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A BIOGRAPHIC CLINIC ON GUSTAVE FLAUBERT.

By GEORGE M. GOULD, M.D.,

PHILADELPHIA.

He was a writer of rare talent; had it not been for the nervous disease which seized him at the outset of life, he would have become a man of genius.—Maxime Du Camp.

Writing in their diary in 1863 the brothers Goncourt say that Flaubert told them that when a child he became so absorbed in his reading that he would bite his tongue, twist a lock of hair in his fingers, and sometimes he would fall to the floor. Once he fell against a library window and cut his nose. Both the fact and its significance have been overlooked by the many who have written on Flaubert.

When Flaubert came to Paris to study law, he was 21 years of age, and of "heroic beauty." Many have enthusiastically described the perfection of his skin, head, his "enormous eyes," his hair, shoulders, whiskers, stature, eyebrows; his "trumpet-like voice," his gestures, his laugh; his abounding health, impetuosity, impatience, dominating character, etc. "Gustave was a giant." So physically strong was he that Du Camp says the excesses of his Paris student days knew no limits; he would study all night, run about the whole day, squander energy like a madman, careless of sleep, reckless of every law of moderation or health.

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He did not like law, and so little did he care for it that two years later, even with his all-absorbing intellect and splendid memory, he was blackballed by his examiners and he returned, in August, 1843, to his home at Rouen. His irrepressible energy of body and mind, and the inviting opportunities to give it rein in Paris, had saved him from injuring his health, and if his life had been rightly ordered, he might have lived a long, happy, and healthy life. His friend Du Camp says of him that had it not been for the nervous disease which seized him at the outset of life he would have become a man of genius.

In October, two months after Flaubert's return to Rouen, he had what is called his first attack of "epilepsy;" his biographers forget his swoonings, or faintings and fallings, years before and while a child. And they also ignore Flaubert's own testimony as to a nocturnal attack, a month before he left Paris and while studying hard for his final examinations. He remembered that he awoke one morning in a condition of extraordinary lassitude which lasted for a week, and he was sure that this, his "first," had taken place during sleep. Du Camp adds that he was probably right, "because these nocturnal attacks were frequent." "These nocturnal attacks," he continues, "affected him less than the others, bringing on decided fits of misanthropy. Once when he was seized in the neighborhood of Sotteville he secluded himself for several months without going out." There was thus no sudden onset of the disease, as one would believe from the reports, but a beginning in childhood, induced always by excessive reading or study. The frequently described "first" seizure occurred two months after his return to Rouen, while riding in the night with his brother, a practising physician, in a carriage. It was very dark, and in passing a wagon the light

flashed in Flaubert's face,* and he fell, unconscious, we gather, and immediately, according to medical custom, was bled by his brother.† Fourteen attacks followed in the next two weeks, probably encouraged by the anemia produced by the terrible bleedings to which parental solicitude and science subjected him. "Excess of plethora, too much energy, and force" said the father, and there was a forbidding of alcohol, of wine, of coffee, of food, and of tobacco. He was stuffed with valerian, indigo, and castoreum. He gulped down the drugs with resignation, ate a little white meat, did not smoke, drank decoctions of orange leaves, smiled, and said Sauterne would taste better. Then he read the books in his father's library on nervous diseases, and said, "I am lost!" Not forgetting the reading, one does not wonder that the treatment kept up the seizures. Du Camp describes a typical example:

"Suddenly, without apparent cause, Gustave raised his head and became very pale; he had felt the aura, the mysterious breath which passes over the face like the flitting of a ghost; his expression was that of anguish, and he raised his shoulders with a gesture of distressing discouragement. He said, *There is a flame in my left eye*; then in a few seconds: *The flame is in the right eye, everything is colored yellow.*‡ Sometimes this peculiar condition lasted

*Another sign of the ocular origin of Flaubert's seizures is this fact of the influence of light as an incidental cause. In the two attacks, described for us in detail, it was light suddenly flashing upon the eyes and further arousing the irritated surcharged optical centers.

†The poor man seems to have been bled nearly to death, by his father, in every subsequent attack. Once when no blood could be got, his father scalded the patient's hand, inadvertently, of course, in the attempt to arouse circulation and get more blood. The wound was long in healing, and Flaubert carried the scars all his life.

‡If there is any value in the theory of the indication of the seat of the lesion in epilepsy from the peripheral organ first affected, then the ocular nature of the aura in Flaubert's case deserves consideration.

for several minutes. It was evident that he hoped the warning would pass without an attack. Then his face would grow still more bloodless, and take on an expression of despair; rapidly he would then walk, or run, to his bed, stretch himself out upon it, gloomy and dejected, as if alive in his shroud, and cry out: *I hold the reins, there is the wagon, I hear the bell,—ah, I see the lantern of the inn!* There followed a harrowing moan the vivid tone of which still vibrates in my ear, and the convulsion followed. This paroxysm into which his whole being entered with fear, was invariably succeeded by profound sleep, and great lassitude for several days."

Dr. Dumesnil, one of Flaubert's many biographers and critics, has written a literary or semimedical clinic, in which he seeks to show that his patient did not have "typical" epilepsy, but that his disease should be called, "Hystero-Neurasthenia." The word raises a smile, and we may pardon the Frenchman's turn for systematization, bringing everything into a *cadre*, or deftly forcing clinical facts into a rigid theoretic pattern. The distinction does not aid us at all to understand either the disease, or its etiology, does not even help us in the simple matter of symptomatology. It is indeed the prototype of a very modern morbid habit among physicians of a certain cast of mind, who cry "atypical" when the particular clinical figure cannot be made to fit into the nosologic puzzle. The more shrewd observer knows that with rare exceptions every case is individual; not even those called infectious and organic are identical in their histories, and when it is a question of functional and psychic diseases, all theories and typicalities end in thin air and ludicrousness. The epileptic seizure in many chronic cases is so uniform that the word typical has been applied to it, but even here there are infinite variations chronicled, while in the early stages, the life-clinic, and the petit-mal types of the disease, there are as many types as there are cases, and there are a thousand

atypical examples to one that is properly or foolishly denominated "typical."

Beyond question, Flaubert's seizures will not fit into the crude, "classic," and outworn framework of those lost in the impasse of nominalism, and theory-worshipping. The aura lasted too long, "several minutes," leaving time for speech, gestures, acts, walking, etc. Then there were sentences repeated before the paroxysm. There was no frothing, no biting the tongue. There was long slumber afterwards. There was no mental deterioration, properly speaking, and the disease was at an end in a few years.

So far as we may be certain, there were never any true attacks after those of 1843, except one in 1846. Du Camp spent a part of the summer of 1846 with his friend at Croisset, and nothing is said as to seizures. In May, 1847, the two friends set out from Paris for a walking tour in Brittany, and on the fourth day there was a "crise nerveuse." The famous Dr. Brettonneau was sent for. "He confessed his ignorance and said: Our science is but a series of desiderata, and we have only reached the point of asking what is Migraine?"

This is the first time that this wonderful word has been heard applied to Flaubert's disease.

Du Camp proceeds to say that Brettonneau ordered such huge doses of quinine that even Du Camp objected. To which the physician replied: "Sulphate of quinine is good for nothing if it does not produce in the organism the effect of the shooting a cannon." Whether it was due to the cannon shot or to the ocular rest and the open air active life, there were no further attacks, either of "epilepsy," "hysteroneurasthenia," or even of "migraine," during the four months' tour. We read

that the walkers carried on their backs thirty volumes of books!

"When I arrived in Rouen," says Du Camp, "Flaubert's father was bearing a burden of which the effects were seen in his face. One read there of humiliation, despair, and a sort of resignation before a power which he could not conquer. His science was paralyzed before an incurable disease, and his paternal affection suffered because of the powerlessness of his art. The sacred disease, the great neurosis, what Paracelsus calls man's earthquake, had struck Gustave, and brought him to the ground. The poor giant bore the disaster as philosophically as he could. He tried to laugh, or be witty, and to reassure those about him; but he forgot his role, his head fell, and it was easy to see with what his thoughts were busy."

