

**A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF THE SWEDISH POET
AND GYMNASIARCH,
PETER HENRY LING**

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A biographical sketch of the Swedish poet and gymnasiarch, Peter Henry Ling by Augustus Georgii

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AUGUSTUS GEORGII

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OF

THE SWEDISH POET AND GYMNASIARCH,

PETER HENRY LING.

BY

AUGUSTUS GEORGH,

PROFESSOR, LATE LECTURER ON ANATOMY, AND SUB-DIRECTOR AT THE CENTRAL
GYMNASIUM INSTITUTION OF STOCKHOLM, ETC.

*Γνώσκειν ὃ δέμας τὸ καλῶς, ἰατρὸν ἔσθαι,
Καὶ ταῖς ἑνὲά τῃ κεφαλῆσιν ἔβοχα Μοῖσας.*

"Full knowledge of the truth I deem is thine
True healer, and beloved by all the Nine."

CHAPMAN'S GREEK PASTORAL POEMS.

LONDON:

H. BAILLIERE, 219, REGENT STREET,
AND 290, BROADWAY, NEW YORK.

1854.

210. α. 153.

PREFACE.

THIS little work is intended to serve the double purpose of guide and corrective—a guide to some knowledge of the aim and limits of Ling's system, and a corrective of certain misapprehensions concerning his character and genius. In a future publication it is my intention to give Ling's Manual such as he left it, which, with the notes and comments I shall add, will, I trust, serve the purpose and merit the title of an "Organon" of gymnastics.

It is highly desirable that the medical profession should be induced to test, and to apply this method of curative movements and exercises. If, in speaking of the hostility Ling encountered, I have felt myself bound to state the facts of the case, I hope that no offence will be taken where none was meant.

It is with great pleasure and gratitude that I acknowledge the kind interest some of the medical body of England have been pleased to take in my success, and the liberal favour Ling's system of gymnastics has met with generally. I am obliged

to a friend for the revision of my English, and for the metrical version of the passages I have quoted from Ling's poetry.

I cannot but express my earnest hope that the system of gymnastics which I recommend and employ, after Ling's teaching, may be fully admitted into the familiar practice of Englishmen, both for educational training and for the relief and cure of many forms of chronic disease. If by my writing, or my practice, I may be enabled in any degree to contribute to this end, I shall be fully satisfied.

A. G.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF LING.

EARLY LIFE, 1766—1805.

PETER HENRY LING was born on the 15th of November, 1766, in the picturesque little parsonage-house of Junga, in Småland, one of the southern provinces of Sweden. He was the youngest of six children, and lost his father, the clergyman of the place, in his second year. His mother married the new incumbent, and in that gentleman he found a kind though somewhat stern preceptor, who vainly endeavoured to educate him for the Church. The circumstances of his childhood, his extreme sensibility, joined with singular determination,—an organization he inherited from his mother,—the romantic scenery of his home—wild heath and lonely lake—his mother's death not long after her second marriage, all combined to colour, if not to create, the strange alternations of his after-life.

At an early age he was sent to school at Wexiö, where he soon distinguished himself for his docility, intellectual aptness, and no less for his inflexible temper and tenacity of purpose. A mutiny which broke out in the school cut

short his studies, Ling being expelled, from refusing, out of an honourable motive, to betray the actual culprits. From school he betook himself to the house of his brother, a curate in a neighbouring parish, but when invited to stay he declined, saying, "There is a blot upon my name, and it must be effaced." His brother gave him a silver spoon and his blessing, and Ling began the world. What hardships he encountered, what temptations he mastered, what dangers he survived, this is not the place to set forth; suffice it to say, in the course of a series of adventures, more or less romantic, ranging from wasteful idleness to the extreme of diligence and thrift, he visited Lund, Upsala, Stockholm, Berlin, Copenhagen, etc., passed his initiatory examination at the first-named university, on the 28th March, 1793, and the same year entered the University of Upsala, which, after passing an examination in theology, he quitted in June, 1799. Once more he set out on his travels, acting now as interpreter, now as teacher of languages, and solving with characteristic fortitude a knot of difficulties, an amusing sample of which appears in washing his only shirt himself, and lying on it till it was dry. After passing through France, England, and Germany, he came to Copenhagen, where he took part in the great sea-fight on the 2nd of April, 1801. But the effects of travel and toil, days spent without food, and now and

then nights passed with little or no shelter, began soon to impair a frame not originally vigorous; he had an attack of rheumatism and paralysis in his right arm, and it then occurred to him to try fencing as a means of cure. The use of his arm he soon recovered, and gained at the same time a thorough mastery of the art. Gymnastics had just been introduced into Denmark by Nachtigall, and received considerable encouragement from the Government; and possibly the idea occurred to Ling of organizing a gymnastic system, with a view to its introduction into his own country, though it seems not improbable that his attention had been drawn to the subject in consequence of the philosophical writings of Montaigne, Rousseau, and Pestalozzi—theories which were practically illustrated in Saxony, where Salzman, as early as 1786, had founded a gymnastic institution. Of the stormy interval of the next few years we have hints rather than records. Ling himself invariably preserved a strict silence as to this part of his life, though we are not left entirely in the dark. Many of his poems were either conceived or written at this time, and he stored his mind with extensive and various reading. In 1805 we find him at the University of Lund, at once a poet, a lecturer on Norse mythology, a teacher of modern languages, and a fencing-master.

DEVELOPMENT OF HIS SYSTEM, 1805.

Ling's mind was naturally philosophical; he saw in fencing merely the germ of some undeveloped science, the action of a mechanical law, subordinate to a higher physiological law. How was this to be educed and demonstrated, and utilized for the purposes of education? Gradually there presented itself the idea of a gymnastic system in accordance with the cycle of social, political, and moral requirement. Regarding man as a dualistic being, in whom body and soul mutually react, according to the different conditions of their nature, he aimed at the perfection of the organism by means of the combined and harmonious action of these two principles, restoring by his system the equilibrium which either indolence, disease, or a too exclusive cultivation of the intellectual faculties may have disturbed. He had now arrived at the region of therapeutics, and a closer consideration of the laws of motory action enabled him to invent a system of *iatric* movements, as varied in their character as in their gradations of strength. Directly or indirectly, he contrived means to affect the most hidden internal organs, thereby placing the organism as a whole, or any of its parts, under the influence of a definite and adjusted application