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AT THE SIGN OF THE THIRD MAN

OR many Viennese, the most cherished of all local institutions is one that, unlike the operetta, the waltz, and the pastry, has never been successfully exported. This is the Heuriger. The word means literally "this year's," and, by extension, has come to mean "this year's wine," and, by further extension, "a place where people gather to drink this year's wine." Vienna is practically surrounded by a ring of green vineyards, which cover the sunny slopes of the Vienna Woods, and it has been a great city for the consumption of wine since at least Charlemagne's time. In 1446, Aeneas Silvius, a poet who later became Pope Pius II, wrote, "Vienna's wine cellars are so spacious and deep that people say the city has been built as much below ground as above it." As far as the local white wine is concerned, however, cellars are less

and customs beyond the understanding of any outsider; every day the Vienna newspapers publish a list of those that

essential than wine shops, for it is at its best when it is very young, and to solve the problem of what to do with it Viennese winegrowers centuries ago invented the Heuriger. In the old days, there were Heurigen all over Vienna, but over the years nearly all of them have moved to the outskirts, and today the most popular are in Sievering, Grinzing, Nussdorf, Salmannsdorf, Heiligenstadt, and Neustift-am-Walde-small villages, though within the city limits, where public pumps stand in the center of cobblestoned squares and every fifth house displays a marble plaque memorializing the fact that Schubert or Beethoven slept in it. There are hundreds of Heurigen in these villages, and they open and close in accordance with rules

will be doing business that night. Most of the customers go out from Vienna by streetcar, and on the last few trips back to town, around midnight, the trams resemble Heurigen on wheels as the passengers link arms and sing and the air grows heavy with the odor

The proprietor of a really authentic Heuriger raises his own grapes, harvests them any time from September to November, and makes his own wine. His vineyard consists of only a few acres and produces only a few barrels of wine, and when he decides that it has aged enough-it is usually a matter of days or, at most, a few weeks-he hangs a fir branch above the entrance to his house, to signify that he has new wine for sale. When it runs out-and this may be a matter of weeks or months, depending on the size of his vineyard—he takes down the branch and closes shop until the next harvest. A few of his customers are likely to be experienced Weinbeisser (literally, "wine biters") who prefer to drink in the press house, where they can perch on the barrels and inhale the fumes of fermentation, but most of them sit out in a garden behind the house or, if the weather is bad, congregate in the kitchen or living room. In the garden, where crude benches flank long, unpainted wooden tables, there are jasmine and chrysanthemums, in season, and there's always a walnut tree or a linden, just as there's always a horse-chestnut tree in a German beer garden. And, out beyond the flowers and the tree, there is a view, either of the lights of Vienna below or the lights of the Kahlenberg above. One finds no fancy trimmings in a true Heuriger. The owner and his wife and children serve the wine, in thick water glasses, the guests bring their own food-sausage, bacon, and hard-boiled eggs wrapped in yesterday's newspaper-and the entertainment is provided by the guests themselves, or by the owner, who may bring out his zither or harmonica if he is in the mood, or by a zither player, a fiddler, or an accordionist who plays for a small wage and the few schillings he can pick up in tips. Meanwhile, everybody drinks steadily and copiously. Good Viennese wines are mild in taste but potent in effect, and tyros who put down a couple of quarts in an evening very much wish they hadn't the next morning. After the first few glasses, one gets a sudden and overwhelming feeling of euphoria, which, after a few more, tends to turn into sentimentality, and this, after still a few more, gives way to a state of de-



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pression that may lead to violence. Whatever else it leads to, it almost invariably leads to a terrific headache for which, veterans say, there is only one cure-to keep on drinking. Some wary connoisseurs will drink nothing except the fresh grape juice, scarcely fermented at all and quite safe, called Most, but the majority are loyal to Sturm, or storm, as the wine is called when it has been fermenting feverishly for three weeks. Most old-time Heuriger habitués have a relatively low opinion of wine that is any older than that, but, naturally, they have to make do with it most

of the year.