"His nervous malady threw a veil, as it were, over his whole life," and from this time, as he told George Sand, he was "afraid of life." For three years he never went out without a medical attendant, and indeed during his whole life he kept somebody near him. From this cause he hardly ever walked, preferring a carriage, and his fear degenerated into a strange rule of hygiene that walking itself was hurtful. He retreated not only into solitude, but into himself, and, with the exception of the noise he himself made, his mother's care was to envelop him in an atmosphere of perfect calm. She watched over him all her life, looking for the slightest symptom of ill-health, and at every unusual noise or silence she would run to the door.

To the trained oculist who has cured a number of epileptic patients, it matters not what name is tacked upon the clinical facts; and to one who seeks the single cause of the individual case of disease, or the pathogenesis of the affection generally, such

meticulous foibles provoke either mirth or disgust, possibly both.

All such puerilities are, or should be, forgotten in Flaubert's case, because of the tragedy that followed the first attacks. Instead of a joyous, expansive, energetic, exuberant healthfulness of mind, there was gloom, silence, self-repression—a most morbid psychosis. Previous to this time he had played the dilettante with the poison of pessimism; he had tasted and tested it in jocular mood; he now fed upon it, and it bit into every cell of his body, and attended every stirring of his psyche.

This disease shattered his life, rendering him solitary and unsociable. He did not speak of it willingly, but in strict confidence he did so freely. Never was he known to mention the true name of his affliction, but alluded only to his "attack of nerves." (Du Camp.)

I have had two distinct lives * * * my active, emotional, passionate life, filled with somersaults, contradictions, and manifold sensations, came to an end at the age of twenty-two. (25.)

Even among physicians few were better equipped as regards medical science than Flaubert. It is therefore of interest to see how he looked upon his own case. The following excerpts are illustrative:

You ask me how I cured myself of the nervous hallucinations from which I formerly suffered? In two ways: (1) By studying them scientifically, that is to say, by trying to understand them; and (2) by force of will. I have often felt insanity coming upon me. There was a whirl of ideas and images in my poor brain, in which my consciousness, my *me*, seemed to founder like a ship beneath a storm. But I clung desperately to my reason. It prevailed over everything though besieged and beaten upon. At other times I used to try, by means of imagination, to give myself these horrible sufferings factitiously. I have played with madness and fantasy like Mithridates with the poisons. I was sustained by a mighty pride, and I conquered the mischief by wrestling with it. (36.)

He spoke correctly when he said, "I am the Victim of Physiology." (Du Camp.)

There are only two or three years (from 17 to 19) in which I have lived in full. * * * Since then I have deteriorated furiously; some mornings I am frightened at myself, I am so wrinkled and used up. * * * But I do not regret my youth. I was atrociously weary, I dreamed of suicide! I was devoured with every kind of melancholy. My nervous malady has done me good, for it brought all this down to the physical basis and left my head cooler, besides making me acquainted with curious psychologic phenomena of which no one has any idea or rather has never felt. (32.)

In my youth I was horribly wearied, I dreamed of suicide, I consumed myself in all possible kinds of melancholy; my nervous malady did me good, it diverted all that to the physical element, and left my head cooler, and then it introduced me to curious psychological phenomena, of which no one has any idea or rather which no one has felt. I will take my revenge some day, I will utilize them in a book (referring to *St. Anthony*), but as it is a subject which frightens me, speaking from the point of view of health, I must wait in order to be able to give these impressions to myself artificially, ideally, and so without danger to myself or my work. (32.)

My nervous disease was the froth of these little intellectual facetiæ. Each attack was a kind of hemorrhage of innervation, seminal losses of the picturesque powers of the brain, a hundred thousand images springing at once like fire works. There was an atrocious tearing of the soul from the body (I was many times convinced I was dead); but my personality, the essential, rational being held out to the end; without this suffering I would have been worthless because I should have been purely passive, and I always retained consciousness even when I was unable to speak. (32.)

I also had my nervous period, my sentimental epoch, and like a galley slave I have its scar on my neck. With my burned hand I have the right now to write concerning the nature of fire. (31.)

But the old secret appears at times, the old misery of which no one knows, the profound wound always concealed. (33.)

Add to this my attacks of the nerves which are only involuntary declivities of ideas and images. (31.)

I have had a great deal of experience with neuroses. All treatment ordered in these conditions only makes the evil worse. I have never met a single physician intelligent

in these things—no, not one. This is consoling. One must study himself scientifically and experiment as to what is the best thing to do. (50.)

When he told me that I had "a disease of the spinal cord, a softening of the brain," it made me laugh. 1853.

If I had had a sounder brain, I should not have made myself ill over reading law, and wearying myself. The vexation instead of staying in my head, passed into my limbs, and made them writhe with convulsions. It was a deviation. (31.)

In the last quotation we see an acuteness of observation and a soundness of judgment which no physician of that day could have equaled. There is a flashing glimpse into the physiology of epilepsy. If some of our modern epileptic specialists had either the desire or the ability to look at the disease in such a physiological and rational way, we should be much nearer a solution of the terrible problem. To the irritation of reading he ascribes the source of his ill—in a half-blind way, of course, and yet clearly, and his *deviation* is a good statement of the explanation of the storm of derouted reflex irritation submerging the lower centers.

In 1851, at the age of 30, when Flaubert's solicitude and fright as regards epilepsy had somewhat subsided, he wrote the following remarkable sentence:

The secret of everything which surprises you in me, dear friend, is in this part of my private life which no one knows. The single confidant which it had was interred four years ago.

Five years before this, and while he was still under the terrifying influence of the shock, he was compelled to go to Paris on some business connected with the death of his father. A medical attendant accompanied him every instant. His friend, Du Camp, says of him during this visit, that he passed rapidly and without apparent cause from a state of

excitement or exaltation to that of depression, that of normal health being almost unknown. He either walked so swiftly that his friends could not keep up with him, or he slept so soundly that it was almost impossible to awaken him.

This description appears to me to have a significance which is simply amazing. And it is quite as astonishing that a multitude of writers, medical and literary, have wholly neglected it. Writing four years previously he says that his "secret" was known to only one person who died "four years ago." There is but one explanation of these things, and of many such mysteries one need not recount, and especially of the character of *St. Anthony* of the "second style" or making, etc. There is no clinical explanation of all these facts, except upon the supposition that since the "earthquake" of 1843, Flaubert was constantly under the influence of opium. In 1853 Flaubert wrote that he had often heard his father credited with a comprehension or diagnosis of diseases without understanding the reasons whereby he reached his conclusions. One cannot be sure that Flaubert's mother did or did not, also know the "secret." There is no reason why the world should not know it, and one may hope that documentary proof may sometime transform my theory into history. It certainly throws a flood of light into a hundred puzzling mysteries, and solves many of the enigmas of his character, life, and literary workmanship in a most gratifying manner.

And especially as to the choice of subject, method of out-working, etc., of the morbid piece of literature, the second *Saint Anthony*, which he composed during the years preceding the journey to the Orient. A study of that book will make more clear Du Camp's correct observation, that "Flaubert's faults were especially the consequences of his ner-

vous ailment, without which his talent, his habits, his character remain inexplicable."

"At the age of twenty," writes Du Camp, "Flaubert had an exceptional intellectual development; he was very peculiar, highly original, open to the world and appropriating everything with extraordinary rapidity. His reading had been extensive, and his memory was well-stocked. He worked with ease, and he was naturally fruitful, like a good tree planted in fat soil and grafted with a master hand. * * * But now Flaubert stopped. He explained his loss of memory as due to the abuse of quinine with which he had been stuffed. His former large curiosity was stifled, he narrowed his field of action, and limited himself to the revery of the moment. For months he never read a journal, and would not allow any one to speak of the external world. Real life was put out of his thought, and he seemed to float in a continuous dream from which he was aroused only with effort."

