before he has finished the task to be rewarded by fame. Public relations experts are available to glamorize him and "blow him up." Any number of sensation-hungry radio stations, tabloids, magazines, newsreels compete for the privilege of discovering the new marvel, whether in the arts, politics, sci-

ence, entertainment, martial pursuits or what-not.

To cite an obvious example: In the past an explorer who got himself properly lost in the jungles or stranded on a raft on the high seas, if rescued, might receive his mead of acclaim and glory in the course of months or years. Today his prototype would most likely be equipped with a shortwave sender; if not, his rescuers at least would be so equipped, so that the drama of the search and the victory would be broadcast to all corners of the earth minute by minute and blow by blow.

Celebrity in our time is thus a lush, weedy thing. It clogs the main highways and chokes to death many a rare plant of genuine accomplishment. Heroes are raised to order; in quantity lots if necessary; cross-bred for fancy effects and grafted on almost any mediocre vine.

True, these artificial fames are shortlived. Newspaper morgues are filled with the flamboyant records of celebrities of the month, the week, sometimes the day. All the same, the super-abundance of shoddy greatness and tinsel splendors begins to cloy and the least we can do is to beg for a moratorium on celebrity, however brief.

— E. L.

# THE FUR COAT

## *A Story*

BY GEORGE LOVERIDGE

SOMEWHERE in the ethereal upper regions of the Brownell Funeral Home an invisible harpist was playing *Going Home*. The tones dripped down the stairwell upon the assembled mourners, upon the preacher and upon the body of Olive Mason lying in a coffin hedged with heavy-scented flowers. There were not many mourners but they were a solemn enough group. Some of them sniffled. They looked sympathetically at Olive Mason's father, who was sitting with Emma Scott, Olive's best friend.

"Poor man," they whispered to one another, "all alone in the world," or "She but forty-five, so young to die of heart disease."

The little old man cried silently without bothering to dry his eyes, and the tears made shiny lines down his cheeks. Upstairs the harpist repeated *Going Home*.

Of all the mourners, Emma Scott, though she held a handkerchief to her lips and put it now and then to her eyes, was inwardly the most composed. She was a rather large woman with a vacant, good-natured face. Her hair was beginning to turn gray but she touched it up cleverly to match the original dark brown. She was unmarried, as Olive had been, and they were of an age. They attended movies together, met for lunch a couple of times a week, played cards, and went to New York now and then for a bender, nothing harmful, just a couple of shows, a few drinks, a few days at a hotel. Emma worked in the motor vehicle department in the State House. Olive had been dietitian in a hotel. They had been chums for twenty years.

But it was not of these things that Emma was thinking, nor of the sorrow of the man beside her. As

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