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NEUROLOGY IN LITERATURE

Disorders of gait

Mrs Gamp was "a little screwed" most of the time. Her cerebellar ataxia would eventually be permanent unless she became abstinent, an unlikely development considering her track record. Baron de Charles seems to have had cerebellar problems in the limbs, as does Mr Dolls in *Our mutual friend*. The basis for Phil's gait disorder, described in *Bleak House*, is not clear from Dickens' description. Perhaps he had a unilateral cerebellar syndrome. Clym Yeobright's gait, in *The return of the native*, was probably a familial characteristic, and not pathological. Mrs Yeobright identified her son by his gait, as it resembled that of her husband.

Charles Dickens, 1843-4, Martin Chuzzlewit
Even after this precaution, she walked so unsteadily as to attract the compassionate regards of divers kind-hearted boys, who took the liveliest interest in her disorder; and in their simple language, bade her be of good cheer, for she was "only a little screwed".

Charles Dickens, 1853, Bleak House
He has a curious way of limping round the gallery with his shoulder against the wall and tacking off at objects

he wants to lay hold of instead of going straight to them, which has left a smear all around the four walls, conventionally called "Phil's Mark".

Charles Dickens, 1864-5, Our mutual friend
A judiciously small quantity of the spirit was given him in a wine glass, and he began to convey it to his mouth, with all kinds of falterings and gyrations on the road.

Thomas Hardy, 1878, The return of the native
Suddenly she was attracted to his individuality by observing peculiarities in his walk. It was a gait she had seen somewhere before: and the gait revealed the man to her, as the gait of Ahimaaz in the distant plain made him known to the watchman of the king.

Marcel Proust, 1927, Remembrance of things past
Time regained
Perhaps also there was in the movements of the Baron that lack of co-ordination which follows upon maladies of the spinal column and the brain, so that his gestures went beyond anything that he intended.

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