When the plan of an oriental journey had been agreed upon Flaubert delayed it until he should be able to complete the *Saint Anthony* upon which he had been working with great zeal for several years. At last it was ready, and the decision as to the worth of the great enterprise was to be left to his two best friends. So sure was Flaubert of their opinion that before he began the reading to them he waved the pages above his head and cried out: "Now, if you do not howl with enthusiasm, nothing is capable of moving you." The patient friends listened in silence for four days, eight hours a day, thirty-two hours in all! What could the poor judges answer the eager questioner?

"Phrases, phrases, beautiful, expertly constructed, harmonious, often redundant, made of grandiose fancies and of peculiar metaphors,—but only phrases, which might be mixed and transposed, without changing the book as a whole."

"Useless work! We could neither comprehend, nor guess whither it all tended, and in fact it arrived nowhere. Three years of labor without result! * * * We judged that

the thing should be thrown into the fire and never spoken of again. Flaubert leaped up and uttered a cry of horror."

"You are perhaps right;" he said to us: "by absorption in my subject I have been fascinated by it and have not seen clearly. I admit the faults you speak of, but they are inherent in my nature; what is the remedy?" The renunciation, we said, of such vague subjects, the renunciation of lyricism, and the choice of a subject in which lyricism will be ridiculous.

He often said to Du Camp: "I was diseased with the cancer of lyricism; you operated upon me. It was high time, but I shrieked with the pain."* Later Flaubert frankly confessed that in *Saint Anthony* he was "himself the Saint, and I forgot it." And the Apostle of the objective in art voices piteously his fall in the mud of disappointment. In 1853 he writes:

"I feel more and more funereal. My novel gives me cold sweats; sixty-five pages in five months! Oh, the joyful times of *St. Anthony*, where are you? I then wrote with my whole being!" (32.)

"I know those masked balls of the imagination, back from which one returns with death in the heart, exhausted, tired out, having seen only falsity, and indulged only in follies." (32.)

"*St. Anthony* was an experiment. It was a subject in which I was entirely free, as regards lyricism, movements, extravagances. I was writing according to my nature, and had only to go straight on. I shall never again find those recklessnesses of style such as I experienced during those eighteen months as I joyously chose the pearls of my necklace. I forgot but one thing, the cord."

In one word, *The Temptation of St. Anthony* was a prolonged opium dream. His reason, the instrument of differentiation, precision and limitation, was in abeyance, was submerged in hypnotic paralysis,

*This, be it noted, was the *Saint Anthony* of the second overworking. If that of the third revision long after the "operation" is now recognized as so worthless, what must have been the quality of that of the "second style!"

and his exuberant imagination was allowed unrestricted play in a realm of fancy, tradition, myth, and metaphysical moonshine. From this he returned to the common world, freed, at least in part, from the drug habit. He then seems to have acted upon the advice of his friend and chosen a subject in which lyricism would be both impossible and ridiculous. *Mme. Bovary* was the pattern and ideal of the "realistic novel." He had no creative ability, and so this work is a sort of microscopic photograph in which there is little of value except the polishing of language, perfection of phrase, and the consecration of style. The tremendous contrast between the exuberance of all that preceded *Bovary* and all the pitiful, petty misery that followed after *St. Anthony*, an irritating puzzle to his biographers and critics, did not escape the attention of Flaubert himself:

A bad week, work would not budge; I reached a point where I knew not what to say. Everything was nuances and refinements in which all was black, and it is impossible to make clear by words what is obscure in the thought. I have sketched, bungled, floundered about, groped. I may find myself at last. What a scamp is style! You have no idea of this worthless book. As much as I have been open-breasted in my other books, by so much have I in this sought to be tight-buttoned and to follow a straight geometric line:—no lyricism, no reflections, the author's personality not to be found. (31.)

There are in me, speaking in a literary sense, two distinct fellows, one who is smitten with *geulades*, lyricism, the eagle flight, all the sonorities of rhetoric and the summits of the idea; the other who fathoms and excavates truth to the extent of his ability, who arraigns the tiny fact as relentlessly as the great one, who would make you realize almost *materially* the things he produces. (31.)

In my youth I had great belief in myself, superb leaps of the spirit, impetuosity in my whole being. I dreamed of love, of glory, of the beautiful. My heart was as large as the world, and I breathed all the winds of heaven. Then, little by little I hardened and shriveled up, worn out, withered. (36.)

There are times when I believe that I am wrong in trying to write a rational book, and not abandon myself to all the lyric extremes, violences, philosophies, fantastic eccentricities that come into my head. (30.)

Even at the age of 18 he correctly describes his natural proclivities:

I incline to facetiousness, to intemperance, to extravagances, the pell-mell of rummaging, without order, without style, etc. (18.)

And in the heart of the *Bovary* period his sighs are still heard:

I love the trenchant and demoniac geniuses; one does not accomplish great things without fanaticism. (32.)

Exuberance—that is what charms me. (34.)

But exuberance was impossible after the opium-years of *Anthony*, and as creative ability had been denied the writer, there could remain only a wearying, ruinous, and impossible striving after perfection of style, elaboration of phrase, ending in a pessimism which is absolutely unrivaled.

Some one has said of Flaubert that "he had a sort of impossibility of happiness," but that superficially cynical criticism needs to be placed over against the pathetic groan of the sufferer toward the end of his life. *How is it possible to be not sick?* Much, indeed all, should be forgiven those who have much suffered. Early his pain began, it was, with few and short exceptions, continuous, and its ingravescence ended with an early death:

Why this happiness? What is it afflicts me? (18.)

A man sick half of the time, and so depressed the other half that he has neither the power nor the intellect to write even the most commonplace letters. (23.)

My nerves leave me little rest. (23.)

By dint of expanding itself to suffering, the soul attains to a prodigious capacity for it. (25.)

Men like me are sick in vain because they cannot die. (25.)

It is the road of death, and I want to live still to make three or four other books. (32.)

My weariness cannot be greater. (32.)

Laxatives, purgatives, derivatives, leeches, fever, diarrhea, three sleepless nights, outrageous stupidity of the bourgeois, etc., etc.,—such has been my week. (33.)

I am profoundly sick without any being knowing how. I cough, and spout continuously like a whale. Add a depression that is unconquerable. I am melancholic, etc. (47.)

My head is very much fatigued. It is useless for me to try to work; the thing will not go. Everything irritates and wounds me, and although I am able to control myself before people, I have from time to time fits of weeping in which it seems as if I should break down. And now I have an entirely new symptom—the approach of old age. (49.)

How tired I am! I would like to go away where I should hear nothing spoken of. (50.)

Flaubert was so irascible, biting, etc., that it seemed as if he must be attacked with the morbid irritability of all the nervous diseases in their germ. (*Goncourts.*) (51.)

What have I not endured for four months! I do not know what has been going on within me, but it is certain that I have been very sick. (52.)

In the depths of pain in every part of my old machine. (53.)

For six months I do not know what ails me, but I feel profoundly ill without being able to say in exactly what way. (54.)

Flaubert not here; sick in bed. (*Goncourts.*) (54.)

It grows worse and worse with me. I have no idea what is the matter, and no one knows. The word neurosis expresses a group of varied phenomena plus the ignorance of the physicians. I am advised to rest; but how? To take things easy, to avoid solitude, etc., all of which are impracticable. There is only one remedy—time. If after a month's rest I do not feel better, I will try the remedy of Charles XII., and remain in bed for six months. (56.)

I am hurrying; I shake myself so as not to lose a minute. Even my bones are tired. (59.)

There are times when it is difficult for me even to lift a penholder. (59.)

The dependence of suffering upon use of the eyes is capitally illustrated in Flaubert's case. I might

have made hundreds of excerpts besides the following:

I have no heart to work at anything whatever. You know that we all have strange moments of weariness; life is so heavy that even those for whom the burden is least weighty often sink beneath it. A week ago I laid aside historical studies—and for what? I do not know. I have scarcely the heart to smoke, and I am filled with a great weariness. It is strange, for two weeks ago I was in the best of health. This change is perhaps the result of the kind of work I have been doing for some time. (17.)

