

# Mr. Fenning

by FRANCES WARFIELD

I

**B**ECAUSE the sight of fresh vegetables reminded him pleasantly of his boyhood, Mr. Fenning paused occasionally in his walk along Sixth Avenue to inspect the market displays set out on the sidewalk. How clean they were. Not a trace of clinging earth. No wonder New Yorkers had such queer ideas about how things grew. Miss Ellis once told him she'd always thought carrots grew on vines. Thinking of squash, perhaps, or more likely just having him on, as usual. . . .

He frowned at the thought of Miss Ellis, with her flat heels and big, meaty, white arms. He'd hated her ever since he first laid eyes on her, two years ago. Galumping into the office and setting herself up as an editor, cajoling Pfeiffer into adding all those new departments to the Back-of-the-Book. Not a minute's peace since she came. . . . Pretty good cantaloupes, there, two for a quarter. Not a bit better, though, than some he'd passed farther back, marked ten cents. A woman ought always to pay cash and shop around for the best prices — save five cents here and five there — mount up in a few months' time. An idea. It stirred and grew in Mr. Fenning's mind, filling it so full that when a white-coated clerk thrust a package into his arms with a brisk, "There you are, sir; thank you!" he accepted it mechanically and walked on.

He had almost reached his hotel before he noticed that he was carrying anything. He stared at the parcel in dismay. It was quite

heavy. Meat of some kind; a mistake, of course. He had bought nothing. Somebody was back in the shop right now, the rightful owner, raising the roof, probably, demanding his meat. Must be a roast. Veal? Pork? He tore the paper at one end and with a shock felt himself grasping cold bone. It was a leg of lamb. As he stood

cradling it awkwardly, two women passed, nudging each other to look. His ears turned scarlet. He must return it, he supposed, but where? He had passed more than a dozen markets — he had no memory of receiving the package. Go from market to market, waving the leg, inquiring, "Have you lost some lamb here?" Markets full of nudging women, grinning clerks. Why didn't they look what they were doing with their fool meat? Nervously he pulled the paper around the exposed shank; people were staring at him. His face pink with misery, his glasses steamy in the mid-



Drawings by Dorothy McKay

August sun, Mr. Fenning fumbled with the wretched thing and finally thrust it, half unwrapped, inside his coat. A policeman was swinging down the street. Think he'd stolen it, sure. Panting and perspiring, Mr. Fenning covered the remaining half block to his hotel.

"Package here for you, Mr. Fenning," said the clerk, handing him his key. "I'll send the boy up with it though; see you've got all you can manage." He glanced at Mr. Fenning's distended coat and grinned comprehendingly. "Little nip of something now and then's relished by the best of men. Eh?" Mr. Fenning

smiled feebly and fled to the elevator. Reaching his room, he bolted the door and flung the tattered bundle on the unmade bed. He sank into the armchair and, taking off his glasses, mopped his face. He was exhausted.

The elevator boy's knock roused him. "Package, sir." Hastily pulling the sheet over the bed, Mr. Fenning opened the door. It was the advertisers' samples, sent from the office. Mr. Fenning ran several departments in the *Household Companion*, a pulp-paper weekly. "Our Bird Neighbors" and "Chats with Uncle Bud" were his. So was "Aunt Addie's Corner" — "*Let Aunt Addie solve your housekeeping worries. Do not hesitate to write to her. Remember, dear readers, Aunt Addie is here to help YOU.*" In addition, Mr. Fenning wrote a column called "Findings," giving sprightly, anonymous puffs to new foods, preparations, and household gadgets recognizably advertised elsewhere in the magazine. The advertisers furnished him with free samples to write about.

"Just set it down anywhere," Mr. Fenning said.

The elevator boy lingered expectantly, glancing around. He had heard the desk clerk's remark.

"Want anything, sir — ginger ale or anything?"

"No, no. Nothing at all." Mr. Fenning gave the boy a dime and bolted the door behind him. Then he turned back the sheet and regarded the leg of lamb with distaste. He had never in his life been so close to a piece of raw meat. Looked indecent, lying there on the rumpled bed; his impulse was to cover it up again. He scowled at it. What could a bachelor in a hotel — a hotel without a restaurant, even — do with a leg of lamb? Any woman with a kitchen would be only too glad to have it. But Mr. Fenning knew no women, except Miss Ellis.