Like many local institutions of the sort, all over the world, the Heuriger does not seem to have improved with age. It has grown to be a well-publicized big business, and many of the quaint old wayside wine gardens have been transformed into Nobel-Heurigen-large establishments with comfortable chairs, uniformed waiters, colored lights, high prices, and, over their doorways, wrought-iron fir branches, instead of real ones. These keep open all year round, and, of course, serve not only new wine from the barrel but old wine from bottles; as a matter of fact, most of their proprietors own no vineyards, and import their wines, through wholesalers, from such faraway places as the Wachau and the Burgenland. The Nobel-Heurigen offer a large selection of cold dishes and a few hot ones, such as Wiener schnitzel and Backhühner (a sort of Viennese version of Southern fried chicken), and by Heuriger standards, the entertainment is elaborate—a zither player assisted by an accordionist, or a Schrammel quartet (a flexible combination that usually consists of two violins, a guitar or a zither, and an accordion or a harmonica), or a couple of fat folk singers, who look like ward politicians and whose voices are distinguished not only for their volume but for their absolute lack of pitch. The songs glorify wine, women, and Vienna, and often the singers get so wrought up that they burst into tears in the middle of a number; in this case, the offer of a glass of wine is usually enough to solace them. Some singers have added yodelling and foreign songs to their repertory, for the benefit of tourists. The newest, and already the most famous, of the Nobel-Heurigen is the Weinschenke zum Dritten Mann (The Winehouse at the Sign of the Third Man), in Sievering, which was opened last October by Anton Karas, a once impecunious zither player who swiftly rose to the top of his otherwise

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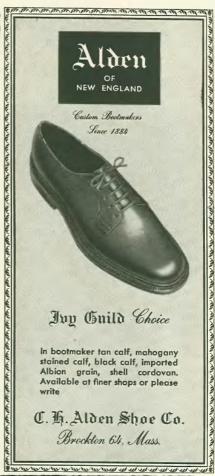
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not very celebrated profession by composing and performing the Harry Lime theme for the British motion picture "The Third Man."

I had often heard Karas while he was still an itinerant zither player, moving from Heuriger to Heuriger-a short, modest, melancholy man who was subsisting on the few schillings his listeners left for him each night. When one place ran out of wine and closed, he would move to another. I've heard it said in Vienna that an itinerant Heuriger zither player must have not only a sensitive ear, a talent for improvisation, and the soul of a gypsy, but also the stamina of a wrestler, for he has to play almost without pause from six in the evening until midnight (in the old days, it used to be until three in the morning), and during the day he often helps out in the vineyards or press houses, to supplement his income. He must have a large repertory of folk songs, along with the ability to detect all the subtle shifts in the alcoholic climate—between bliss and gloom-and adjust his music to them. And, like all night-club musicians who count on tips, he must be able to please the customer who comes over, asks him to play "a song I haven't heard since I was a boy," and whistles or hums a snatch or two off key. Karas, who has a wife and three children, played in Heurigen for twenty-eight years before he had his freakish rise to fame, and during that time, he says, he never received a schilling in salary. Since last year, the zither players have had a minimum wage of nine hundred and seventy schillings, or thirty-nine dollars, a month, but the most Karas ever got out of a proprietor for his music was a glass of wine and a piece of sausage.

I was told in Vienna that Karas was doing splendidly and that his place had become a major attraction for foreigners, ranking not far below St. Stephen's Cathedral and the Schönbrunn Palace. There was also some talk about skirmishes Karas had had with his competitors, who had apparently done all they could to see that he didn't get a license to open his establishment. It is not every day that an itinerant zither player sets himself up as the proprietor of a Nobel-Heuriger, and when two Viennese friends of mine recently suggested that we drive out for an evening at Karas's Weinschenke, I was delighted at the chance to see how he was faring in his new profession. As an afterthought, one of my friends called up to reserve a table. This was hardly in the Heuriger tradi-



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tion, of course, but it turned out to have been a wise precaution.