I am not made to enjoy. (25.)

To think is to suffer. (25.)

Those excesses in the matter of work, which exhaust, and by reason of that fatigue which they entail, make you lose more time in the end than you have gained. (25.)

You must know that I am driven wild by writing; style, which is a thing that I take very much in earnest, agitates my nerves horribly. I vex myself, I prey on myself, there are days I am quite ill from it, when I am feverish at night. (25.)

Sometimes one rejoices hugely at success in composition, but this pleasure is bought at the cost of how much discouragement and bitterness? (25.)

You were sick; do not work to excess which exhausts you because of the weariness; you finally lose time which you thought to save. (25.)

I am harassed by my writing; style shakes my nerves horribly. (26.)

My writing does not put me in a normal state. * * * I am furiously tired; sometimes there is a doubled lassitude just as after dinner one wants to vomit. (26.)

From April, 1848, to May, 1849, there is a gap in the correspondence. At this time Flaubert was working hard at the *St. Anthony*, and his health had failed again. (*Tarver*.) (28.)

I left you with laughter in my mouth and gaiety in my heart, and now I am frightfully despairing. What a difference in three days! I know that my happiness left me in returning to Rouen, and taking up the work of each day, the life of minutiae, the writing table, etc. (29.)

For three months I have been writing every day from morning until evening. I am at my wits' end with the ceaseless irritation of the incessant impossibility of completing my task. (29.)

Who knows if I shall not become a Cretin in four years!
(30.)

For the seven or eight days in which I have been busy at these corrections my nerves have been terribly on edge; I hurry, and such work must be done slowly. (31.)

This book tortures me to such a degree that sometimes I become physically sick. For three weeks I often have pain sufficient to make me swoon. At other times I am oppressed, or come near vomiting. I think I should have hanged myself to-day had not my pride prevented. If I cannot finish *Bovary* in fifteen days I shall stop work indefinitely and until I find again the desire to write. I am too irritated, irritating, sullen, etc. (32.)

After great excitement from long-continued writing I have great pain in my knees, my back, and my head, lassitude, etc. (32.)

My head is afire; and because I have written too long,—from noon until midnight. (32.)

I must love you or I could not write, because I am exhausted. I have an iron band about my head. I have written for twelve hours, etc. (32.)

How I suffer! It is a thing atrociously delicious to write and to torture oneself in this way. There is a mystery here which I do not understand. (32.)

To suffer and to think—are these the same thing? (32.)

The week has been bad; I have writhed with exhaustion and abundant disgust. This happens regularly when I have finished something and must go to work again. (32.)

I am overwhelmed. My brain dances in my head. From six o'clock yesterday evening until now, one o'clock, I have copied seventy-seven consecutive pages; it is brutalizing. I have crushed the branches of my cervical vertebræ from bending my head too long. (32.)

Writing brutalizes me. I feel toward literature the hatred of powerlessness. (34.)

I cling to my chimera of style, which wears me out body and soul. (34.)

Since Thursday I have been in a frightful state of weariness and weakness, the result of a paragraph which I could not finish. This book crushes me, and I use up the remainder of my youth in writing it. (35.)

I must have a herculean temperament to withstand the atrocious tortures to which my work condemns me. (36.)

The more expert I become in my art, the more this art becomes a torment. Imagination stands still and taste grows. (36.)

Few have suffered more than I for the sake of literature. (36.)

I work away stubbornly and then am unable to sleep for two days. At last I finish my unfinishable Chapter VII. (39.)

For a long time I have been training my nerves; sometimes they get angry, and then they disorder the whole machine. (40.)

My wretched book has exhausted even the marrow of my bones. I am used up. (43.)

I read your book for four and a half hours and then did not sleep that night, and I had the stomach trouble. You will cause much gastritis. What a frightful book! If I were not suffering so to-day I would write you a long letter. (44.)

I am working like thirty thousand niggers. * * * Some days I feel as if ground up. I can hardly stand, and intermitting suffocations stifle me. (47.)

It is always so when I set to work. Then I am wretched, wretched, wretched! But this time it is worse than ever before. (48.)

I have been much weakened all this week in which I have written nearly one page. (52.)

Strange things are taking place within me. My psychic weakness must have a secret origin. I feel old, discouraged, used up. Perhaps it is my work which makes me sick, for I have undertaken a senseless task. (54.)

For the last four months, in which I have endured infernal anguish, I have in all written four pages; and bad ones they are. My poor brain cannot withstand another such injury; this grows very clear to me. (54.)

Physical fatigue prevents me writing every day. (57).
1878.

My furious labor brought on what Dr. Trelet calls *la folie lucide*. (57.)

Lest one should carelessly repeat the careless error that mental labor may produce suffering even with healthy eyes, it need only be recalled that that foolishness has long ago been outlived. There are a number of answers to the "brain-fag" philosopher. There are few eyes without some refractive error, and even with least, an immense amount of labor, may produce great suffering. In Flaubert's case

the disproof is perfect, because he found his mind worked well and painlessly when he lay down and closed his eyes.

Then there is the striking fact that when he was walking or journeying, all pain, and even all pessimism disappeared as if by magic:

My health, far from bettering, is worse, and I was compelled to consult Dr. Cloquet at Paris, who emphatically urged me to live in a warmer climate. I leave for Egypt in October. (27.)

He was not seasick, but for the eleven days of the sea-voyage he ate, smoked, joked, and was genial, with his stories, wit, good spirits, etc. (28.)

I have become enormously fat in the East. (29.)

As to health it is excellent. We are all getting fat. (29.)

In Egypt he says:—What we need, in writing, is the soul of the matter, the idea of the thing. * * * All our learning,—of what use is it? But the heart, the life, the sap? Whence to set out, and where to go? Oh, when I get back, I shall take up once more my old tranquil life at my writing table, etc. (29.)

Why was I so happy and healthy in Egypt? (32.)

Yesterday and to-day I slept like a drunken man all the afternoon. I had the feeling as one has after drinking six bottles of brandy. I was stupid and dazed. But this evening, after dieting all day, strength has returned and I have written almost in a breath a whole page of close psychologic reasoning. (32.)

After the journey to Trouville, he writes: What a volume I could make this evening if expression were as easy as thinking! (32.)

I advise you to travel and you say your health does not permit. But it is precisely for your health that you should change your life. (36.)

In Africa: I sleep like a stone, eat like an ogre, and drink like a sponge. You have never seen me while traveling,—then everything goes well. (37.)

I have recovered from the frightful blow which *St. Anthony* gave me. I do not boast of not being a bit dizzy, but I am no longer sick. * * * Has there been some progress in me? From day to day I find myself more sensi-

tive, more easily moved. (37.) (On his way back from the Orient.)

For five months I have been in a deplorable condition, and if I go on this way the work will not be ended in twenty years. I must positively take a journey in Africa. (37.)

It was high time. In the six months since returning from the Orient I have stifled. (37.)

My four weeks at Vichy were stupid, and I did nothing but sleep. Doubtless I needed it; it refreshed me. But my intellect is atrophied. (39.)

The excitement of bringing out *The Candidate* told severely on Flaubert's nerves, and he consulted a doctor, who recommended a Swiss town. (53.)

Did I tell you that I should go this summer and set up my nerves at St. Moritz? It is by the advice of Dr. Hardy, who calls me an hysterical old woman. (53.)

I shall soon spend a few weeks on the Righi to deneuropathize myself. (53.)

To Switzerland by my physician's orders. (53.)

At Kalt-Bad for 15 days, and bursting with ennui because I have brought no books or work with me. I am thinking of myself, and when one does this he will end by becoming really ill. (53.)

Righi, where I nearly died with ennui, did me much good. My troubles have lessened, and I am able to go upstairs like a young man. I shall now return and go at my novel, which will take me two or three years to complete. (53.)

