

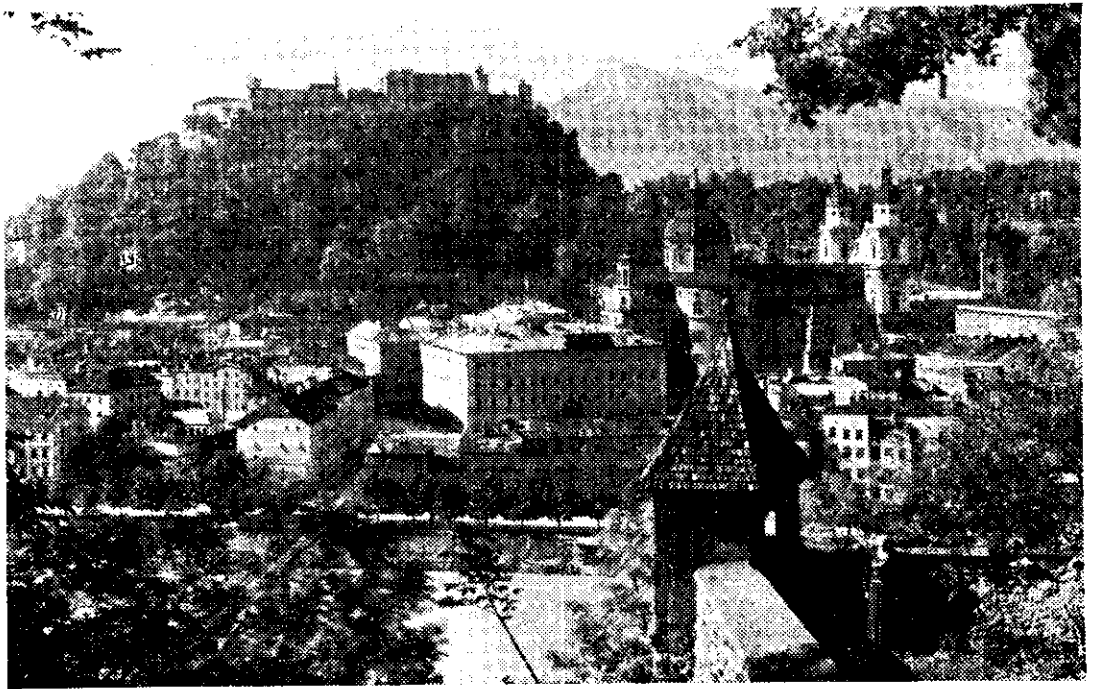
MUSIC IN A SERVICE CAR

Random Recollections By ELSIE K. MORTON

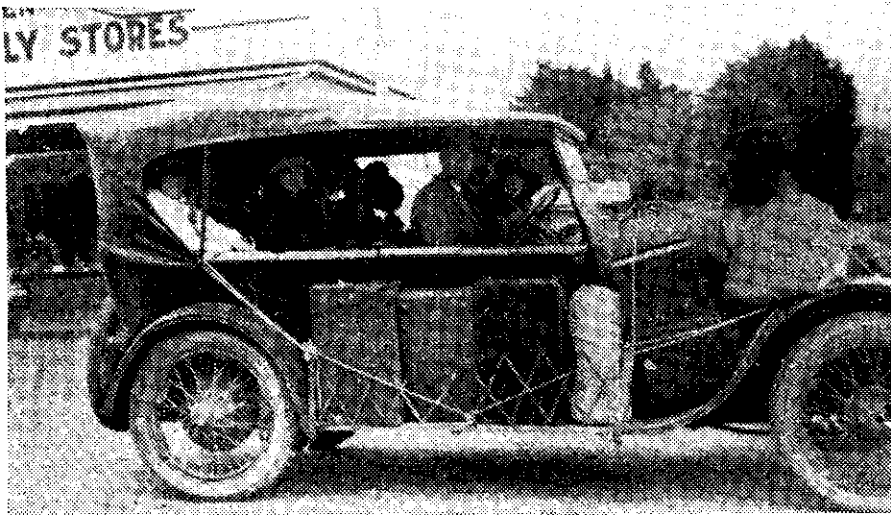
"LIKE a bit of radio?" asked the service car driver as we set off down the smooth, grey Waikato road. "Some people like it, and others ask me to switch it off."

"No trouble to-day," I assured him. "I'm the only passenger so far and I like it."

