THE MEDICAL PHRASES OF VICTOR HUGO*

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LITERATURE is not lacking in medical characters: many great writers of drama and fiction have introduced doctors into their narratives. The doctors of Shakespeare and of Dickens have furnished themes for interesting studies, while much of Molière's satire is heaped upon the doctor and his foibles. In the stories of innumerable lesser writers of fiction may be found physicians as major or minor characters; some play the parts of heroes, others the parts of villains. In each instance the authors display more or less knowledge of doctors and familiarity with their work, according as they have had opportunity for personal observation of or association with them. Usually scant justice is done the doctor in his attitude and service, but, on the other hand, much effort at mock heroics is wasted in attempts to give him more than he deserves. The average fictionist is glaringly ignorant of medical men and their ways and even more so of medical science itself. The hero or heroine is still dying of "brain fever," and peculiar pathology is often developed from sensational injuries.

Conversely the comparatively few physicians who have gone in for literature rarely use their works for displaying their professional learning. It appears certain that Keats and Goldsmith actually avoided medical ideas, if, indeed, they had many; and very little of the best thought of Holmes and Mitchell contains medical allusions.

In lay literature one author—Victor Hugo—stands forth supreme in his medical knowledge. Yet not one of Hugo's leading characters is a physician. He makes no attempt to portray the personality of the doctor. He merely writes into his works his wide and accurate knowledge of the whole science of medicine. An astounding mastery was his of every branch of science as it existed both before and during his day; his books fairly teem with evidences of it. Most of his medical expressions are in the form of figures of speech.

It is not uncommon, however, for speakers and writers to employ medical similes; now and then they add strength to the ordinary discourse and enliven the usual occasion. The ability to use such expressions wisely and well constitutes an art, even if it does not attest a profound knowledge of medical subjects. But when one illumines one's pages over and over again with deep-rooted ideas of all that pertains to a great science, as Hugo does, it is nothing short of genius. And genius he was in the truest measure of the term.

There was apparently nothing in Victor Hugo's early life or his education to give him such knowledge, except that in the year 1818, in a general yearly competition of all French scholars for University prizes, he obtained fifth place for physics. At sixteen he left the school for good, determined not to try for admission to the Ecole Polytechnique or to be a soldier, as was his father before him. Instead, he began to write. We know also that he began to read widely; only omnivorous reading can account for his omniscient writing. At least I shall claim that he read greedily and remembered tenaciously all science, and medical science in particular, for without this preparation he could hardly have set down the wonderfully true and interesting scientific observations which enrich all his works. Whether in figure of speech, running illus-

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tration or homely simile, the details are perfectly presented and the meaning is exact.

My purpose, then, will be to pass in review the phrases which give evidence of the profound medical knowledge of this man of letters and of his artistic perception in weaving this knowledge into his narrative. Let me hope that my account may not be a tiresome catalogue of quotations.

Beginning with the fundamentals, let us first find the *anatomical* references. With his wonderful power of description Hugo refers to "a row of great piles set upright in the sand against a wall" as "dry, gaunt, knotty logs resembling an array of leg bones and knee-caps afflicted with ankylosis." Indeed he carries the figure further and suggests that "revery . . . might inquire to what race of men these three-fathom tibias had belonged." One of his philosopher characters (Combeferre in "Les Miserables") is said to have been "enraptured with a lecture in which Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire had explained the double function of the exterior carotid artery and the interior carotid artery, one of which supplies the face, the other the brain." This same philosopher was said to believe in "the suppression of suffering in surgical operations." Anatomical figures are vividly set out in the experience of children hidden in the elephant of the Bastile: "Above a long dusty beam, from which projected at regular distances, massive encircling timbers representing the vertebral column with its ribs, stalactites of plaster hung down like the viscera, and from one side to the other huge spider webs made dusty diaphragms." Similar anatomical description is seen in this passage from "The Toilers of the Sea": "Over his head was a roofing not unlike the insides of a vast skull; the vault was the cranium; the arch was the mouth; the eye sockets were lacking. . . . The vault with its cerebral lobes, and its crawling ramifications, similar to outspreading nerves, had a tender reflection of the chrysoprase." In one of his letters he calls the Strait of Maumusson "one of the navels of the sea"; and in proving how divinity adheres to the "rough draught" he shows "how the solar ray is an umbilical cord," how the "disfigured becomes transfigured." Walking the corridor of a dungeon gives rise to a comparison: "This gut made circuits; all entrails are tortuous, those of a prison as well as those of a man. . . . The stone pavement of the corridor had the viscousness of an intestine."