As it is absolutely necessary for me to get out of this condition of agony, I shall in September go to Concarneau. (54.)

I have been at Concarneau for 15 days without being absurdly well. I am in a more calm condition. (54.)

Since I have tried hydrotherapy I find myself calmer and am going to work again without looking behind myself. (54.)

I have worked this winter in a most reckless way and reached Paris in an absolutely lamentable condition. I am a little better. (55.)

I am just back in the old house which I left last year, three-fourths dead with discouragement. Things are not indeed superb, but they are perhaps tolerable. I am re-equipped and I wish to write. (55.)

At first glance it might seem that Flaubert's com-

plaints of ill health, pessimism, etc., began too early in life to be caused by eyestrain, and that they arose in some precedent or more fundamental morbidity of his nature. "I cried too much in my youth to sing now ; my voice is hoarse," says the young man of 25. We must not forget that as a child he was so preoccupied in his reading, read so long and so intensely, that he frequently fell over in a swoon. The boy of 10 wrote "tragedies," and when he was just 9 years old he writes to a boy friend :

I will send you some of my political liberal speeches. I will also send you some of my comedies. If you wish us to join writing, I will write comedy, and you shall write your dreams, and as there is a lady who comes to our house, and who always talks silly things to us, I will write them.

And at 13 years the true note is struck :

As for us, let us concern ourselves with art, with art, that is greater than peoples, than crowns and kings, always there, floating on enthusiasm, with her heavenly diadem.

Observant and keen oculists have often noticed a common symptom in the stories of their patients. There are many ways of expressing it—"everything stops," they repeat ; "while I am writing or reading, things stop," "I get blind spells," "I half lose myself," "I get dazed," "I seem stupid," "I can't see," "everything becomes blank," "I have to quit and go take a walk," "my mind won't work," "I sit like a fool," "things fade out," "I lose my place," "the letters blur up"—and a thousand such expressions. Carlyle would sit for hours staring at his paper in blank amazement and thoughtlessness. In the letters of nearly every great eyestrain sufferer we find this symptom constantly reappearing. It is illustrated with most striking insistence every day that Flaubert drove his baulking eyes to their savage

work. It begins as early as 18 and is clearly stated in a thousand passages I have not transcribed. The following are examples:

Formerly I thought, reflected, and wrote, good and bad thrown recklessly upon paper, so uncontrolled was my fervor; now I no not hink, meditation has gone, and I write nothing. My thoughts are confused, I am incapable of any imaginative labor, and everything that I write is dry, painful, forced, and extracted with suffering. I began a recondite work a couple of months ago, and all I have done is absurd, without the least idea in it, and I had to stop. (18.)

The further I go the less capable I find myself of expressing the idea.

Two execrable days. It is impossible for me to write a line. How I have sworn, spoiled paper, stamped with rage.

I always am frightened when I go to write. In beginning a work, do you also experience a sort of religious terror, an apprehension in commencing the dream? (25.)

Sick, irritated, the prey a thousand times a day of an atrocious agony. It was not like this formerly. (25.)

Already my imagination dies down, my power weakens, and my phrase disgusts me, and if I keep what I write it is because I love to surround myself with memories just as I do not sell my old clothes. (25.)

If you knew all the invisible bands of inaction which are about my body, and all the fogs which obscure my brain! I often feel a deadly fatigue of ennui upon being compelled to do the simplest thing, and it is only by great efforts that I am able to seize a clear idea. My youth steeped me in a sort of opium of weariness for my whole life. I hate life. It is torment to eat, to dress myself, to stand up. I have felt it everywhere and in everything and throughout everything—at college, at Paris, Rouen, the Nile, on the voyage. (30.)

I must keep the most complete immobility of life in order to write. I think better lying on my back and with my eyes closed. (31.)

I assure you I have fear now (of madness), but in seating myself at the table to write to you, the sight of the white paper has calmed me. (31.)

At work the whole week on *Bovary*, mad at not being able to make any progress. (31.)

I do not know if it is the Springtime Season, but I am in a frightfully bad humor, and my nerves are as irritable as wires. I am in a rage without knowing why. Perhaps

it is all caused by my novel. It does not budge, will not go on; I am more weary than if I were rolling mountains. At times I almost break into tears. A superhuman will is demanded to write, and I am only a man. It seems occasionally as if I needed to sleep continuously for six months. I have written only 20 pages in a month, working at least seven hours a day, and the result of it all is bitterness, inner humiliation, my only reliance the ferocity of an unconquerable fantasy; but I grow old, and life is short. (31.)

Sometimes my arm almost falls with weariness, and my head is lost in vagueness. I live a bitter life, without external pleasures, and the only thing that keeps me up is a kind of continual raging, that weeps often because of powerlessness, but which never stops. I love my work with an unbridled and perverse zeal, like an ascetic. The hair-cloth scratches my body. Sometimes, when I find only inner vacuity, when expression is denied, when after long pages of scribbling I find I have not worked out a single phrase, I fall on my lounge and rest there, stupid and in a subjective desert of ennui. (31.)

I have succeeded in writing but one scene in four months. (32.)

For three days I have rolled among my furniture in attempting to find what to write. There are cruel moments in which the thread is broken and the reel unwound. * * * The end of my book is postponed, and it may prove the end of my own life. * * * Everything comes out of the head, and if that miscarries, it was at least good gymnastics. What is natural to me is unnatural to others, is extraordinary, fantastic, metaphysical howling, mythology. *St. Anthony* did not give me a quarter of the mental tension which *Bovary* causes. It was an outpouring; I had only pleasure in writing during the eighteen months of its composition. Its five hundred pages were the most profoundly voluptuous of my life. I now have to get within the skins of those antipathetic to me, and for six months I make platonic love while I am exalted as a Catholic at the call of the bells and want to go to the confessional. (32.)

My head whirls and my throat burns because I have hunted, chopped, dug, gone over again, rummaged, and howled, in a hundred thousand ways, a phrase which at last I have finished. (32.)

I am broken-hearted with weariness and humiliated with weakness. Ideas will not come; in vain I dig in my head,

my heart, and my senses, nothing anywhere. The whole day has passed thus and I have been unable to write a line, not even think a thought, or find any activity. Utter emptiness and void. (32.)

My head swims with stupidity, discouragement, and fatigue. I spent four hours without achieving a single sentence. To-day I have not written a line. What atrocious labor, what exhaustion! O Art! Art! what is this mad chimera which eats the heart, and why? What a fool is one to give himself such suffering! (32.)

For four days I have had fever, and yesterday it was violent. (32.)

You do not know what it is to remain a whole day with your head in your two hands, trying to squeeze a word out of your wretched brain. (45.)

You understand nothing of my literary torment. I do not know how to go about it to write. (45.)

As for literature, I am incapable of any work. In about four months (during which I have been in hellish anxiety) I have written fourteen pages in all, and those bad ones. My poor brain will not stand such a blow. That seems to me quite clear. (54.)

