

Berczeller

TIME WAS, by Richard Berczeller (Viking). The author recalls his medical studies in Vienna in the nineteen-twenties and his first years of practice in and around a small Austrian town in the nineteen-thirties. His easy narrative style, gossipy and affectionate, makes everything fresh as paint. He reminisces about the giants who taught him medicine, about the girls who broke his heart, and about Maria Jeritza as Tosca; he remembers his hardy peasant patients, the village priest, the town

rabbi, the mad colonel, the game-keeper, the winegrower. He recalls city buildings and country scenery, his development as a doctor, and his wife's evolution in the demanding role of a doctor's wife. Austria has never seemed lovelier. Austrians more charming, or a country medical practice a more appealing way of life. Then, in the last chapter, young Nazi thugs appear, and everyone tells the Doctor (who is a Jew) that nothing will come of it. Alas, nothing, in every sense, is what did come of it, for most of what Berczeller remembers was wrecked by the Nazis and the war.

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