

**HEALTH AND  
SUGGESTION: THE  
DIALECTICS OF THE MIND**

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Health and Suggestion: The Dialectics of the Mind by Ernst von Feuchtersleben & Ludwig Lewisohn

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**ERNST VON FEUCHTERSLEBEN & LUDWIG LEWISOHN**

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## Health and Suggestion

# Health and Suggestion: The Dietetics of the Mind

BY

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## PREFACE

The wave of human thought advances, recedes and advances, making some headway, doubtless, but rarely adventuring upon a direction wholly new. Hence it does not greatly surprise us to learn that the vivid interest taken in mental healing in America within recent years, was shared by another generation and in another land. Any exhaustive study of that other and foreign movement would be out of place here. It suffices to mark its existence and to say a word concerning its chief representatives.

It is hard to say how early, in Germany, the facts of common experience which seem to point to a curative power in the mind of man, crystallized into any definite doctrine. It is worthy of note, however, that no less a man than Goethe dwells upon phe-

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nomena of this kind in his autobiography. Others, at all events, followed in fragmentary fashion in his wake, until, at the end of the eighteenth century, the well-known novelists and satirists Hippel and Lichtenberg took a fairly definite stand in a number of essay-like writings and insisted upon the influence of the soul's temper and development upon the physical organism of man. These various currents of thought were concentrated by Hufeland in his *Makrobiotik* which, in its turn, drew from Kant — the greatest name in the movement — his brief essay on "that faculty of man's soul through which, by a mere act of willing, a mastery over our morbid sensations may be gained."

Kant's little treatise is practical and extraordinarily modern in its attitude to the phenomena of mental healing. It had, of course, in its day and country, a wide influence which grew with the fame of its author. Thus, in the first third of the nineteenth cen-



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tury, we find mental therapeutics a recognized subject of instruction at the University of Vienna, and may assume that it became one through the dignity which the great name of Kant had lent it.

The typical German classic on mental healing, however, is not Kant's essay but the *Diätetik der Seele* by the Austrian physician, Ernst von Feuchtersleben, a translation of which is here offered to the American public. To call this little book a classic in its specific field, is not, in any degree, an exaggeration. It has passed through innumerable editions; it is represented in all those admirable series of inexpensive books in which Germany is so rich, (*Reclam, Meyer, Bibliothek der Gesamt-Litteratur*); it is a favorite gift-book to this day; its vogue, in a word, has been wide, lasting and therefore significant. Without clamor or insistence the essential facts of psychotherapeutics have been present in Germany, as they are — every-

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where and always. But there, as in America to-day, they were thoughtfully reflected upon and interpreted.

Nor have the two movements failed to touch. Dr. Worcester tells us (*Century*: vol. lxxviii, p. 426) how, during his arduous preparation for the remarkable work which he at last took up, he read all books pertinent to his subject in various languages "with the exception of Feuchtersleben's *Diätetik der Seele*." "In some way," he continues, "this inimitable work escaped me, and I have become familiar with it only during the last year. It contains the principles of our whole project, and expresses many phases of our thought better than we are able to express it."

Ernst von Feuchtersleben was born in Vienna in 1806. He obtained his preliminary training at the "theresianische Akademie," and took his degree (M.D.) at the university of his native city in 1833. His success as a practitioner and teacher of medicine was rapid, and from 1840 until his premature

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death in 1849 he lectured on psychotherapeutics at the university of Vienna. In 1848 he declined the portfolio of education, but accepted an undersecretaryship of state. The immense labor which the complete reorganization of the Austrian school system entailed broke down his health, and he resigned from office too late to regain the vital energy which he had spent in the state's service. His character is said to have been one of singular beauty, his temper of exquisite serenity and gentleness. This is especially apparent in his poetry of which he wrote not a little, nor any that is not marked by both distinction and grace. He is the author, for instance, of the song, universally known in Germany:

"In God's high council 'tis decreed  
That from our dearest at our need  
We're parted,"

and of many excellent gnomic poems one of