The Admonisher

There are localities which decorate themselves — like some people — with famous relatives. They assign them to themselves on the basis of information from Oberlehrers, at the same time they also name themselves accordingly and wish to be so regarded and so addressed: Florence on the Elbe, Athens on the Spree, Little Paris, and Great Britain, the last being a village between Heinrichswalde and Linkuhnen.

This city here wouldn't be in such need of it, but Rome is built on seven hills, so it too, for it is in possession of a university, an art academy, several scholarly societies, among them an archeological society.

Of the seven hills here only one lies in the southern third of the city, that is, south of the great river which divides the city: a sand-

hill, formerly occupied by pines, later cultivated with oats, now completely covered up by a church, a cemetery closed long ago, yet worth seeing; and large tenements, tightly pressed against one another, set up at regular intervals. The remaining six hills are found on the northern bank. And because the elevations and flat ground are rather uniformly blocked up, with small houses on the peaks and taller ones in the valleys or low ground, the differences actually cancel each other out: you don't think that there could actually be so many hills, seven, only the roads between them - called Roll Mountain, Oldtown Mountain Road, Bent Ditch, Leaning Mountain — run up and down and are narrow and hardly recognizable, even from one of the church towers, concealed in the shadow of the gables which lean towards one another.

Those are the gabled roofs. Down there, in the semi-darkness, run the streets. If one were just, one would mention a few more pretty places, one even laid out on a slanting slope.

Nevertheless, the hills, the much cried about seven, you can easily count from one of the church towers. You see them, but only six, because you're on one of them yourself—you forget that one. So from up there you recognize them, because a church rises on each one: the Löbenichtsche, which is actually

called St. Barbara on the Mount, the Castle Church, the Neurossgärtsche, the Old-town Church and so forth. Only the cathedral in the lower town has no hill — instead it takes

up almost half of an entire island.

The highest thing to be sure is the Upper Pond, higher than all these seven hills, way up, and it begins just where the ground elevation has attained its full altitude and now goes on farther, northwards, as a kind of elevated plain, but then on second thought not that high either.

In any case the name Upper Pond is to the point, it is up and is a real pond, namely round and not too small. Two baths — one civilian, the other military — gardens on the bank with shrubs and clumps of trees, then however bastions, ramparts, so-called cavaliers, detached forts, dry moats, rampart walks, glacis — such things formerly belonging to the city fortification and now more for adornment, just like history, and at any rate for the amusement of the citizens, changing in character and use from time to time, like the amusement itself.

So the Upper Pond broadens itself at the top and lower down, towards the south, the Castle Pond. But this one narrows itself rather and in fact also gets its water from above, from the Upper Pond, and it comes hopping or plunging, according to how the

sluice above has been regulated, down over a many-stepped cascade, first out of a little house, out of the round basin in front of it, and then down over increasingly broader steps, and lastly it goes through an iron grating and into a short canal; finally, accompanied by bank paths, it has arrived at the Castle Pond — it stinks somewhat.

In spite of that a lot of people, brightly clad, ride about in skiffs on the black, marshy water, for after all there are gardens laid out everywhere on the bank, beer gardens, café terraces — in the evening they take boat rides. At the south end of the Castle Pond rises the Castle with an octagonal corner tower and a complicated gate complex next to it.

This castle has two more towers which aren't especially high either, but round, the highest being the Castle church tower. You can, as was said, climb up, but we're not going to; we place ourselves in front of the tower on the southwest corner, with the view towards the south, but still up on the slope, we lean ourselves — say — on the tower wall. There are already two standing there.

One of them says: Observe God's Commandments. He's small. The other one is big—he doesn't say anything. But then again he is the Emperor and of bronze and stands on a stone base which he can't get

down from. The other one can go off to where he's needed to recite his saying. Up here maybe he just says it into the wind. But he does say it up above the cars, wagons, motorcycles, bicycles, streetcars and vegetable carts; down there the main road runs past, and all that down there needs his admonishing.

Now the man goes off, down the steps, on to the square and is gone. And we won't follow him, I think, because after all we know him. Down there he meets the old superintendent-general, they greet each other and say good-bye. The man goes on, a simple man, native Lithuanian.

Once before there was someone who came from Lithuania and said something quite similar — three hundred years ago. But he used big words, called himself Adelgreiff and Schmalkilimundis or Schmalkallaedis and straight out Son of the Supreme — although he in fact really was that, a child of God like everyone — a Latin Bible in his hand. For this, to be sure, they executed him at that time, after — as the story goes — Her Electoral Grace her very own self — in vain — hath admonished him — here in the town, to extinguish the spectacle of his appearance with the spectacle of his death.