He nodded, and I settled back in the comfortable arm-chair seat of this stream-lined modern car to listen to the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra's magnificent rendering of "Tales from the Vienna Woods." I closed my eyes; the green pasture lands of the Waikato, the wooden houses and crude iron sheds disappeared; I was seated high up in the gallery of an opera-house packed to the doors, listening to one of the great star performances of Salzburg's last Musical Festival, a Sunday morning concert by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra! I heard again through the lovely strains of music the subdued roar of the Salzach River in flood, washing grey and sullen at the foot of the thousand-foot cliff crowned with the mighty Hohensalzburg Castle, one of the greatest fortresses of medieval Europe.



(Above)—Site of the great Musical Festival. A view of Salzburg, showing medieval Hohensalzburg Castle crowning the hill-top.



(Left)—A photograph which will revive memories of bygone service car jaunts in "old bone-shakers with collapsible hoods."

But Salzburg was not a happy place that summer day. Only a few months before, Hitler had crushed all the spirit out of the people; the Austrian nation was broken, the beloved Toscanini had gone into exile; this would be the last of all those marvellous Musical Festivals that had brought to the dreaming old town music-lovers from all parts of Europe.

Pickled Cabbage and War

The music ceased; a woman's voice sounded, telling the world how to make pickled cabbage. The driver switched off hurriedly, and I sat quietly, just thinking of all that radio had brought to the world—and all it had taken away! On the whole, I decided, the balance was well on the side of good. After all, one need not listen every time Daventry re-told the story of horror and misery of a world at war, and presumably there were thousands of women to whom the making of pickled cabbage was a topic of absorbing interest.

So I just sat quietly, and thought of all the roads I had travelled since last I had sped down through the Waikato in a service car. Roads of the Crusaders, arrow-straight, Roman-built roads cutting across the scorched Syrian plains to Antioch and Aleppo; hair-raising, snow-slushed roads that snaked in-and-out and round the corners of the Alpes Maritimes; zig-zag roads built by the Norwegians

right to the top of their Fiordland mountains; the superb touring roads of Germany and the United States; the mountain roads of Italy, and the incomparably dreadful roads of New Zealand itself a couple of decades ago!

In Bygone Days

The music started again, and I almost laughed aloud at the thought of myself racing down this perfectly-formed, tar-sealed road in the Antipodes to the strains of "Booms-a-Daisy," with the driver swaying gently as he followed the sprightly tune. I glanced at the little mirror over his seat, and saw that he, too, was smiling.

I studied him for a moment, a slender, fair boy with delicate hands, gripping the wheel in sure, careless mastery of this beautiful, modern, stream-lined car with arm-chair seats, radio and little cigarette-ash gadgets on the back of every seat! I thought of bygone service car jaunts throughout the length and breadth of New Zealand in old bone-shakers with collapsible hoods that were always down when it came on to rain, and always up when you wanted them down; torn side-flaps that had to be fastened with pieces of string, running board, radiator and carrier piled to breaking point with luggage and mail-bags, parcels of bread and vegetables, bags of flour, perhaps an odd pup or duck

in a wired benzine box, the whole lot topped off, as likely as not, with a baby's pram or a kitchen sink!

"Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag,
And smile, smile—SMILE!"

Well, that was right enough, but there was plenty to wipe the smile off one's face these days, I reflected, directly one allowed one's thoughts to roam a little farther afield to the tribulation of the northern world! Poland—Finland—

Christmas in London

But the tune had changed again. Above the steady hum of the engine came the music of a choir, boys' voices singing the beautiful old carol,

*The first Noel, the angels did say,
Was to certain poor shepherds
In the fields as they lay . . .*

In an instant I was far from the Waikato, back in the beautiful old Temple Church, that little haven of peace and solitude that survives so strangely amid the unceasing roar and clamour of modern London. It was a grey, chill day in Christmas week but the mellow colouring of the ancient woodwork, the banners, the golden lights and bright scarlet of the choir-boys' robes made a picture of warmth and beauty in vivid contrast with the cheerless winter-world outside.

In Time for Daventry

The roof-tops of a little country town gleamed in the late afternoon sun. The music ceased, the car slowed down, and came to a stop in a street lined with a row of shops.

"Twelve minutes for refreshments," said the driver. "You'll get a good cup of tea in the second shop down."

"I don't think I want any tea, thank you," I replied. "I think I'll just stay here—it's so nice and peaceful."

"Right-ho!" he said amiably, and switched on the radio once more. "You're just in time for Daventry!"

A clear, impersonal voice said: "The capital last night was ablaze with fire from incendiary bombs . . . people are taking refuge in snow-covered forests—many searching frantically for their children. . . Hundreds killed and injured by bombs . . . twenty passengers in an omnibus blown to pieces . . ."

I rose and made for the door.
"Thank you," I said. "I think I will have that cup of tea after all!"