Hugo exhibits his peculiar talent in no way better than in his strictures upon the destruction of the marvelous art of the Middle Ages by modern architects. "They have," he says, "audaciously adjusted, in the name of 'good taste,' mounds of Gothic architecture, their miserable gewgaws of a day, their ribbons of marble, their pompons of metal, a veritable leprosy of egg-shaped ornaments. . . . Three sorts of ravages today disfigure Gothic architecture. Wrinkles and warts on the epidermis; this is the work of time. Deeds of violence, brutalities, contusions, fractures; this is the work of the revolutions from Luther to Mirabeau. Mutilations, amputations, dislocations of the joints, restorations; this is the Greek, Roman and barbarian work of professors." Bemoaning the fate of the "charming little bell tower" of the Cathedral, he tells us that "an architect of good taste amputated it and considered it sufficient to mask the wound with a large, leaden plaster, which resembles a pot cover."

Our author's familiarity with *physiology*, *pathology*, *chemistry* and allied subjects is striking. Here is a contrast between pathology and anatomy: "The simplicity which is short-winded is a case for pathology. A hospital ticket suits it better than a ride on the hippogriff. . . . I admit that the hump of Thersites is simple; but the pectoral muscles of Hercules are simple also. I prefer this simplicity to the other." How does the logic of the following physiological chemico-pathological study appeal to

you? It is selected from the postprandial remarks of a reveller: "Now listen attentively! Sugar is a salt. Every salt is desiccating. Sugar is the most desiccating of all salts. It sucks up the liquids from the blood through the veins; thence comes the coagulation; then the solidification of the blood; thence tubercles in the lungs; thence death. And this is why diabetes borders on consumption. Crunch no sugar, therefore, and you shall live." In 1862 through the mouth of Grantaire, who is "perfectly boozy," Hugo gives vent to this strange physiology of the nations: "If I do not admire John Bull shall I admire Brother Jonathan then? I have little use for this brother with his slaves. Take away 'time is money,' and what is left of England? Take away 'cotton is King,' and what is left of America? Germany is the lymph; Italy is the bile. Shall we go into ecstasies over Russia? Voltaire admired her. He admired China also. I confess that Russia has her beauties, among others a strong despotism; but I am sorry for the despots. They have very delicate health." Did this keen observer have any inkling then of the greatest world crisis now at its acme? Speaking in "Les Miserables" of the grosser interests of certain states, he hits the nail squarely: "Sometimes the stomach paralyzes the heart. The grandeur and the beauty of France are that she cares less for the belly than other people; she knots the rope about her loins more easily." The physiology of digestion was a favorite theme of illustration with Victor Hugo. Of a shipwreck scene he says that "the deck underwent the convulsions of a diaphragm, which is seeking to vomit." Ursus cries: "I have toiled today, empty stomach, plaintive throat, my pancreas in distress, my bowels ruined, far into the night my recompense is to watch another eat." Gringoire, the impecunious man of letters, thus figures the King: "He is a sponge, to soak money raised from the people. His saving is like the spleen which swelleth with the leanness of all the other members." Then there is this illuminating antithesis: "The foreign war is a scratch one gets on the elbow; civil war is the ulcer which eats up the liver."

