

# THROUGH EASTERN EUROPE WITH AN MG CAR



WE were at last approaching unfamiliar country. The walled city of Rothenburg, Salzburg, the Traun See, Dürnstein, where legend has it that Richard the Lion Heart was found by the minstrel Blondel, and the Benedictine Monastery of Pannonhalma, from which Lake Balaton, though forty miles away, is visible, all seemed far distant.

The convoy of Nazi lorries speeding northward towards Munich, and the avenues of mulberry trees near peaceful Sopron, belonged to an almost forgotten past.

On 11th June we crossed the border into Roumania, near Oradea Mare. Here, for the first time in our experience, all our luggage was examined, a brawny lad of about ten acting as porter between car and Customs office. While dining in Arad that night we were asked to hurry, as all the lights in the town were to be turned out because of aerial manoeuvres. Crowds paraded the streets in complete darkness, but Arad apparently remained invisible and intact, as no sign was seen or heard of the would-be bombers.

There was such a crowd round the car in Arad that the police asked us to move it as we were creating a breach of the peace.

The next day we were due in Sibiu. The road, because of heavy rain, was one long discouraging puddle, and had the Castle of Hune doara been of less interest,

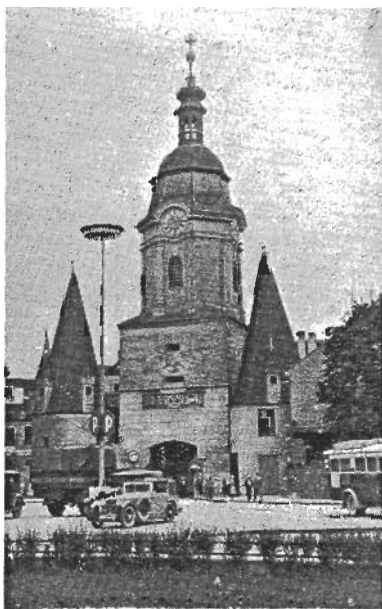
by  
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the extra journey there would not have been made.

Some miles north of Sibiu, near Medias, there is an escape of natural gas which has been burning for many months and defies the efforts of experts to extinguish it. It is not unlike a burning oil-well. This has now become a point of pilgrimage for visitors and natives alike, who flock at

night to see it; and it is indeed a most impressive sight, even from miles away. The intense heat makes it impossible to approach nearer than about 150 yards, and the ground far away is warm to the touch. We were told that in the valley the vines ripen quicker than ordinarily. A story goes that after it had been burning for some months, a neighbouring village noticed it for the first time and dispatched, with great speed, its fire brigade to the help of Medias, which it thought was burning.

Our stay in Sibiu will be memorable, not only for the cordiality of our reception at the hotel or the kindness of newly-acquired friends, but for the many and interminable meals which appeared lightheartedly at most unusual times of day or night. One such I will describe: it was given us by the village priest of Poplaca on whom we called. To begin with, a potent grape liqueur called Treba, and then in the following order, smoked bacon fat with paprika, bread and sheep's milk cheese, coffee with buffalo milk and soft boiled eggs, all washed down with an excellent local white wine. Such fare, and the lateness of the hour at which we arrived home, made our start next morning a matter of conjecture. We had, however, only a short journey before us; the road



IN KREMS

(Continued on page 609)