Suddenly he realized what it was about the thing. It reminded him of Miss Ellis. She had small hands and tiny wrists. He had often noticed how suddenly her heavy arms spread away from her

wrists. Her ankles were the same way. He gazed at the lamb, fascinated. Couldn't he get away from that woman? He was doing all his work at home now, because he couldn't stand it with her clumping around the office. He got rattled just listening to her talk. "Well; here's Aunt Addie! Prompt as pay day." Or some crack like that.

## II

MARTHA ELLIS. Matt, they called her. A good name. She was more like a man. Talked like a man — right out. "Hello, Fenning, told the Aunt Addies what every married woman ought to know? Or don't you know yourself?"

Yes, the leg of lamb reminded him of her. Mr. Fenning reached a tentative hand toward the meat and withdrew it quickly. The refrigerator chill was still on it. What if she could see him sitting on the bed with a raw leg of lamb? How she would laugh. He particularly hated her laugh — loud and hearty. With sudden determination he seized the thing by the bone. He was sick of thinking about it. Sick of the sight of it, too. He opened an empty bureau drawer and thrust the meat inside, kicking the drawer shut with his foot. There. Relief poured over him. That was the way to deal with that. He went to the washstand and scrubbed his hands vigorously, looking at himself rather cockily in the mirror. It was as if his privacy, his very bachelorhood, had been threatened. Now he was a free man again.

Stepping lightly, Mr. Fenning set about putting the room to rights. He didn't allow the chambermaid to do it. He had arranged with



the hotel clerk to have her come in only once a week, when thorough cleaning was necessary. It was a small, cheap hotel, used to underpaid writers and their eccentricities; Mr. Fenning had lived there for years. He supposed the clerks thought it was stinginess — well, he didn't care what they thought. The idea that a chambermaid should have a pass-key to his door and could peer in at any time, even before he was up, outraged him. He had had a bolt put on and used it always.

He made the bed efficiently, and emptied the ash tray. Then he sat down at the table, where the week's pile of "Dear Aunt Addie" letters lay unopened. He uncovered the typewriter, lit a cigarette, and leaned back, composing himself to write. He began:

Dear Readers:

Don't you sometimes get sick and tired of your families? Don't gasp. Isn't it true? Wouldn't you love to go off just once and have some fun — doing what *you* feel like for a change? Oh, you don't have to be ashamed of these thoughts! All we women have them.

Well, here's my idea. You *can* have some fun. I want each one of you to make up her mind that a year from now she'll go off, either alone or with one or two other women friends, and have the kind of vacation she's been longing for.

Where's the money coming from? Listen to Aunt Addie. How often do you shop around from store to store, seeing where you can get things cheapest? We all do it. Heaven knows, I've been pinching pennies long enough myself. Well, I want each of you to get a special purse, called the Fun Purse, and keep it in her bag. Then when you see cantaloupes, for instance, marked two for a quarter and go on till you find them selling for ten cents apiece, call that *your* nickel you've saved. Put it in the Fun Purse. Every cent you can save this way, add it to the Fun Fund. And watch it grow!

Now won't you all start Fun Purses right away? And then write in and tell the rest of us. . . .

Mr. Fenning tapped on, oblivious to the gathering afternoon heat. He ripped the sheet from the typewriter, revised it with a pencil, and rewrote it entirely. He was a fussy writer, and he was rather proud of this piece. Best idea he'd had in months. Lucky he'd happened to notice those cantaloupes. Might even be extended later into a separate department. The Fun Club. Ellis would never hear of it, though — she wanted no ideas but her own — trying to run the whole shebang. Ellis, Ellis, *Ellis!* Couldn't he stop thinking about her for a minute?

He got up and opened the transom before tackling the letters. The heat was unbearable.

Dear Aunt Addie:

Will you tell how to take paint spots off mirrors and window panes? I read your column every week.

Mrs. J. A. H.

Turpentine is the best thing for removing paint. You can buy a prepared paint-remover but plain turpentine is cheaper and, with patience, works just as well.

Mr. Fenning tossed the answered letter in the wastebasket and opened a second, written in an uphill, unformed hand. He frowned as he read it. One of those letters. What did they think Aunt Addie was anyhow — a doctor?

. . . heard you were supposed to drink turpentine, but I'm afraid it will make me sick. Oh, dear Aunt Addie, what shall I do? Please help me.