Hugo's chemistry comes in for its share in his figures of speech. He is not very complimentary to the products of the metropolis when he writes: "The mud of Paris is particularly stinking; it must contain a great deal of volatile and nitric salts." Then a glimpse of cloacal chemistry: "Death in the mire under a cover! the slow stifling by the filth, a stone box in which asphyxia opens its claws in the slime and takes you by the throat; fetidness mingled with the death rattle; mire instead of sand, sulphuretted hydrogen instead of the hurricane; ordure instead of the ocean." The grandeur of scenery is used to bring out further details: "The oxides of the rock had placed here and there upon the cliffs red patches resembling pools of clotted blood." The toxicology of character is expressed when he makes Gilliatt say: "I test the quality of a scoundrel as a doctor will test a poison."

For true science this great man had the profoundest respect, but he could not conceal his utter disdain for all spurious and quasi-forms of learning. Satire and ridicule were effective weapons in his hands. All through his monograph on Shakespeare, in which he hales into court the world's greatest men, of whatever branch of learning, he gives examples which prove his remarkable acquaintance with the history of science, the real and the sham. He believed that long advances had been made, and quite as confidently looked for more. "Look at the point," he states, "at which spermatology and ovology have already arrived and recall Mariana reproaching Arnaud de Villeneuve (who discovered alcohol and the oil of turpentine) with the strange crime of having attempted human generation in a pumpkin." This is vivi-genesis with a vengeance. Were there other "antis" in those

days besides Mariana? In the following passage one can hardly decide whether the author is serious or satirical. At any rate here is an unusual cause of death: "Chrysippus of Tarsus forms an era in science. This philosopher (the same who died—actually died—of laughter caused by seeing a donkey eat figs out of a silver basin) had studied everything, gone to the bottom of everything. . . . He condensed in his brain all human knowledge." But we do definitely perceive, further on, the insight Hugo had into the scientific pretense of his day. "Five hundred years before Jesus Christ it was perfectly scientific, when a King of Mesopotamia had a daughter possessed of the devil, to send to Thebes for a god to cure her. It is not exactly our way of treating epilepsy. In the same way we have given up expecting the Kings of France to cure scrofula." Substituting "eminent specialist" for "god" and remembering that most cases possessed of the devil are afflicted with hysteria, these words have a very familiar sound at this day. Neither have we by lapse of time or more diffuse education entirely outlived those who still believe in the Royal Touch and the laying on of hands—except that the Royal Touch is now frequently given by a famous physician; we have places of pilgrimage, too.

Hugo draws on his knowledge of *digestion* and *dietetics* for an argument against formal, stilted writing. This is his point: "It seems that the only question [with the 'serious' school] should be to preserve literature from indigestion. Formerly the device was 'fecundity and power'; today it is barley gruel.' . . . Be of the temperance society. A good critical book is a treatise on the dangers of drinking. Do you wish to compose the Iliad, put yourself on diet." Again: "He does not stop, he does not feel fatigue, he is without pity for the poor weak stomachs that are candidates for the Academy. The gastritis called 'good taste' does not afflict him." In describing the choice of subjects for writing by a genius, he asks: "What is the Iliad? A collection of plagues and wounds—not an artery cut which is not complacently described."

In the realm of *internal medicine* and *diagnosis* we find the great author demonstrating the same capacity for critical illustration. What an observant attitude is pictured in this passage: "The pedestrian bathed in sweat finds in this vault [tower rock on the road to the Rigi] an abundance of chilling shade, and a little cool water falling all about him; a treacherous bench has been placed there, and on it pleurisies are in wait!" General manifestations of disease are thus brought into service: "The revolutionary fever, however, was increasing. No point of Paris or of France was exempt from it. The artery pulsated everywhere. Like those membranes which are born of certain inflammations and formed in the human body, the net-work of the secret societies spread over the country." In this connection, when the young men, enthusiastic over the Revolution, were sent about to organize their several branches, Joly, the medical student, was to "go to Dupuytren's clinique and feel the pulse of the medical school." Joly, by the way, was a typically latter-day neurasthenic. He is depicted as a "young malade imaginaire. What he had learned in medicine was rather to be a patient than a physician. At 23 he thought himself a valetudinarian and passed his time in looking at his tongue in a mirror."