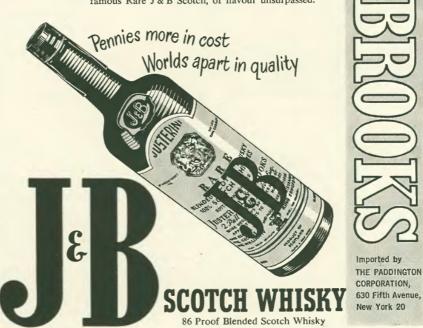
HE air was warm and smelled of jasmine as we set out for Sievering, and it was altogether the sort of evening that, in the opinion of the Viennese, was made for the enjoyment of old memories and young wine. The usual route, the Sieveringer Strasse, was closed for repairs, and we had to make a long and pleasant detour among the vineyards. Here and there, we came upon a small house, all but choked by vines, that had a fir branch above its entrance and a few cars parked nearby, and now and then we heard the sound of a zither. Along the way, we drove past a big, new beer garden, and one of my friends snorted; lovers of new wine are not automatically hostile to beer, but they do not think it has any place in the Heuriger region. As we approached the charming old village of Sievering, with its houses half hidden behind trees, the Heurigen became larger, and so did the number of cars parked outside. We passed the Sievering parish church, and almost immediately pulled up near a new white house, built on a terrace. It had a sign that read, in large letters, "WEINSCHENKE ZUM DRITTEN MANN," and underneath, in smaller letters, "Anton Karas." There were two empty buses on the street, with stickers on their windshields indicating that one was carrying German tourists and the other British tourists, and a dozen cars with foreign license plates; there were only a few with Austrian plates. The three of us got out and walked down a lane, flanked by old acacias, that led to a wrought-iron gate opening on a well-kept garden. On one side were flowering bushes and on the other was a linden tree, with several basket chairs under it. Ahead of us was a lovely silver fir. A tidy white gravel path ran from the gate to the rear of the garden, where there were about seventy tables, with highly varnished larch-wood chairs ranged around them. Off to one side was a wooden arcade, and there stood more tables, under hanging wrought-iron lanterns. Out in back were the green slopes of Sievering, covered with vineyards all the way to the top. Although it was only a little after six, most of the tables were occupied. A heavyset blond man was playing a large accordion that had the sonorous tone of a small organ, a blond girl was wandering about with a tray of pastries, and waiters dressed in Lederhosen and jackets were serving wine in Weinheber-glass bowls, suspended in a frame of wroughtiron vine leaves, that have spigots at the





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base, from which the customers fill their own glasses.

We were shown to our table, and, after we were seated, I saw that Karas's waiters were serving not only "this year's wine" but bottled Grinzinger, Sylvaner, Nussberger, and Sekt. One of my Viennese friends remarked that this was all wrong; at a Heuriger there should be nothing but new wine. Some of the guests had brought their own food, in old Heuriger fashion, but others were being served from a large buffet, on which I could see chicken, cold cuts, and cheese. Several tables had been pushed together in the middle of the garden to form two long rows, one occupied by a group of Germans and the other by a group of English peopleobviously the tourists from the buses. The accordionist launched into "Ein rheinisches Mädchen," and the Germans began shouting "Prosit!" at one another and at everybody else. One of my friends said dolefully that when Rhenish songs were played at a Heuriger, things had come to a pretty pass indeed. At the table next to ours there was a large and ebullient party of Viennese, and we quickly gathered that they were celebrating the golden wedding anniversary of Oma and Opa-Grandma and Grandpa. Opa, a little man with white hair and moist eyes, lifted his glass, kissed Oma, a cheerful septuagenarian, and began to cry. At that, several of the women in the party started to cry, too, but one, a pretty auburn-haired girl, started fluttering her eyelids at a bearded man at another table, who acknowledged her interest by coming over and telling us all, in French, that he and his party were from Ankara. They had had no wine yet, and they plainly didn't know what to make of the peculiar local blend of lachrymosity and gaiety.