Worried

"Worried," eh? She'd better be. Where did they all get the idea of drinking turpentine? He threw the letter after the first, into the wastebasket. He never answered that kind. Martha Ellis did, when they came in through her Girls' Club. Not in the magazine; she took them home and answered them personally, if they gave a real name and address. Naturally she couldn't tell them anything to do, just advised them to confide in their parents and maybe things could be fixed for them to get married or at least go away for a while. Hunh. He wasn't wasting his sympathy on a lot of flighty girls, picking up with any drug store sheik with slick hair and a car. Out for a good time, all of them. They had their fun, let them pay for it. As he reached for the third letter, Mr. Fenning's eye was caught by the word "turpentine" in the answer he had written to the first. He chuckled. There was a coincidence. His hands on the typewriter keys, he considered a minute. All right, he'd be a sport. He'd give "Worried" an answer, only she'd have to be smart enough to find it. He gave the keys a preliminary sweep and then, smiling as he wrote,

But remember — don't leave the bottle in the medicine chest where someone may pick it up by mistake. Turpentine, taken internally, does nobody any good.

He laughed aloud as he read it over. That was pretty cute. Ellis would enjoy that. Right in her line. He telephoned downstairs for a pitcher of ice water and got out a nickel for the elevator boy. It was worth it. He was in fine form to-day.



The next week was very trying for him. He had to ransack the library for material for his bird article; besides, New York was having its worst heat wave in ten years. What with one thing and another, it was several days before he was reminded of the leg of lamb.

He had only to finish his "Findings" column and carry all his copy to the office and the week's work would be over. He looked at the advertisers' samples spread on the bed beside him. A camphor flake preparation, a trick kitchen knife, an insect spray, a new kind of clothesline, a cigarette box — half a dozen other articles. He picked up the knife. "Nevadull" it was called. A sawlike blade, "especially good," urged the accompanying booklet, "for cutting gristle." He sighed wearily and began.

Here's just what you've been wanting — a knife that won't get dull! Its sawlike blade —

Mr. Fenning dropped his head in his hands for a moment. He had hardly slept the night before. Hadn't been a breath of air in the room — wasn't now, either. What was that queer smell? He'd noticed it during the night. He lit a cigarette and continued,

— will make quick work of picnic sandwiches. Slices vegetables—

Suddenly his hands crashed down on the keys.

The leg of lamb! In the bureau drawer all this time. That was what he smelled. Must be completely rotten by now. Mr. Fenning groaned. That dratted leg of lamb. Reluctantly he got up and pulled the drawer out a few inches — whew! The warm, rank odor assailed him in all its strength. He shut the drawer quickly. Ye gods, ye gods! Of course he should have known it would spoil. He hadn't thought — he was no damned housekeeper, was he? He had supposed it would stay there or else dry up. The truth was, he had rather hoped that the thing didn't exist at all. It did, though. Mr. Fenning's stomach jerked sickeningly at the thought of what he had seen. Dark, purplish meat — yellow, beaded fat. He thought — he had closed the drawer too hastily to be sure — he had seen something moving . . .



What could he do? He had his work to finish. He went back to his table. *Damn* that smell! He seized the package of camphor flakes and tore it open. Holding his breath, averting his face, he opened the drawer and poured the flakes over the decaying meat. His fingers smelled of camphor; he pressed his nose to them gratefully.

It was no use. Mr. Fenning wrote a few more paragraphs and then realized that the smell was worse than ever. The camphor — the insufferable heat — would it never let up? Speculatively he eyed the insect spray. Might as well try it. He poured the fluid into the hand pump and opening the drawer, plied the pump until his arm ached. He straightened up, eyes smarting, nose tingling. What was in that spray, anyhow? Smelled like chloroform. Might preserve the meat or something. He wondered what embalming fluid was made of; funny he'd never run across it, all the things he'd looked up on his job. He smiled shakily. If he'd thought his leg of lamb would decay, he might have *embalmed* it . . . keep indefinitely that way . . . he'd heard of murderers . . . Mr. Fenning laughed out loud. Why, if anyone were to come in and smell that smell they might think . . . might t-think . . . Oh, what a mess, what a complete mess.

He picked up the piece of clothesline. Might hang it outside the window . . . might even throw it out . . . couldn't. Couldn't possibly touch the thing. He shuddered. He forced

himself to sit down and finish the rest of the "Findings" paragraphs. As his fingers worked, his mind streamed on separately. The smell continued. Not all the time—in waves. It flowed toward him on humid, relentless waves of August heat. Couldn't stay in this room . . . finish up quickly . . . go away, never come back . . . let them find it . . . the corpse, ha ha, how they'd laugh at him when they found it . . . a leg of lamb . . . dead . . . find it Saturday, chambermaid came in to clean. Nice room . . . familiar . . . had it seventeen years . . . ruined now.