Discriminating knowledge of special diseases is constantly exhibited: "There is something of the cholera in that sort of tempest"; and, "The breath of the cholera was felt in those winds"—evidently the prevailing idea of the epidemiology of cholera in those days. With the same figure in mind, Hugo finds the origin of storms: "Tempests are nervous attacks and fits of delirium on the part of the sea. The sea has its sick headaches." A similar figure is employed to explain an unobserved leak

during shipwreck: "They had not noticed it amid the convulsive violence of the wind which had shaken them. In a fit of tetanus one does not feel a prick." Describing the condition of a little child, he thought "a nurse would have reckoned her five or six months old, but she was, perhaps, a year old, for in poverty growth undergoes heart-breaking reductions which sometimes extends to the rickets." The etiology is somewhat mixed, as is the metaphor, but the kernel of knowledge is there. Further along Ursus "listened to the other child eating," and exclaimed: "It will be a task, if I must henceforth nourish this glutton who is getting his growth. He will be a tapeworm which I shall have in the belly of my industry." I dare say that no one could express more clearly the relation of certain degenerative diseases to the life we live than is found in the following paragraph: "His rheumatism came to him about the time when he had gotten into easy circumstances. These two products of labor are fond of keeping one another company. At the moment when one becomes rich, one is paralyzed. This crowns life." The sclerosis of age is well presented in the personification of the cathedral door which yielded but slowly to the attack of the vagabonds; one of them said: "It is old, and its gristles have become bony." The following gives his diagnosis in the crowd: "Persons who wore cravats that hid their chins were called the scrofulous."

A really remarkable excerpt is the one I am now about to quote. Well might we ask, did Victor Hugo know of gall-stones and duodenal ulcer? Portraying a man in the full vigor of life, he says: "This vision is splendid and astounding; but a little gravel in the liver or an abrasion of the pylorus—six feet of earth, and all is over." Not less remarkable is his broad prophecy of fecal infection contained in a longer extract. Did Hugo anticipate Metchnikoff's theory and foresee Lane's operation when he wrote: "The belly being the centre of matter is our gratification and our danger; it contains appetite, satiety, and putrefaction. The devotion, the tenderness which seize us are liable to death. . . . The belly is to humanity a formidable weight; it breaks at every moment the equilibrium between the soul and the body. It fills history; it is responsible for nearly all crimes; it is the matrix of all vices. . . . It is perhaps obesity, perhaps dropsy. . . . The large intestine is king; all that old world feasts and bursts; and Rabelais (doctor and priest) enthrones a dynasty of bellies."

On a lonely journey through the Alps, Hugo wrote letters to his wife. During one of these tramps he had an opportunity to indulge his fancy in speculation on the etiology of goitre. The following quotation is worth reading: "There was one witness in reality, only one. . . . In a cleft in the crag, seated on a huge stone with legs hanging down, was an idiot with a goitre, his body slim and his face enormous, laughing with a stupid laugh. . . . The Alps were the spectacle, the spectator was an idiot. I forgot myself in this frightful antithesis. . . . Nature in her superbest aspect, man in his most miserable debasement. What could be the significance of this mysterious contrast? What was the sense of this irony in a solitude? Have I the right to believe that the landscape was designed for him—the cretin, and the irony for me—the chance visitor? However, the goitrous idiot paid no attention to me. . . . At this height the convexity of the globe confuses to a certain extent all lines and deranges them. The mountains take extraordinary postures. . . . The landscape is crazy. With this inexpressible spectacle before your eyes you begin to understand why Switzerland and Savoie swarm with stunted minds. The Alps make many idiots. It is not granted to all intelligences to cohabit with such marvels and to keep from morning till evening, without intoxication and without stupor, turning a visual radius

of fifty leagues across the earth around a circumference of three hundred."