Here there is no such spectacle, not with this Lithuanian. Only the cries of the children resound after him, and behind his back heads wag and a racy anecdote is tacked on for good measure. And this last only because the man is mistaken for another — quite readily, by the way, because otherwise you'd be stuck with this anecdote about a boozer, whom it really refers to; then it wouldn't be such a good one.

For this anecdote you need to know a few things. That privy councilor Quint holds his seamen's services early mornings, even before the real services, in the cathedral down on the island; the little old geezer, he does it for the owners of onion, cabbage and fish skiffs who have slept over in the town after the Saturday market, and after the service paddle back early, upstream, then through the river fork to the Baltic coast lagoon villages; because they live there. Further: that Motz, the Stone Street Church parson, holds his service an hour earlier than usual; then he can talk in great detail, the way his parishioners, who live in the prostitute quarter around Wagner Street which was named after a doctor, like it; then you can still get to Reverend von Bahr in Tragheim just in time. From there it's just a short walk to the old town — since Herr von Bahr speaks his precise twelve minutes, after all, the people can't and won't follow any longer; Councilor of the Consistory Claudin however finishes off an elegant twenty-five minutes. Reverend Schreitberger in Löbenicht invariably runs to a good forty. Longest of all speaks the cathedral minister Kässlau — one hour. That's then what you have to know.

The man, the one we mean, goes Sunday for Sunday from church to church and gets everywhere in the nick of time for communion. He's arranged it so and can slug it down with the best of 'em. And if the cathedral minister, now in the large services — for that's how the circle closes, this exactly calculated circuit — wants perhaps to pull the chalice away, at least that's how the anecdote goes, our man, the other one it is to be noted, makes a grab, says out loud: "I'll not let my Jesus go," and takes another nice nip.

But we know of course that it doesn't refer to our quiet Lithuanian. We're not telling this story behind his back. Maybe we'll meet

him again now that we know him.

Perhaps we've given the impression we want to populate our town with slanders—that's the thing these days. But it's a big city that's being talked about here, with many regular people, with industrial works, dock and carriage construction, an extended harbor, a goods redistribution center of importance. So what are a few slanders there—they just disappear.

But on second thoughts we did want to

follow after the man, unfortunately much too late; we'd already lost sight of him, just sort of went down the steps and across the square, past a department store, over a bridge, looked over at the warehouses near which ships were lying at anchor, across still another bridge - to the suburb. And there in the steady traffic a disturbance became noticeable, you knew it right away, there was something of a jumble, a few cars turned into the side streets, motor vehicles stopped and a piercing music was heard, behind that a racket, commands, then came mounted police and right behind them the Nazis, a whole parade, brown on brown, all but the eyes, which were blue - or at least should be. But we can't get around the slanders, or whatever you want to call them.

The street flutist Preuss runs alongside the column of the Brownies, screams his opinion across at them: Lazy bums, lousy good-fornothings, dirty slobs and threatens with his

flute.

And actually means the Communists, because he says: Sure the Emperor hadda throw away the war, with you oxes. He doesn't differentiate, demonstration is demonstration, it's the year 'thirty-two, there's nobody around to explain it to him. Who should do it?

Preuss would laugh his head off at our

quiet Lithuanian. Maybe that wouldn't be so bad, worse that he wouldn't even listen to him — such a dumbhead. Oh, Preuss. Yeah, but who should do it then? The drunken jerk of the anecdote?

He just says contemptuously, and means the Brownies: The leader don't drink.

Or the cathedral minister. But he's too learned to be able to talk with Preuss; or maybe on the other hand not learned enough.

Possibly he goes to Reverend Motz at Stone Street. Who'd like to load up all his parish children and carry them straight off to heaven. But what in the world would he do that for, Preuss. Although he belongs there, at least in Stone Street Church, just because he lives there.

With that, the time has long since come for everyone. In half a year it'll be the Hitler people's turn. Then not only the Communists will be hunted, because of whom the Emperor lost the war, according to Preuss, them first of all, but they'll seize Preuss too, in his dwelling place in Wagner Street, which is now renamed Richard Wagner Street but otherwise stays the same, as an enemy of the state or the people, as they say; in other words for the same reason as the Communists, and not much later it'll be the turn of the cathedral minister. And they'll take the Sunday boozer along too, as an asocial ele-

ment, and soon after that our quiet man, as mentally inferior.

Observe God's Commandments, he calls across to them as they come. But that they don't do.