Like a man in a slow motion picture, Mr. Fenning pulled the last sheet of paper from his typewriter. He glanced around the room. It was decided. He'd never come back. His weekly bill lay on the bureau. Settle it now. Say nothing. Send an office boy for his typewriter and clothes. He took his brief case and went downstairs. At the desk he paid his bill. "Hot enough for you, Mr. Fenning?" He nodded vaguely at the perspiring clerk. He walked carefully. He was made of glass. Touch of the heat, probably. Find another hotel—clean—cool. Lie down.

### III

MISS ELLIS's voice rasped on Mr. Fenning's ears the moment he reached the office. ". . . can't help it. You've got to make room," she was shouting over the telephone. "Well, pull out something. The recipes have got to go in." She glanced up as Mr. Fenning entered her office. He was walking slowly. If he was careful . . . didn't say much . . . keep steady . . . perhaps he wouldn't be sick . . . the terrible heat, that was it . . .

"Listen, Fenning," she was saying. "Care if we hold out 'Bird Neighbors' this once? Make-up man's in a jam and I've simply got to run this bunch of lamb recipes. Advertising department has a special display of cook books."

"What?" asked Mr. Fenning faintly.

"Oh, my eye, Fenning—lamb recipes," she barked. "Ever hear of lamb? Roast lamb, lamb stew, minced lamb on toast—" She turned back to the telephone. "Hey,

Joe. Leave out the bird stuff and run the lamb instead. O. K.—Why, what's the matter?" Mr. Fenning had dropped his copy and made for the wash room, pale and trembling.

When he returned he was feeling considerably better. Miss Ellis was reading his copy, smiling appreciatively. A stenographer stood by her desk. New girl, Mr. Fenning noticed. She wore a white jersey blouse, outlining inviting curves. Straw yellow hair, cheeks and lips coated with rouge, a flash of gold in her teeth as she smiled at him. Mr. Fenning smiled diffidently. He thought her beautiful. He was afraid of the other stenographers in the office—flashily dressed, flip-tongued. He knew they called him Aunt Addie behind his back. This one looked different. Softer—he couldn't describe it. What was the word?

"This stuff is swell, Fenning," Miss Ellis greeted him, taking up a new page.

Mr. Fenning was pleased. "Thanks," he said, and then wished he hadn't. Trying to patronize him? He'd been there fifteen years before she saw the place. Of course his work was good. But the stenographer's eyes were on him, blue and admiring. He blushed and turned away. Unusually nice girl.

"Put it in the Fun Purse," chortled Miss Ellis. "Oh, Fenning, you'll be the death of me! 'Heaven knows I've been pinching pennies long enough myself!' Old Aunt Addie Fenning herself. Join Aunt Addie's Fun Club and let's all go off and have a good cry over our female



troubles. Boy, won't that fetch the old gals! It's a shame you're a man, Fenning; you've got the soul of a woman, all right. Honestly, you can pour out the best mush I've ever laid eyes on."

Mr. Fenning glared at her sourly. At it, as usual. The spell was broken now. The new stenographer was laughing frankly, mockingly, reading over Miss Ellis's shoulder, looking up at him with little pert, jabbing glances. Like all the others.

"Hustle, now, Dora, and get those letters out," said Miss Ellis. "Oh, I forgot. This is Miss La Rue, Fenning, the new girl. Dora, meet Aunt Addie Fenning, the woman's friend."

"Glad to know you, Aunt Addie." The girl picked up her notebook and flounced out with a backward giggle that filled Mr. Fenning's heart with rage.

"What'd you have to say that for?" he demanded, facing Miss Ellis. How he hated her. Deliberately making a fool of him in front of that girl. She did it on purpose. Making a joke of his work, too. He'd like to grab her fat neck and squeeze until —

"Oh, what of it?" Miss Ellis was off-handed. "She'll pick it up from the others. Listen, Fenning, I want to talk to you about her. She's a girl I got in touch with through the Girls' Club. She was in a jam, see, and I helped her out and got her the job here to give her a new start. I want you to keep an eye on her, will you? This office is too full of men. I'm depending on you. You're the only one around here that's safe."

Mr. Fenning was white.