Materia medica and *therapeutics* form the basis of certain comparisons which were the beliefs of the times. Some of these reflected the serious side of the author. Witness: "Many will remember that great epidemic of croup which desolated, thirty-five years ago, the quarters bordering on the Seine at Paris, and of which science took advantage to experiment on a large scale as to the efficacy of insufflations of alum, now so happily replaced by the tincture of iodine externally applied." On the other hand he takes occasion at times to berate the ignorance both of the physician and of the layman. The archdeacon showed the inscription, "Medicine is the daughter of dreams," to his doctor, who immediately had his ire aroused and exclaimed: "Medicine a dream! I suspect that the pharmacopolist and the master physician would insist upon stoning you if they were here. So you deny the influence of philters upon the blood, and unguents on the skin! You deny that external pharmacy of flowers and metals, which is called the world, made expressly for that eternal invalid called man!" The cleric replied: "I deny neither pharmacy nor the invalid. I reject the physician." "Then it is not true," replied the doctor hotly, "that gout is an internal eruption; that a wound caused by artillery is to be cured by the application of a young mouse roasted; that young blood, properly injected, restores youth to aged veins; it is not true that two and two make four and that emprosthotonos follows opisthotonos." Which being said, the debate ended in surliness on the part of the priest and anger on the part of the physician. But, "Ursus, in his capacity of physician healed, because, or in spite of. He made use of aromatics. He was versed in simples. He took advantage of the profound power which is contained in a mass of disdained plants,—hazel twigs, white alder, guelderrose, the wayfaring tree, slatern, viburnum, buckthorn. He treated phthisis with sundew; on appropriate occasions he used the leaves of the tithymal, which plucked from the root are a purgative, and plucked from the top are an emetic; he took away your sore throat by means of the vegetable excrescence called 'Jew's ear'; he knew which rush cures the ox and which mint cures the horse; he was acquainted with the beauties and virtues of the herb mandragora, which, as every one is aware, is both male and female. He had receipts. He cured burns with the wool of the salamander, of which Nero, according to Pliny, had a napkin." A more modern example of botanical superstition may be recalled. An old woman, (whether male or female I do not know) once asked the celebrated Abernethy: "Doctor, do you believe that poplar bark scraped 'up the tree' is an emetic and scraped 'down the tree' is a purgative?" "Certainly," replied the doctor, "and don't ever take any scraped around the tree, for, if you do, it will fly through your ribs and kill you." Hugo tells us that Ursus "correctly preferred Galen to Cardan; Cardan, learned man as he is, being only a worm of the earth in comparison with Galen." But in his "Shakespeare" he violently asserts that "a country horse-doctor would not inflict on horses the remedy with which Galen treated the indigestions of Marcus Aurelius." What the remedy was we are left to conjecture.

Obstetric references are few but pointed. The family of nations is thus to be nourished: "France bears within her the sublime future. This is the gestation of the nineteenth century. That which was sketched for Greece is worth being finished by France." The channel islands are described as the "puritanical archipelago, where the Queen of England has been blamed for violating the Bible, because she gave birth while under influence of chloroform." When Dom Claude rails at a fellow by shouting, "What means of safety have you found,

knave? Must your idea be extracted with forceps?", one is at a loss to know whether to classify this metaphor with obstetrics or with dentistry. Idiopathic Cesarean section, amid rather warm surroundings, is thus described: "Under Mary Tudor a mother and two daughters were burned. . . . One of the daughters was with child. She brought forth the child in the coals of fagots. The chronicle says: 'Her belly burst. A living child came forth; the new born infant rolled out of the fiery furnace; a certain House picked it up. [The] bailiff . . . caused the child to be flung back into the fire.' "

Maternal impressions are hinted at when the populace hoots the hunchback of Notre Dame: "The monster! a face to make a woman miscarry better than all the drugs and medicines. . . . 'Twas you that made my wife, simply because she passed near you, give birth to a child with two heads! And my cat bring forth a kitten with six paws!"