The Rhenish song ended with a fortissimo chord, and two of the Germans sprang to attention and toasted each other in the traditional Wehrmacht manner, with their elbows raised and their chests out, whereupon some of the customers whistled-a sign of disapproval in Vienna. The accordionist diplomatically followed up with "Tipperary," and a dumpy, elderly Englishwoman stood up and, after announcing to no one in particular that she was from Sheffield, raucously took up the song. Everybody applauded—the Viennese, the Germans, and the people from Ankara. One of the two Germans who had been toasting each other walked over to the English table, clicked his heels, and bowed to the woman from Do you know how to obtain the feel of casual ease in your clothes? We suggest a man has a good start when he's assured of looking relaxed. JACKMAN Sportclothes will turn this trick. See them at the leading stores.





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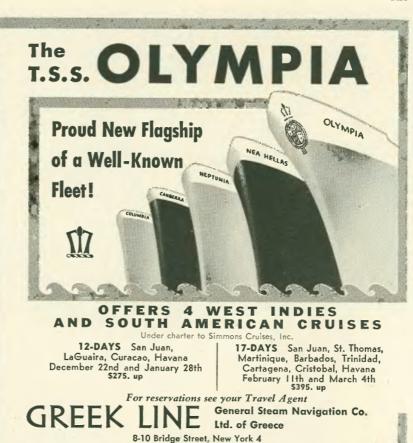
Sheffield. She rose and gave him a loud kiss on the cheek.

I asked a waiter where I could find Karas, and he directed me to a small white building at one side of the garden. This turned out to be a pantry containing several tables, many shelves of wine bottles, a large zinc counter, and a sink. A few employees were busy there, washing glasses, cutting bread and sausage, and opening bottles. Karas, wearing Lederhosen, embroidered braces, a white shirt open at the neck, and spectacles, was behind the counter, pouring wine from two-litre bottles into the Weinheber. He recognized me, and we shook hands. Then he went on with his work, explaining that he liked to fill the Weinheber himself because it helped him keep track of the wine. I asked him if his duties as a Heuriger proprietor gave him any time to play the zither.

Karas put down a bottle and held out his hands. "Do they look as if I'd given up the zither?" he asked. There were thick calluses on his fingertips. "A real zither player never stops playing," he went on. "The zither gets into your blood. I'd rather be a zither player here in Sievering than a capitalist anywhere else. But I'm a lucky fellow now. I play only when I feel like playing, and I stop before my fingers start bleeding. Of course, it's not only a question of fingers. You play the zither with your heart as well." He poured the rest of the bottle, and said, "Let's go and sit under the linden for a while before the rush really starts." We walked across the lawn and sat down in two of the basket chairs. Karas took off his glasses and rubbed them on his shirt, gazing with obvious satisfaction at the crowded garden. I said that I knew he had been playing the zither for many years but that I had never heard how he became interested in the instrument.

"I began playing when I was twelve," he told me. "That was in the Brigittenau [a poor district of Vienna, on the south side of the Danube], where I was born. There was a zither or a harmonica in every house. Everybody liked music. One day, I found an old zither in our attic and asked my father if he would let me take lessons. 'Sure,'