In a strictly scientific and medical sense, we have here a capital example of what the physiologists call inhibition. A common function is prevented by some reflex which prevents its execution. A subconscious wisdom forefeels the hurt and shrinks from it. The sick lose the spur of action, even the desire for it. The wounded or weak animal feigns death; the hurt eyes notify the brain to stop, and the very effort required to overcome the strain checks mental activity and initiative. It is such a natural, common, and necessary protective method that we have overlooked it. But what vast significance it has for the welfare of the individual literary worker, and for literature itself. It is extremely frequently that in this simple inhibition of thought due to eyestrain lies the entire question of the quality of "inspiration" and of "inspiration" itself. Whipping oneself into "a white heat," as Carlyle and others did, or developing the aphorism-style of Nietzsche, with its morbid

vagueness, excess, and disjointedness, give an altogether diseased character to the literary work. There is, indeed, often tragedy to the worker and to his literary art in not having a normal and physiologically acting ocular mechanism. Of all truths none is truer than that healthy and happy brain-action often depends upon spectacles which give health and ease to ocular function. Forcing inspiration defeats its own object and results in sterility. In the heart of his *Bovary* period Flaubert ground up his soul in agony and fury to overcome this inhibition. He is said to have hunted for one desired word for three weeks. "How tormenting is my *Bovary*! I want to cry sometimes, so much do I feel my lack of power. But I'd rather die than play the juggler with it." And so he stamped and walked, howled, sang, and declaimed, like a madman day and night for thirty years to lash himself into a fury and overcome the inhibitional effects of eyestrain. He could lie down, close his eyes, and his brain would work vividly, and he could go on travels and his mind at once became a fireworks of abundant energy. But sit at his table and write—that he could not do. *St. Anthony* drew its inspiration, as I believe, from opium, and the awful pain of the undeception resulting from that error was never for a moment forgotten by Flaubert. Creative ability was denied him by nature, and if there was any that slipped through the fingers of the Fates, it was paralyzed by disease and fear, or exhaled into dream by the hypnotic. What was left? The labor of days over a sentence, the desolate and empty beauty of cadenced prose, the "filing of the line" until it was a line—geometrically speaking—that is, without breadth or thickness. At its best only esthetic mysticism could result, at its worst, pessimism relentlessly and logically intermixing, what Gautier called the *triste amour du laid*,

"the pitiable love of the unlovely." His own poor mother at last said to him, "The mania for phrases has dried up your heart." His own self-judgment was that he had no interest in the external, in useful things. "I have bid practical life an irrevocable adieu." Some of his rules of literary workmanship, or their consequences, are these:

The whole United States may perish rather than one principle. May I die like a dog rather than hurry a second the phrase which is not ripe.

His great principle now, was that the utmost weakness was to show one's personal feelings in the art work.

I have always forbidden myself to put anything of myself in my writings, but have nevertheless done so.

The idea exists only by virtue of its form.

The men of olden times had no diseases of the nerves such as I have.

Physically speaking, for my health's sake, I need to re-invigorate myself with good poetic phrases.

For fifteen long years I have labored like a mule. I have lived all my life in this maniacal obsession to the exclusion of my other passions, which I shut in cages and which I went to inspect occasionally to amuse myself.

If I have the power I have not the patience, and patience is everything.

What would be fine and desirable would be a book upon nothing at all, a book without exterior bonds, which would upbear itself by the internal force of its own style, like the earth without support in the air, a book almost without subject, or at least where the subject was almost invisible, if possible. The most beautiful works are those having the least of material; the more that expression comes near to being thought, the more the word adheres to it and disappears, the more beautiful it is. I believe the future of art is along this road.

Style is in itself and exclusively an absolute method of seeing things.

The moment a thing is true it is good.

Now what in the person, and in his art-work, and in his philosophy, was the conclusion of the whole matter? The latest and perhaps the best answer is, Zolaism. But the ideal is sought by thousands of

other errant pseudoliterateurs that tell their wearisome story in every bookstall and "popular" magazine of the day. It is, strangely enough, a result of diametrically opposed and opposing tendencies, disease being the father of both—"Art for art's sake," and "form," empty and contentless; or Zolaism—the formless search for "truth"—the latter day alias of mud and filth, shortly, the yellow newspaper. Both vicious bastards have for their father Flaubert's monotonously repetitive "Art has no morality," leaving the "artists" to be impaled on either horn of the dilemma. They usually succeeded in being doubly gored. Already Flaubert recognized the fact in himself when he said, "The basis of my character, whatever is said, is the mountebank"; and in the further statements:

I hate what it is agreed to call *realism*, although I am made one of its pontiffs.

When Zola shall give me the definition of the term *Naturalism*, I shall perhaps be a Naturalist. But until then I do not know what it means.

They would use Mount Olympus for a potato patch. (1846.)

"I am the last of the Church Fathers," he said a few years before his death.

Du Camp, in allusion to his friend, says that the restless search for the exquisite finally ends in all sensation becoming almost pain. So dissatisfied was Flaubert with his (the greatest Master's) most excessive and most perfect work in "style," that he wished to buy up all the copies of *Bovary* and suppress the publication. *Anthony* had proved a hypnosis dream, *Salambo*, "an orgy of antiquarian erudition." How was it with the method itself?

I have suppressed phrases at the end of five or six pages which have cost me the work of entire days.

Sometimes one realizes that he needs to make himself

suffer, to hate his own flesh, to throw mud in his face, so hideous does it seem. Without the love of form I should perhaps have been a great mystic.

This book, which is only style, has for its constant danger style itself. The phrase intoxicates me, and I lose sight of the idea.

The deplorable mania of analysis exhausts me. I doubt everything, and even my doubt. You thought me young, and I am old.

As I approach mastery, the art of writing appears in itself more impracticable and I am more and more disgusted with anything I produce.

The plastic art of style is not as large as the entire idea, I well know, but whose the fault? Language; we have too many things and not enough forms, whence the torture of the conscientious. (1853.)

After all the struggle and the "success" there is the most pitiful failure: "*Form is only an error of sense, and substance a fancy of your thought.*" A faint and far forefeeling of a greater truth is dimly seen in his saying:

The blood of the Middle Ages still pulses in the veins of humanity, and it pants for the mighty air of future centuries, which only bring it storms.

In the score of clinical biographies I have collected it is a rule, almost absolute, that the general pessimistic view of a writer depends accurately upon the persistence and intensity of the suffering from eye-strain, and the most extreme and maddest expressions come from a special day or hour of ocular and nervous injury. This rule is admirably illustrated in Flaubert's case. The Goncourts say that Flaubert told them that it was indignation alone that kept him alive. Over his own tomb might have been erected Goya's monument, a skeleton crawling out of the grave and scrawling on the wall, *Nothing*. I choose a few lines:

There is left only weariness during life, a tomb after death, and rottenness for eternity. (18.)

Vice wearies me as much as virtue. (18.)

Let us spit on their heads, and then calmly continue our task. (21.)

The modern weariness that gnaws a man's entrails and turns an intelligent being into a walking shadow, a thinking apparition. (24.)

Real griefs stay in my heart, bitter and hard; they crystallize as they come. (25.)

There is no springtime in my heart.

If I had expected better things of life I should have cursed it. (25.)

I have never seen a child without thinking it will become aged, nor a cradle without seeing a grave. (25.)

You seem to be happy; that is sad. (25.)

The burden of great despair that nothing lightens. (25.)

I now see my maturity bordering on decay. (25.)

I have never had a sentiment that I have not tried to be done with it. (30.)

I mock at everything, even at those I love most. (31.)

I was born with a heap of vices which have never even looked out of the window. I love wine and do not drink. I am a gambler and have never touched a card. Debauchery attracts me, but I live like a monk. I am at bottom a mystic, but I have no faith. (31.)

Happiness is an invention of the devil in order to make the human race mad. (32.)

The love of humanity is as sorry a thing as the love of God. (32.)

If I ever achieve any success I shall greatly regret it. (32.)

Despair is my normal state. (36.)

What a city of the dead is the human heart. (36.)

Paganism, Christianity, Smuggery. These are the three great evolutions of humanity. It is not pleasant to find one's self in the last. (50.)

The odor of corpses disgusts me less than the miasm of egotism breathing from all mouths. (50.)

The mass, the number is always idiotic. (50.)

Do you know what is worse than all this? It is that one becomes habituated to it. (50.)

I will vomit upon my contemporaries the disgust with which they inspire me, even if I have to burst my breast to do it. (52.)

It seems to me I am traversing an endless solitude in order to go I do not know where. And I myself am the desert, the traveler, and the camel; all in one. (54.)

In the biographic clinics of private or of public patients, there is a constant repetition of the complaint of old age coming on prematurely, even in youth. Eyestrain suffering quickly etches in the face the indelible lines of the waste of life in conquering the insuperable and Sisyphean task. It is indeed an ever-recurrent and never-renounced Cadmean victory. In Flaubert's case, it, of course, began early. His "innocencies," "simplicities," etc., appeared in childhood, and his school days were miserable.