"Damn you," he burst out. "What do you think I am? A fool woman, going around making stenographers behave? Do it yourself if you get a kick out of it — Tom Pry. Always sniffing about girls' going straight. Know what's the matter with you? You're fat and you're homely and you've never had a chance to cut up yourself. Why don't you admit it? You don't care any more about girls in trouble than — than I do. You're jealous — that's all." He stopped, trembling all over.

"Why, Fenning," Miss Ellis spoke quietly, the vitality gone from her voice. "That's not true. I know I'm not good-looking, of course, but the rest isn't true. I'm terribly sorry. I only asked you because I thought you were a good egg. I thought you liked me."

"Like you," muttered Mr. Fenning. He turned away, his face strained and agitated. "I hate you. Get that. I've always hated you, ever since you barged in here and worked yourself into a job that ought to be mine. I've done my work at home because I couldn't stand the sight of you. After this I'll never come to the office. You can send a copy boy for my stuff. That way I won't have to see you at all." His voice trailed off. He turned and left her office, walking uncertainly to the elevator.

There was one other passenger in the elevator. Mr. Fenning did not notice him until he spoke. It was Jonas, in the circulation department. Mr. Fenning knew him by sight.

"Hot, isn't it?" Jonas spoke pleasantly. "You look about all in, Fenning."

Mr. Fenning nodded. The other man looked at him intently, hesitated, and then spoke again.

"Say, doing anything special, Fenning? Why not come out with me and have a drink? I know a good place near here."

Mr. Fenning shook his head. He always refused such invitations. "Ought to go home," he mumbled. Home. Lie down. Then he remembered. He was never going home again. That smell.

"Oh, come along," urged Jonas. He took Mr. Fenning's arm as they reached the street. Mr. Fenning was glad of the support; he felt horribly unsteady. Jonas steered him several blocks, across a street, and then down before an iron grille, which a shirt-sleeved proprietor enthusiastically unlocked.

"What'll it be, Fenning? Scotch?" asked Jonas. "Two Scotch," he nodded to the bartender. "Well — here's the chute!" Mr. Fenning steadied himself against the bar and gulped down the whisky, choking. The effect of the liquor was almost immediate. He straightened up.

"Have another?" invited Jonas.

"On me," said Mr. Fenning. He felt brusque and masculine. They drank the second round, and Jonas ordered a third. Mr. Fenning looked about him. "Nice place," he commented. He liked the place. He liked Jonas. "Been with the paper long?" he asked.

"Not so very — about two years."

"Stranger around there, myself," Mr. Fenning told him wittily. "Only drop in once a week. Take copy to Ellis."



"Thought I hadn't seen you around much. Ellis! Boy, wouldn't I like to be in that gal's shoes! Did you know she's getting ten thousand a year on her new job? Ten thousand smackers. Baby, I could use that."

"What new job?"

"Didn't you know she's leaving? Gets through this week. Starts in Monday as Back-of-the-Book editor of *Woman's World*. At ten thousand berries *per annum*. Gosh, I could use that money. Or did I say that before?" He ordered another round.

"Leaving the magazine?" Mr. Fenning repeated uncomprehendingly.

"Sure, but don't let it get you. What's the matter? You're not secretly in love with old Fat Matt Ellis, are you? Man, where's your taste? And with that new one, La Rue, in the office, just spoiling to be asked. Well, well! So Fenning's in love with Matt Ellis! Here, better celebrate that." He swallowed his drink and clapped Mr. Fenning on the shoulder. "Nothing against your taste, old man. Of course not. If you *like* 'em so much on the hoof —"

"In love with her?" shouted Mr. Fenning. "I detest her. I've hated her ever since she came on the magazine. I'd like to murder her, that's all. Ha! Leaving, did you say? I'll tell you; we'll celebrate that. Another round," he told the waiter impressively. "We'll celebrate. Ten thousand dollars, did you say she was getting? Well, we'll celebrate that with ten thousand drinks! Waiter! Waiter, bring nine hundred nine thousand nine hundred more drinks! No, wait a minute — nine hundred nine thousand — here — here's a chute!"

#### IV

IT WAS LATE next morning when Mr. Fenning awoke in his familiar hotel room. He ached all over. He was lying on something hard. Groaning, he rolled over and extracted the bread knife, "Nevadull." It lay with the

rest of the advertisers' samples on the bed where he had left them.

He dragged himself to the washstand for a drink of water and saw a half-empty bottle of whisky on the shelf. He stared dully at it. The glass rattled in his unsteady hand as he mixed himself a drink of whisky and water and downed it painfully.