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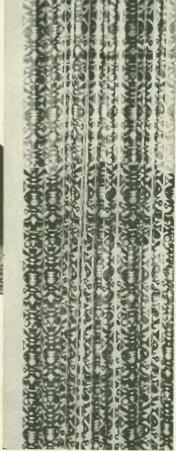
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he said, 'everyone has to learn an instrument.' A funny thing, he had never played any himself. He sent me to Horack's Music School, where I studied with Professor Spiegel. People think you can learn to play the zither in a few months, but it takes three years just to learn the fundamentals. Maybe it's because there are no zither players in the Vienna Philharmonic that people look down their noses at the zither. They call it a folk instrument. All right, it is a folk instrument. What's wrong with that? It's a wonderful instrument. The zither should always be played solo. We have zither orchestras, but they don't bring out the full beauty of the tone. Anyway, I went through my apprenticeship with Professor Spiegel, and later I studied with Adolf Schneer, the zither virtuoso. When I was seventeen, I began playing at Franz Brandmayer's Heuriger, and from then on, I played in this Heuriger and that Heuriger for twentyeight years, until at last I got my break. It was at Stefan Martinkovits' Heuriger, on Bellevuestrasse—a place I'd always liked working in. One night in April, 1949, a bunch of theatre and movie people came in-British, and American, and Austrian. One of them was Carol Reed. The next day, to my surprise, he called me up at Stefan Martinkovits' place and asked me to come to his hotel and bring my zither along. When I got there, he had me play for several hours. He just sat and listened. I was happy. Here, I thought, is a friend of the zither. At the end, he thanked me and gave me a nice big tip. A real friend of the zither, I thought. A few weeks later, while I was still at Martinkovits', there was a long-distance call for me from London. You should have seen the excitement! No one had ever phoned Martinkovits' place from Salzburg, let alone from London."

The call was, of course, from Reed, who had directed "The Third Man" in Vienna; he said that he wanted Karas to compose and play incidental zither music for the film, promised him what sounded to Karas like astronomical pay, and asked him to fly to London at once. Karas arrived in London on May 31st, and spent most of the summer working on the simple, strongly accented melody that came onto the sound track of the film every time Orson Welles appeared in a scene. After the London première of "The Third Man," on September 2nd, he returned to Vienna and got his old job back at Martinkovits' Heuriger. But he didn't stay long. As the fame of the Harry Lime theme spread, he became very much in



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demand, and soon he flew to London again, for a command performance before the Royal Family. Then came concerts all over Europe, a thirty-week tour of the United States, and so on and on, until August, 1952, when he returned to Vienna and told his wife that he was through with travelling.

"I wanted to quit while the quitting was good," Karas told me. "Enough is enough. All my life I'd had only one ambition-to own my own Heurigerand now I was in a position to satisfy it. I learned that this place was available and bought it. It wasn't in good shape. Back in 1945, the Russians had parked their tanks right here in the garden, and the house was a burned-out ruin. But I liked the view of our church and of the vineyards out in back, and I liked the old trees. I called in an architect and told him what I wanted-a place that would have Viennese atmosphere and be comfortable and modern, too. I pitched in myself-carried bricks, mixed cement, laid the shingles on the roof, spaded up the garden. Right now, I'm working on a fountain."

Karas paused for a moment, and his eyes wandered over the house, the garden, and the arcade. Then he said, "And I owe it all to that one melody. So much nonsense has been written about it. I've heard it called dirty, melancholy music that haunts you and makes you want to jump out the window. People say that I wrote it because I was hopelessly in love or because I was planning to kill someone. That's silly. I admit it's not a happy melody, but then, I'm not a happy man. All zither players are sad people; happy people play the trumpet or the glockenspiel. I'm glad I brought it off, though. And don't think I'm not grateful for my good fortune. My friends say my lucky break has given hope to all the other fellows who slave and starve because they can't live without their zithers, and I hope it has."

Karas got up and said he'd like to show me the interior of his Heuriger, where his guests do their wine drinking in bad weather. He led me into the house and showed me the Saal, a large hall containing forty-five tables; its walls were decorated with stills from "The Third Man." On the second floor was a smaller room, which he uses for the overflow, as well as an office and what he assured me was the most modern bathroom in Sievering. "People will tell you I'm a millionaire," Karas said as we returned to the vacant Saal and sat down at one of the tables. "That's a joke. By the time I opened this place, SWISSAIR
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Peacock's Garlic Juice.