In my own eyes I seem immeasurably aged, older than an obelisk. (25.)

Alas, I am not as gay as formerly. I am growing old. I no longer have that magnificent *blague*, etc. (24.)

Ten years ago I was ruddy, all was perfume, and I exhaled life and love; now I see maturity near to withering. (25.)

For three days, although I work long (about ten hours a day), I am seized with an unparalleled sadness; I feel in my soul a mortal colic of bitterness. (25.)

Oh, how old I am growing, how old! (32.)

Sometimes I feel exhausted and tired to the marrow of my bones, and I think of death with longing as an end of all this anguish. (38.)

I have had hypochondria. Once at the height of my youthfulness I was thus seized for eighteen months, and I nearly succumbed. (38.)

I am submerged in a kind of black melancholy which appears with or without reason many times during the day. It passes and then it begins again. It is a long time since I have written. Nervous strength fails me. (49.)

As for myself, I am a used-up man; my brain will never again act normally. (49.)

His profound ennui, discouragement with everything, his wish for death, to be forever rid of his *moi*. (51.) (*Goncourts*.)

But I feel myself mortally wounded. To create a work of art one must not be burdened with care, and this is not true of myself. I am neither Christian nor Stoic. I shall soon be fifty-four years old, and at this time of life one does not change his habits or remake his life. The future has no good to offer me, and the past horrifies me. * * *

Old age and decadence. As to literature, I do not believe any more in myself. I find myself empty—a discovery with little consolation in it. (54.)

I am seized with fits of prostration, when I feel as if annihilated or about to explode. (55.)

As for myself, I consider myself done for. My brain will not recover itself. One cannot write when one has lost one's self-esteem. I only ask for one thing, that is, to die and be quiet. (59.)

And this of a man of splendid natural health and endowment of vitality, normally exuberant, expansive, and life-loving. As in others, here, too, the depression and abnormality proceeds almost to insanity. At the age of 19 Mme. Lugier told the Goncourts that she feared he would lose his mind. There is a lurid suggestiveness in the story of Flaubert, told by himself, in reference to a poor, hysterical and weak-minded man who believed he had a tape-worm, and whose entire life and actions were dominated by the tyranny of this belief, so that it dictated his food, drink, his going and coming, etc. Flaubert was fascinated and ends the tale by, "I find it makes me giddy."

Louis Lambert of Balzac struck me like a thunderclap; it is the story of a man who became insane in thinking intangible things. This has stuck to me with a thousand hooks. (31.)

How close to insanity we sometimes feel ourselves, I especially. (31.)

After bordering on, "grazing" madness or suicide, I am now completely recovered. (49.)

In all the previous cases studied and in the vast majority of private patients suffering from eye-strain, the oculist finds an unconquerable driving and necessity of walking, journeying, hydropathizing, or some other form of eye-rest. In Flaubert's case there are illuminating and seemingly contradictory exceptions to the rule. But closely studied they not

only "test," but they "prove" it. In the first place, Flaubert spent more time in travel and trips abroad than the "Monk of Croisset" is usually supposed to have done. There was the summer walking tour with Du Camp, and the two years' Oriental journeying; there was another trip to Africa, one to England, a coaching tour through several countries, many outings to Paris, etc. During these times there was a return of normality, happiness, gayety, while melancholy, pessimism, and ill health disappeared in an instant, and until the day of the return and resumption of literary labor. Then sickness and horror began. It is true that while at his work in his room he was seemingly the worst of hygienic sinners as regards exercise. But thereby hangs a tale! The beginning of the habit of staying in his room and not exercising was naturally and surely the shock and fear of having epileptic seizures while outside of the house. There was a reckless, ill-advised, but most determined resolve on that score. His mother had to torment him to make him walk in the garden. He never went beyond, he had no horse, no boat, etc. He would sit half a day in the same position. He worked at his literary task fourteen or fifteen hours every day, going to bed at 4 A. M., and often at it again as early as 9. This continued for some eighteen months. At the age of 32 he says he had not taken a walk or seen the country for two years. He finally came to contend that walking was hurtful to him or to anybody. He tried to "get even" with the still small voice by such outbursts as these:

Too much rowing, too much exercise! Yes, sir! The civilized man has not such a great need of locomotion as our friends, the doctors, insist. (57.)

I am now reading books on hygiene; how comical they are! What impertinence these physicians have! What asses, for the most part, they are! (53.)

I am reasonable. I go out every day. I take exercise and come back tired and even more stupid. This is what I get for it. (54.)

The overlooked solution of this sorry and puzzling contradiction is at hand: While at his work he walked, howled, stamped, declaimed, like a madman. Passers-by wondered and gossiped. This served a double purpose. It enabled him to get exercise of a sort, it is true, but real nevertheless, and it was his peculiar and logical method of whipping himself into excitement, "white heat," that is, of overcoming the inhibition of mental action due to his eyestrain.

My chamber walls remember still my frightful oaths, the stampings of my feet, and my cries of distress which I vented alone. (24.)

It is very late, and I am tired. My throat is raw from having yelled all the evening in writing, according to my exaggerated habit. (32.)

Let no one say that I take no exercise, for I carry on so that sometimes I walk several leagues a day in composing. (32.)

I howl! I sweat! It is glorious! It is sometimes decidedly more than delirium. (34.)

Howling from morning until evening almost to break my breast. (38.)

In the silence of my workroom I indulge in such howlings and fury that one would think it was a horse galloping, neighing, and kicking. (39.)

There is scarcely one eyestrain sufferer that is not a victim of insomnia. When the morbid reflexes are resisted by the brain, when one organ is not too persistently or violently harmed, when the struggle for health is obstinate, and its regaining has not become impossible, then sleep is possible and some measure of refreshment is usually secured. Flaubert's case again illustrates the clinical truth:

I have been two days without accomplishing anything and I am very tired, worked out, most sleepy. (31.)
For too many nights I have gone to bed late, rarely be-

fore three o'clock. It is a stupid way in which I exhaust myself, but I wished so much to be done with this novel. (32.)

I slept a good part of the afternoon, and took up my work again in the evening with great exhaustion. (32.)

I have the greatest need of sleep now for several days, and I prefer to lie completely fallow rather than half-work. (32.)

For two and one-half months my best night's sleep has been five hours. Finally, after three days, I slept my fill and am brutalized by it. (51.)

I sleep twelve hours a day; it rests my poor brain. (52.)

In the last eight days I have slept altogether ten hours. I keep up with cold water and coffee. (55.)

I have probably injured my brain severely, judging according to my sleep, because I sleep every night ten or twelve hours. Is it the beginning of softening? (56.)

That mysterious, protean, universal disease, called by the senseless name, "migraine," is surely 99 times out of 100 due to eyestrain, and just as certainly Flaubert was a lifelong sufferer from it. His naturally strong, and in all parts and organs equally strong, physique enabled his organismal wisdom to endure the assaults of the morbid reflexes upon each and every individual part with marvelous success. Only once, indeed, did one mechanism, the brain, fail to neutralize or cast off the ceaselessly incoming irritation or morbid reflex. But, thanks to its inherent vigor, and probably to opium, it was able to resist the epileptic storm, and the ship righted itself finally, and pursued its course. I shall briefly allude to some of the diseases which are now more or less well recognized as the results of eyestrain, the effects of the derouted reflexes, seeking a denied outlet for their excesses and morbidities of innervation.

It is remarkable how often eyestrain patients complain of ever-recurring colds, coryza, grippe, etc., and how free they become with proper glasses. I have one patient who gets a violent cold or coryza whenever his glasses are so ill-adjusted as to bring

his astigmatic axis five degrees out of precision. Many such cases could be epitomized. Flaubert suggests a similar story.

My cold has perhaps purged my head, for I feel better. (32.)

For three days extremely stupefied with a violent coryza. (34.)

Grippe has seized me, of the most violent kind, with diseases of the stomach. (37.)