Then he remembered. He had had a dream.

He dreamed that he had murdered Matt Ellis. His eyes roved the bed. With the bread knife; that was it. "Especially good for cutting gristle." He giggled a little. Especially good for killing Matt Ellis. She was dead, then. She was leaving the magazine. Leaving to get ten thousand — suddenly Mr. Fenning sniffed. That smell. Hunh. The window had been closed all night. He opened it and then poured himself another drink. That was all right. Naturally, he'd have to dispose of the body. He could handle

that. Anybody who read the newspapers knew a hundred ways to dispose of the body.

He washed and dressed slowly and reached down his suit case from the closet shelf. Which murderer was it put them in suit cases? Another stiff drink and he stripped a sheet off the bed and approached the bureau. Dexterously, without looking at it, he scooped up the leg of lamb.

"Not leaving us, are you, Mr. Fenning?" the clerk asked, glancing at the suit case.

"No. Just need it to — ah — carry a little something." Mr. Fenning looked straight at the smiling clerk and, amazingly, winked. The clerk's laugh was like a sly nudge in the ribs.

He went along Sixth Avenue until he came to a row of garbage cans set out for the collector. He opened the suit case and without looking around dumped the bundle on top of one of the cans. There. That was how it was done. That was how murderers did it. Never trace him. Carrying the empty suit case, he walked until he came to a restaurant. In a loud voice he ordered a hearty breakfast.



When he reached the office, Pfeiffer called him in and looked up thoughtfully.

"Sit down, Fenning. Cigar? I suppose you know Miss Ellis is leaving us. I hadn't decided — we don't see much of you around the office — but she spoke to me yesterday about your taking her place. Seemed to think you were the one to have it. What do you say?"

"Why not?" said Mr. Fenning distinctly. "I write the best mush we print, don't I?"

Pfeiffer gave a surprised snort of laughter.

"It's pretty good mush, Fenning. True enough. You think you can handle an editor's job, then?"

"I'll have to have some help."

"That's right. We'll make some changes — give you an assistant."

"And a stenographer."

"Surely, surely. Take your pick, Fenning." Pfeiffer was smiling broadly.

"Raise in salary?"

"Of course. Let's see — how would a ten dollar a week raise do for a starter?"

"For a starter," conceded Mr. Fenning. He rose. Pfeiffer got up and held out his hand.

"That's settled, then. You start in Monday."

Mr. Fenning walked briskly to the elevator

without glancing at Miss Ellis's open door. Reaching the street, he found his way easily to the speakeasy Jonas had taken him to the afternoon before. He bought a quart of whisky and the bartender, who remembered him, stood him a drink. He stood the bartender a drink and then, putting the whisky in his suit case, went to a booth and called the office.

"Miss La Rue," he told the switchboard operator.

"This is Mr. Fenning," he said, when she answered.

"Who? Oh, of course — Aunt Addie." He heard her giggle. "How are you?"

"I want you to have lunch with me."

"Why, I don't know — I don't think —"

"It's important," he interrupted. "I suppose you know, Miss La Rue, that I'm taking over Miss Ellis's work next week. There are some matters — I shall have to talk to you."

"Oh, *sure*, Mr. Fenning. Sure, I'd love to go to lunch. Are you really going to be editor? Say, that's grand! Where'll I meet you?"

Mr. Fenning smiled and swung his suit case as he returned to his hotel. What a nice little voice she had. Soft, like her. Pliant. That was the word. Pliant.

# I'm Signing Off

***A Radio Announcer Betrays His Profession***

## ANONYMOUS

SOME TIME ago, under the usual pressure, through the good offices of an influential friend, and with no previous experience in the business, I entered radio station XXX as announcer and utility man. I am, I suppose, of average intelligence and sensibilities, of a typical American background and adequate education. Additionally I own to a decent general knowledge of music and a proficiency at the piano and in singing. I am — I confess it reluctantly — the average young man. Station XXX (not a thousand miles from Fifth Avenue)

is correspondingly average, representing the typical large American broadcasting station.

I arrived, much flustered and slightly apprehensive. The business manager, Mr. A., told me to "look around for a day or so and get the hang of it." And for three days I did nothing more than that, observing what Milton Cross, one of the better known announcers, termed in a New York *Herald Tribune* article "the very highly specialized activity" of the "art" (his word) of radio announcing.

I observed how the microphones, condenser,