Two or three figures of speech must suffice to convince us of Hugo's knowledge of the *eye and its diseases*. Hardly could there be expressed a more beautiful figure than this: "The pupil dilates at night, and at last finds day in it, even as the soul dilates in misfortune and at last finds God in it." Another is keenly suggestive: "He suffered the strange pangs of a conscience suddenly operated upon for the cataract. He saw what he revolted at seeing." Ocular therapeutics is brought into play upon literary diseases: "Let us not, then, be surprised . . . at the poultices applied by a certain school of criticism to the chronic ophthalmy of academies."

It may not be surprising to realize that the great Frenchman was well versed in *surgical science and practice*. He certainly writes of times when surgery was often in demand and when the average citizen was necessarily familiar with its practices. His exact knowledge of surgical pathology is evident. As an introduction Hugo regretted that "we are deprived of the progress which the executioner caused surgery to make," for "by cutting the limbs of living men, by opening their bellies and tearing out their entrails, they [of the olden days] caught phenomena in the very moment, and made discoveries." Hearing this, let the women rage and the anti-vivisectionists imagine a vain thing. Hugo's phrases on wounds are interesting. Combating the idea that "emotion grows dull" he argues that "it is as though one were to say a wound is assuaged and become calm beneath nitric acid falling drop by drop." The wounds of Marius afforded ample opportunity for descriptive talent: "The doctor examined Marius and, after having determined that the pulse beat, that the sufferer had no wound penetrating his breast, and that the blood at the corners of his mouth came from the nasal cavities, he had him laid flat upon the bed, without a pillow, his head on a level with his body, and even a little lower, with his chest bare, in order to facilitate respiration. . . . The head . . . was covered with hacks; what would be the result of these wounds on the head? Did they stop at the scalp? Did they affect the skull?" Does not the following observation show marked discrimination? "He had for several weeks a fever, accompanied with delirium, and serious cerebral symptoms resulting rather from the concussion produced by the wounds in the head than from the wounds themselves." And this also: "The suppuration of large wounds always being liable to re-absorption and consequently to kill the patient under certain atmospheric influences." Further, "the dressings were complicated and difficult, the fastening of cloths and bandages with sparadrap not being invented at that period" . . . "they used for lint a sheet 'as big as a ceiling' " . . . and "it was not without difficulty that the chloruretted lotions and the nitrate of silver brought the gangrene to an end." The convalescence was delayed "on account of the accident

resulting from the fracture of the shoulder blade. There is always a last wound like this which will not close, and which prolongs the dressings, to the great disgust of the patient." Can it be doubted that the author of these lines, only a part of which I have transcribed, had himself seen and attended such wounds? Even the King had pretensions, for we are told that he was "something of a doctor; he bled a postilion who fell from his horse; Louis Phillipe no more went without his lancet than Henry III without his poniard."

Of wounds in special regions we note an instance here and there. "There was a wound in the shoulder blade . . . but as the lungs were not touched she might recover." "Wounds in the breast demand silence." Surgical diseases are the particular care of Ursus, who thus addresses the populace: "I think and I dress wounds. Chirurgus sum. . . . . Almost all our local inflammations and sufferings are issues and, if well cared for, rid us gently of other ills which are worse. Nevertheless I would not counsel you to have an anthrax, otherwise called a carbuncle. 'Tis a stupid malady which serves no end. One dies of it and that is all." He also gives a much needed caution: "An awkward movement, a fright, and there you have a rupture of aneurysm. I have seen instances of it." Arterial ligation was evidently much in Hugo's mind. Over and over again he indulges his imagination in this sort of figure. For example: "It was time that the artery should be bound up. He had suffered a loss of virtue . . . and he felt something like a generous transfusion in his veins." A geographical reference is inspiring: "French blood is largely mixed with Spanish blood. . . . The Pyrenees are simply a ligature efficacious only for a time." History furnished this: "Revolutions such as the revolution of July are arteries cut; a prompt ligature is necessary." Other affections appeal to the figurative nature within him: "The bulging of the canvas became larger. It grew more and more distorted like a frightful abscess ready to burst." The diagnosis in the following case is not plain, but the plan of treatment admits of no uncertainty: "One day . . . a man was dying, choked by a tumor in his throat, a horrible fetid abscess, possibly contagious and which had to be emptied at once. . . . [The priest] applied his mouth to the tumor, sucked it, spitting out as his mouth filled, emptied the abscess and saved the man's life." Physical disability has always furnished a plea for clemency in crime. "The old punishment," writes Hugo, "which our ancient laws of torture called 'extension' and which Cartouche escaped because of a hernia, this Prometheus undergoes." The question is how did Hugo find that Cartouche had a hernia.

