

THE EPILEPSY OF NAPOLEON.

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No life in its singularity better supports my theory that epilepsy is fundamental to genius, than that of Napoleon, as he was surely one of the most complete examples of genius. He not only had motoria convulsions, followed by sleep and unconsciousness; excessive violence without cause, so common to genius, but the phenomena rarely noted in psychic epilepsy—momentary mental absences. Nor was an hereditary cause lacking. It is well known that epilepsy is often inherited through parents addicted to alcohol. Napoleon himself confessed to Antommarchi that his father drank, and he died young of a cancerous affection. He was talented, intriguing, and lacking, or almost entirely so, in moral sense. It was known he was an old friend and follower of Paoli, whom he abandoned at the time of his exile, and thenceforth became a client of the French governors. Napoleon's sisters were very immoral, especially Pauline, who was hysterical; it was she who allowed herself to be sculptured nude by Canova. Lucien was selfish, avaricious and sensual. The mother, however, was a woman of solid character, resolute, intelligent and imperious.

Napoleon was short of stature, barely five feet tall, though he measured five feet six and a quarter inches from finger-tip to finger-tip; which is considered by the alienist, a mark of degeneration. The mesocephalic head, with depressed temples, was not lacking in anomalies, especially the heavy jaw, with the pendant lemuria that is familiar to us all, the salient cheekbones, arched zygomatic bone and scanty beard, which one sees in his youthful portraits, before adulation had transformed the expression of his face. The upper and lower parts of his body lacked proportion, the legs being too short in comparison to the trunk; the head sunk between the shoulders, and the back slightly curved. He had hyperesthesia to such an extent that he had his room heated as late as July. He perceived odors

when no one else noticed them. He suffered from frequent migrains, and had an exaggerated form of what I call meteorologic sensibility, causing him to feel the approaching changes in the weather, from which he suffered, becoming ferocious when it was damp. As is frequent with epileptics, he had muscular contractions, especially when under strong emotion. In anger the muscles of his calves twitched. When he treated of new schemes he was addicted to what are called Jacksonian convulsions, twisting the right arm and raising the right shoulder, with contortions of the lips and grinding of the teeth. From his youth he had regular epileptic convulsions. At one time at school in Paris, he was to have been punished for insubordination, by wearing coarse clothes and by eating on his knees, but he was seized with such a serious attack of convulsions that the punishment had to be spared. In a journal of travel to Margonza in 1804, kept by an unknown lady of the court, and in Constant's *Memoirs*, it is stated that on September 10, Napoleon had one of the nervous attacks to which he was becoming subject. Josephine called for assistance and after many hours of anxiety it passed over. The Emperor forbade its being spoken of. Another time Constant saw him in an attack between epilepsy and incubus, lying on his elbows in bed, shaking and screaming; he was awakened with much difficulty, and pretended to have dreamed that a bear was tearing his chest. Talleyrand saw him in a more marked attack, when in 1805, he went with the Emperor to Strasburg. One afternoon he saw him go into Josephine's room; soon afterward he came rushing out, grabbed Talleyrand by the arm, almost dragging him into a near room, confusedly asked him to close the door, when he dropped upon the floor as if dead. "He trembled and foamed with convulsions, which lasted about a quarter of an hour. Soon after, he began talking then rearranged his clothes, and recommended silence to us: half an hour later he was on his way to Carlsruhe." Like many epileptics, he had a very slow pulse, 48, and later 60 to the minute.

Great were his mental absences. Wolsley