My grippe appears to be lightening. (46.)

Frightful colds and grippe, for six weeks. (52.)

An abominable attack of grippe. I cough, I blow my nose, I spit, I sneeze continuously, and I have fever at night. (53.)

"Rheumatism" and "neuralgia," etc., are frequently only meaningless names for eyestrain. At 26, Flaubert had "rheumatism" in the neck.

I write you with great difficulty, because since yesterday I have an attack of rheumatism which gets worse every hour. I suffer enormously and am most irritable. (31.)

My winter has been miserable. I have suffered from rheumatism and from violent neuralgia. (45.)

I was sick all last week; my throat was in a frightful condition. (51.)

I have had to have one of my last molars pulled out. Besides, I have lumbago, and moreover blepharitis. (57.)

Flaubert suffered frequently from boils and skin affections, and still more from "toothache," of which there are bitter complaints throughout much of his life. In private practice there are occasional examples demonstrating that the eyes are the causes of such affections.

Apparently that no organ should be exempt from the morbid reflex, the ears (as sometimes happens) became abnormally sensitive, and sometimes the hearing was so peracute as to become a real torment. Flaubert tells one of his correspondents that he has heard people speaking in a low voice through closed doors thirty yards away.

As was to be expected, there are few and unimportant complaints of the eyes themselves. Photographs show these to have remained exceptionally clear and healthy. There are a few complaints of styes, blepharitis, etc., and just before death he says that his "eyes begin to grow weary, for I have abused them more than ever." This is all in accord with recognized clinical experience. The more perfectly visual acuity and binocular vision are preserved, the more certainly the morbid reflex to the eyes is escaped, and the more certainly other organs must bear the brunt and the hurt. The more the complaints as to the eyes, the better the general health.

The irritability and sensitiveness resulting from all the unhygienic conditions, overwork, and disease, were natural and necessary. It is an old and daily-repeated story:

If having sensitive nerves were enough to make a poet, I should be a greater poet than Shakespeare, than Homer. (31.)

Mother came in at ten to say good-night, and I was so frightened that I shook with terror. * * * What a wretched machine is this body of ours, and all because a fellow was working at a phrase. (31.)

In order to write there must be the *impossibility* of being interrupted, even when I wish to be interrupted. (32.)

The bromide of potassium has calmed me. (54.)

Some writers and one of his physicians have charged Flaubert's excessive smoking as being the cause of some of his symptoms. He did smoke too much throughout his life. Once he speaks of having smoked fifteen pipes in one day. It is possible that his inflammation of the tongue in 1854 may have been caused by the habit. Flaubert did not believe in the theory.

In what vices I should indulge if I did not write! The

pipe and the pen are the two safeguards of my morality, a virtue which is dissipated in smoke by the two tubes. (32.)

We cannot tell; we know nothing about the effects of small doses of tobacco (in chewing and smoking) habitually kept up for years. In an age when billions of money are expended in tobacco, the medical profession is, apparently, concerned not at all about this important drug-habit.

The two organs most commonly affected in eye-strain, the two almost constant symptoms of "migraine," are headache of some kind, and indigestion of any kind. As to headache, the "iron band about the head" is a symptom almost every day complained of in the oculist's office. Flaubert speaks of it, after writing twelve hours:

My mind is worse off—due to the leeches put on me yesterday, and which scratched my ears. (23.)

For several weeks I have had pain in my cerebellum so intense as to make me cry out, and Sunday the attacks began again. (32.)

Heavens! How my head aches! I must go to bed. My thumb is furrowed by the pen, and my neck wrenched! (32.)

Concerning the diseases of digestion, a great authority, a famous general physician, Professor Musser of Philadelphia, has lately publicly asked:

Who has not seen the correction of errors of refraction relieve so-called "bilious attacks," periodical vomiting, anorexia, indigestion, and other gastric symptoms? The cure of grave organic [should be *functional*] ocular defects relieves similar gastric conditions. The subject is familiar to all.

With proper reverence for Dr. Musser, it must be said that neither is the subject "familiar to all," nor is it scarcely ever acted upon. Every book on gastric and intestinal diseases, in the world, shows the utter, absolute and appalling unfamiliarity of "all," at

least "all" the "experts." Poor Flaubert and all the rest of the Europeans could not suspect it, and at this present day they could not get a physician in all the continent to think of such an etiology nor of such a cure. This is how they suffered then, and still suffer :

After all, life is only a continual indigestion. (26.)

My viscera have been seen through my skin leaping and bounding. (31.)

All the evening I have had pain in my stomach and belly to make me faint if I were capable of fainting. I think it is indigestion. I have also great headache; I am exhausted. (32.)

All this time I have been physically ill, with atrocious stomach troubles. I have had to go to bed with cramps in all my extremities, with pains in the back of my head. (38.)

[Back at Croisset.] I have suffered greatly this autumn; I have had frightful stomach disease. (38.)

When I wrote *Bovary* I had the taste of arsenic in my mouth so much, and was so poisoned myself, that I had two attacks of indigestion that I twice vomited up all my dinner. (47.)

One of his biographers adds that there is no exaggeration in this as when Flaubert gave way to his feelings he repeatedly became literally and physically sick at his stomach. A better observation would have noticed that it was not a powerful imagination in sympathy with his heroine that caused the stomachal malady, but that it was simply old-fashioned sick headache, "the disease whose nature is unknown" (Osler), but which is always due to eyestrain.*

When I am not hungry the only thing I am able to eat is dry bread. The most indigestible things, such as green apples and lard, lessen my stomachal distress. And so on.

*How little Flaubert's stomach was an "irritable" or morbidly disposed organ is shown by the fact that in an eleven-day rough sea voyage he was not in the least seasick, but was the life of the whole company, full of joviality and wit.

A man without common sense cannot live according to the rules of common sense. (48.)

Flaubert, like thousands of others suffering from "migraine," was struck by the quick recovery, and the equally quick return of the disease:

One thinks himself cured at times, and then awakes to find greater suffering than ever.

To epitomize: Flaubert from boyhood to the day of his death was the victim of unrecognized eyestrain. His epilepsy, typical or atypical, his "hystero-neurasthenia," his "migraine," or whatever name be given his symptoms, was the glaring consequence of abuse or overuse of slightly astigmatic or otherwise ametropic eyes. The mental and moral shock of the discovery led to the morbid seclusion, and unhygienic life, but every indication points to a control of epileptic tendency by means of opium. The character of his *Saint Anthony* (second style) and the Paris episode of morbid activity alternating with morbid slumber, corroborates this view. Denied creative ability, Flaubert's mind took refuge thereafter in the perfection of phrase and style, and a vast school of so-called literature, morbid in itself, and inartistic to death, sprang from the diseased example. Flaubert's success in this endeavor was self-confessedly a failure. The life of unhygiene, of systemic, and varied disease, was partly offset by the violent "exercise" he habitually took in his study, by means of howling, declaiming, stamping, walking, etc. The organismal wisdom thereby achieved three compensations: 1, ocular rest; 2, excitation of the emotions and mind to overcome the inhibition of eyestrain; 3, muscular exercise. The inhibition of normal cerebration due to his eyestrain is the second most striking fact both of his history and of his literary activity. For the rest, his diseases of the head and stomach, his

colds, grippe, rheumatism, neuralgia, etc., were mostly and chiefly those now well recognized as exhibitions of "migraine," so-called, or more correctly called eyestrain. His pessimism was the inevitable result of eyestrain, plus the incidental conditions described.

Swift, Nietzsche, and Flaubert! None indulged in more reckless and unhygienic abuse of their bodies than these. They did not scorn their duties to this heroic friend and servant, they were utterly unconscious of duties to it; none more certainly outraged every common-sense rule of ocular hygiene; in none were the horrors of eyestrain more plainly manifest, in none its wrecking power on character, intellect, and will, more evident; and in none were the injustice and insults more patently avenged. And they were the world's arch pessimists and cynics, the three greatest haters of humanity which humanity can exhibit.