

Book Reviews

GEORGIUS PURKIRCHER, *Opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. Miloslaus Okál, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum, new series, vol. 10, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988, 8vo, pp. 255, £11.00.

Despite the existence of substantial biography, written in Hungarian in 1941, Georgius Purkircher (c. 1533–77) has never been a name to conjure with. He is known, if at all, only for a long poem on the anniversary of the death of Melanchthon, his erstwhile teacher at Wittenberg. This new edition of the poems and letters of this doctor from Bratislava will, it is hoped, ensure a wider audience for his humanist learning.

The medical historian will here find three main topics of interest. Purkircher's Latin poems are filled with medical data. He writes on plague and, in gruesome detail, on the illnesses that carried off friends and family. Secondly, his letters from Padua, where he studied medicine from 1561 until the end of 1563, are full of unusual sidelights on his teachers, his courses, and his life as a student. He comments bitterly on the chaos of 1562–3, when the sudden deaths of Fallopio and Landi in quick succession almost ended medical teaching. Replacements were hard to find, and Professor Trincavelli's failing memory became a student joke. Finally, Purkircher was one of the many medical men with an interest in botany who communicated their findings, seeds as well as ideas, in a network of correspondence that linked Italy with Belgium, and Germany with furthest Hungary. Guilandini, Matthioli, Crato, Clusius, and Camerarius were on familiar terms with Purkircher, who once also acted as a marriage-broker for Hugo Blotius, the historian and librarian of the Imperial court at Vienna. In his own lifetime, then, Purkircher was a far from negligible figure, among European learned physicians as well as in his native Bratislava. This edition of his writings explains why.

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JOHANNES OEHME, *Das Kind im 18. Jahrhundert. Beiträge zur Sozialgeschichte des Kindes*, with contributions by Helmuth Albrecht, Ulrich Herrmann, Urte von Kortzfleisch and Gerhard Trommer, Documenta Paediatrica 16, Lübeck, Hansisches Verlagkontor, 1988, 8vo, pp. 132, illus., DM 24.00.

The major contributor to *Das Kind im 18. Jahrhundert*, Johannes Oehme, has much to tell, maybe too much. The book was apparently prepared according to the formula, a bit about everything, but only a bit. On the other hand, the volume is ordered with rigour and clarity and this, with an excellent bibliography after every chapter, makes it not only useful, but entertaining and well written too. No need for anyone with shaky German to fear difficulty with the language here.

The book mostly treats, if not healthy children, then at least children who are not ill. It is, as the subtitle suggests, a social history, one with a strongly medical flavour, but its subjects will interest others than doctors and educationalists.

The authors discuss education from various points of view: 'Schulbildung im 18. Jahrhundert', 'Kinderarbeit und Industrieschule', 'Findelkinder und Waisen', and 'Physische und moralische Erziehung'. Ulrich Herrmann has written a most interesting and suggestive chapter about the child and the family. His thesis, that generational conflicts are grounded in the family pattern which arose at the end of the eighteenth century, when care for children developed into strict control, should be read by all parents. Oehme's chapter, 'Kindesmisshandlung und Kindesmord im 18. Jahrhundert', is most depressing. Although Oehme cannot hide his indignation, he does not forget to explain the reasons for the encroachments against children, which in many cases were grounded in social circumstances and ignorance. Another fascinating chapter is by the same author, on infant prodigies. The phenomenon was discussed and debated in the eighteenth century, but, surprisingly, no one seems to doubt the accounts of these indeed advanced children who could write a history book at the age of three and speak Latin and foreign languages as babies. The accounts of their physical development are suggestive: the description of the life of "das Lübeckische Wunderkind" makes me think of the symptoms of anorexia.