Nor does our observant genius overlook the question of *anæsthesia*. Referring to the time of Queen Anne he recalls "that even at that day the means of putting a patient to sleep and of suppressing pain was known. Only at that epoch it was called magic. Nowadays it is called anæsthesia." He speaks at another place of "a stupefying powder . . . which suppressed pain," and, whether accurately or not, thus relates its history: "This powder has always been known in China and it is still employed there at the present day. China had all our inventions before us, printing, artillery, aerostation, chloroform. Only the discovery which in Europe immediately acquires life and growth, and becomes a prodigy and a marvel, remains an embryo in China, and is there preserved in a dead condition. China is a jar of fœtus."

Victor Hugo was certainly not ahead of his times in *sanitary science*. What would our trained public health officers think of his ideas on the following question? He says "that strong mental excitement is a preservative against all ailments. In times of pestilence, while sanitary and hygienic measures should not be neglected, the people

should be entertained by grand fêtes, grand performances, noble impressions. If no one troubled about the epidemic it would disappear." At least he knew the value of the nurse and paid her this tribute: "It is the physician who prescribes, it is the nurse who saves."

Humor at the expense of the doctor is found in spots. It is not biting. "A funeral is passing. There is a doctor in the procession. 'Hullo!' shouts a gamin, 'how long is it since the doctors began to take home their work?'" And the physician to Louis XI is spoken of as "the brave man [who] had no other farm than the King's bad health. He speculated on it to the best of his ability." After obtaining from his Majesty in one day an appointment for his nephew and a new roof for his house, the doctor had applied to the royal loins "the great defensive cerate composed of Armenian bole, white of egg, oil, and vinegar" and retired followed by the raillery of the attendants: "'tis easy to see that the King is ill today; he giveth all to the leech." Louis' retort to the barber closed the scene: "The physician has more credit than you. 'Tis very simple; he has taken hold upon us by the whole body, and you hold us only by the chin." Below the rank of royalty a bit of dialogue between notables may bring a smile: "Good morning, Marat," said Chabot. "You rarely attend our meetings." "My doctor has ordered me baths," answered Marat. "One should beware of baths," returned Chabot, "Seneca died in one." The following reference includes the social problem along with its grim humor: "If he is rich, let him have a doctor. If he is not rich, let him not have any. If he doesn't have a doctor, he will die. And if he does have one, he will die."

Hugo was hard on the *quack*. He knew the brand instantly. Of Gilliatt he relates: "Peasants came with fear and trembling, to tell him about their maladies. This fear begets confidence; and in the country the more the physician is suspected of magical powers, the more efficacious the remedy. Gilliatt had prescriptions of his own, which he had inherited from the old dead woman; he bestowed them upon those who asked and would take no pay. He cured whitlow by the application of herbs, the liquor from one of his phials cut short the course of a fever; the chemist . . . thought that it was probably a decoction of cinchona. . . . Gilliatt was a very good fellow for sick people where his ordinary remedies were concerned. . . . He absolutely refused to perform miracles, which was ridiculous in a sorcerer. Do not be a sorcerer; but if you are one fulfill your profession." Do we not now meet those of this kind? And is it not all true to our own life and times—except the "no pay" feature? Ursus, the man, represents the peripatetic patent medicine vendor in all his glory, and, without doubt is one of the cleverest and queerest characters in fiction. "Regarded as a good mountebank and a good physician" he was everything else that it was necessary to be. He describes himself: "I am neither an Englishman nor a man, having the honor to be a doctor. That goes together. Gentlemen, I teach. What? Two sorts of things; those which I know and those which I do not know. I sell drugs and I give away ideas." That stamps Ursus as an out-and-out quack. The real physician sells his ideas, and may or may not give away his drugs. Being a quack he proceeds to denounce other quacks: "Gentlemen," says he, "distrust false savants who speculate upon the briony root and white adders, and who make eye salves from honey and cock's blood. Learn to see clearly through his lies. . . . It is not true that Adam had a navel. . . . Oh, gentle friends who listen to me, if any one tells you that whoever smells of the herb valerian will have a lizard born in his brain, . . . that a man weighs more dead than alive, that buck's blood dissolves the emerald, . . . that the falling sickness is cured by means of a