I had spent all my savings and I owed the bank five hundred thousand schillings. A millionaire! In England, the tax people took fifty per cent of what I earned, and in Vienna, the tax people took fifty per cent of what was left. I figure that after paying travel expenses, agents' fees, my manager's cut, and publicity costs, I had only about ten per cent left. Now I have to pay an income tax, a sales tax, a wine tax, a tradeand-professional tax, a music tax, and an entertainment tax, and my monthly payroll runs to over ten thousand schillings. But I can't complain. Business is fine. Half of our guests are foreigners, and a lot of Viennese complain about that, but what's wrong with having foreigners? They go back home and tell their friends about our lovely Sievering."

Karas went on to say that things had been difficult at first. As soon as the established Heuriger proprietors in the neighborhood heard he was planning to open a place, they began grumbling about having to compete with a mere zither player, and he was afraid they might use influence to keep him from getting a license. But things went smoothly, and he received a government permit "to serve, on weekdays, from eighteen to twenty-four hours, smoked meats, Wiener schnitzel, and Backhühner, as well as wine, mineral water, and nonalcoholic artificial beverages." (Heurigen do not serve coffee.) Thus authorized, he opened his place last October 15th. Three months later, to his bewilderment, the Austrian Ministry of Trade and Reconstruction ruled that "Herr Anton Karas, zither player and composer, is illegally practicing the innkeeper's trade and his license is hereby revoked." The Ministry based its ruling on what it referred to as "the expert opinion" of the powerful Innkeepers' Guild, which had stated that there was "no local need" for a new Heuriger in Sievering. While Karas's lawyers appealed to the courts to reverse the ruling, Karas went on serving new wine and playing old songs, with the uneasy feeling that the police might close his place at any moment. Then, in May, the proprietor of a nearby Heuriger decided to retire, and offered Karas his license in return for a monthly fee. At first the Ministry didn't want to allow this, but it gave in when practically all the Viennese newspapers, from the extreme Rightist Montag to the Communist Volksstimme, in a rare show of unity, took up the case for Karas. The transfer of the license was approved, and since then, Karas has



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Mr. George Lindholm, Manager ARIZONA BILTMORE HOTEL Box 81, PHOENIX, ARIZONA had no trouble from bureaucrats. The whole experience has rather soured him on some of his neighbors. "They were nice enough when I was working for them," he told me. "And then they saw my fine new place, and the big buses bringing customers to it, and they weren't nice any more. Oh, well, I suppose it's only human." He shrugged and stood up. "I'd better get back to work," he said. "There's nothing like keeping track of the wine in this business. And after I've poured out some more wine, it will be time to perform on my zither. You'll see how quiet my guests become when they hear me. I play cat-and-mouse with them. Just wait and see."

N contrast to the old informal days, Karas's performance was carefully staged, and his guests were made thoroughly conscious of the fact that they were about to listen to a world-famous virtuoso. One of the waiters set up a table and chair in the center of the garden, and another brought out the master's zither and placed it on the table. Then the accordionist played a fortissimo flourish and announced that Herr Karas would appreciate silence during his performance. Asking for silence at a Heuriger is something like asking for silence at a ball game, and the request prompted one rugged Weinbeisser to shout, "What do you think this is—the State Opera?" He was promptly shushed. When Karas walked out and sat down at the table, there was loud applause. As he struck a few chords, warming up and waiting for the applause to subside, he seemed less like a Heuriger zither player than like a concert performer on a stage, and some other guests joined the rugged Weinbeisser in making uncomplimentary remarks, but then Karas began to play "Wien, Wien, nur Du allein."

