

Immortality—Victor Hugo.

Victor Hugo, shortly before his death, gave expression to his sense of immortality in the following words: I feel in myself the future life. I am like a forest which has been more than once cut down. The new shoots are stronger and livelier than ever. I am rising, I know toward the sky. The sunshine is on my head. The earth gives me its generous sap but heaven lights me with the reflection of unknown worlds. You say the soul is nothing but the resultant of bodily powers. Why, then, is my soul more luminous when my bodily powers begin to fail? Winter is on my head and eternal spring is in my heart. Then I breathe, at this hour, the lilacs, the violets and the roses as at twenty years. The nearer I approach the end the plainer I hear around me the immortal symphonies of the world which invites me. It is marvelous yet simple. It is a fairy tale, and it is history. For half a century I have been writing my thoughts in prose, history, philosophy, drama, romance, tradition, satire, ode, song—I have tried all. But I feel that I have not said the thousandth part of what is in me. When I go down to the grave I can say, like so many others, 'I have finished my day's work, but I can not say, 'I have finished my life. My day's work will begin the next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley; it is a thoroughfare. It closes in the twilight to open with the dawn. I improve every hour because I love the world as my fatherland. My monument is hardly above its foundation. I would be glad to see it mounting and mounting forever. The thirst for the infinite proves infinity.

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A favorite employment for him was the messenger extraordinary of sovereigns. He ran from country to country bearing letters and dispatches of the highest import, and always beat mounted couriers when matched against them. He never walked, but always ran. Invariably he took the direct route to his destination, climbing mountains, swimming rivers and guiding himself through forests in a way known only to himself. His food was a small quantity of biscuit and raspberry syrup. His rests he took twice in twenty-four hours, when he usually learned against some support, covered his face with a handkerchief and slept. If he was compelled to remain quiet any length of time he complained of giddiness and rush of blood to the head. In 1842 he was employed to discover the source of the Nile. Starting at Silesia in May, 1843, he ran to Jerusalem, thence to Cairo, and up the banks of the Nile into Egypt. Just outside the village of Lyang he was seen to stop and rest, leaning against a palm tree, his face covered as was his wont. He rested so long that some person tried to wake him. They tried in vain for he was dead.

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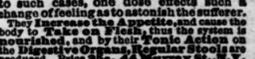
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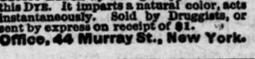
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