worm which is found in the brain of a kid, believe it not; these are errors. But here are truths: The skin of a sea-calf is preservative against lightning; the toad is nourished upon earth, which makes a stone grow in his head; . . . the elephant has no joints and is forced to sleep standing erect against a tree; make a toad hatch a cock's egg, and you will have a scorpion which will make you a salamander; a blind man recovers sight by placing one hand on the left of the altar and the other on his eyes. . . . Good people, feed yourselves on these evidences."

Hugo's interest in *deformities* is shown by his creation of these two freaks in human shape—Gywnplaine and Quasimodo. No other writer in our knowledge has succeeded in producing such hideous and repulsive deformities—the one artificial, the other natural. Much has been brought against Hugo for giving these characters sentiment, one critic going so far as to say that he has made "fatherhood sanctifying physical deformity; motherhood sanctifying moral deformity." Marzials says of the "Laughing Man": "To me it is simply a preposterous, an impossible book." Assuredly it is a weird conception. But the details are admirably worked out. Very briefly the method of producing the deformity of Gywnplaine may be stated by Hugo himself: "This artificial production of teratological cases had its rules. It was a complete science. Let the reader imagine orthopedy reversed. Where God had placed a glance, they put strabismus. Where God had placed harmony, they put deformity. . . . It seemed evident that a mysterious science, probably occult, which was to surgery what alchemy was to chemistry, had chiselled that flesh, assuredly at a very early age, and deliberately created this visage. This science, skilful in cuttings, obtusions and ligatures, had split that mouth, opened those lips, bared the gums, distended the ears, removed the partitions of the cartilages, disarranged the eyebrows and the cheeks, enlarged the muscles of the cheek bones, softened down the seams and scars, brought the skin back over the wounds, still maintaining the face in the gaping state, and from that powerful and profound sculpture, that mask, Gywnplaine, had emerged." A full, if not clear, exposition of the principles of plastic surgery!

Quasimodo I do not attempt to explain. He might be dismissed, according to one reviewer, as follows: "An animal with a turn for bell-ringing and, apart from his deformity and deafness, not entitled to much sympathy." But whatever the classification of his misshape, it was congenital, not acquired. My feeling is that Hugo must have received the impression of this monster through a bad dream. At any rate he put down no figure of speech in which Quasimodo is involved.

Hugo has been accused of being theatrical, of straining after effect. Perhaps so, but he got the effect. Poet, dramatist, novelist, publicist; he stood apart—the great Frenchman. His espousal of the Republic and the Revolution was his absorbing passion. He came down and remained close to the people—a circumstance that caused him to study them deeply, to live with them intimately. This naturally may have directed him to those homely medical illustrations, of which he was so full. Coppée's estimate is not wide of the mark: "Among all the poets of mankind Victor Hugo is the one who has invented the greatest number of similes, and those the best carried out, the most striking, the most significant." What need to tell his life story? Study the man in his writings—there he reveals himself. A characteristic piece of his imagery may form a fitting close to our study: "An idea is a balm; a word may be a dressing for wounds; poetry is a physician."