The effect was astonishing. The garden became so quiet that whenever Karas paused, one could hear the wind in





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the linden. By the time he reached the refrain, several men and women were crying. Karas followed with another tear jerker—"Im Prater blüh'n wieder die Bäume"-and then, perhaps for the benefit of the British, he played the "Indian Love Call." As the program continued, it became apparent that everybody was waiting for the Harry Lime theme. That was what they had come to hear, and, of course, Karas knew it. At one point, he played the first few bars of the melody, and there were several "oh"s and "ah"s, but then he smiled and switched to "Trink' ma noch a Flascherl!" It was a skillful job of building up tension; he was indeed playing cat-and-mouse with the audience. At last came the Harry Lime theme-a straight version, followed by several variations-and when it was over, there was tremendous cheering and clapping. With a faint smile, Karas rose and bowed, and then he quickly made his way out of the garden and back to his pantry. The waiters, who had stood motionless during his performance, brought out more wine, and the accordionist announced that Herr Karas would play again in an hour.

I again joined Karas in the pantry, where he had resumed his wine pouring. He came out from behind the counter, and we sat down at a table on which his zither was resting. Karas looked at me with the questioning, worried expression that musicians everywhere have after a performance. I said that it was amazing how deeply he had moved his audience, and he smiled and thanked me. "We all have to work hard tonight," he said, picking up his zither and playing a few soft, sweet chords. "My second accordionist is sick, and I'll have to play more than usual. But then, we have to work hard every night. Back in the days when all I did was play my zither, I never realized how much effort it takes to make a Heuriger a success. Work, work, work, all the time. Up at seven every morning, and it's two or three o'clock the next morning before I get to bed. I've been asked to write the music for a film that's going to be made in Munich, and you may be sure I would have jumped at the chance a year or two ago. But I don't know whether I can get away from here long enough to do it. Oh well, I grumble about the work, but I don't really mind it, of course. I've got pretty much what I want now, and with luck I'll have all my debts paid off in two or three years. I own a small villa on the hill across the road—a beautiful place, with a hundred and twenty-six



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steps leading up to it—and on Sundays, at any rate, I can sit in the garden up there, or in my glass-enclosed veranda if it's cold, and look out on the things I like best in all the world—my *Heuriger*, the Sievering church, and the city of Vienna down below."

—Joseph Wechsberg

MOST FASCINATING ADVICE OF THE WEEK

[The following column of advice, reprinted in its entirety, is from the Detroit Times]

DEAR MRS. MAYFIELD:

How does a person go about trying to right a terrible wrong she has done?

When I was 13 years old (I'm 19 now), I had a terrible crush, which I thought was love, on a married man old enough to be my father. I was baby sitting while his wife worked to help support the three children.

I deliberately went about trying to make him fall in love with me. Please don't try to excuse me because of my age, because I knew full well he was a married man with three children, and that I didn't have any business falling in love with him, but I just didn't care.

His wife finally found out about us, and she fired me, but I kept on seeing him almost every night anyhow. Although she begged and pleaded with me not to see him any more, I wouldn't stop.

Finally she started suit for divorce, and I guess he finally saw that his family meant more to him than I did, because he stopped seeing me.

Then I fell in love with the man who is now my husband. Mrs. Mayfield, I'm so happy with him and my baby son, but the woman I wronged won't speak to me any more.

My conscience is bothering me so much that I can't eat or sleep, and my husband is starting to notice that something is wrong. I thought of going to my clergyman and getting this off my mind, but I can't.

The man's wife has told one of the neighbors that she's going to tell my husband what I did, because she can't stand to see me so happy when I brought so much unhappiness to her.

She said she's going to break up my home like I broke up hers. I'm worried sick, so much so that my thoughts are confused.

Please let me know how I can go about making this thing right. I know I have to tell her how sorry I am, and ask her forgiveness, because I'm enough of a Christian to know that I have to go to her before I die, but I just haven't got the nerve to go to her.

Please help me before I go crazy, because I know what she can do if she really wants to ruin my married life.

Mrs. A. D.

DEAR MRS. A. D.:

At first I thought your letter would be a simple one to answer—but now that I've actually sat down at the typewriter with your pages in front of me, I'm not quite sure just what I should tell you.



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