

## CLASSIC PAPER

### Froelich, Fertility And A French Emperor

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Commentary on 'Napoleon's Sex Life By Maj Gen FM Richardson

#### Introduction

This article with its gloriously inviting title, hinting at libidinous scandal and debauchery is actually an attempt to unravel some of the inconsistencies and intriguing by-lines regarding the great man's sexuality that are contained within the plethora of Napoleonic biographies. Originally published over two editions of the journal in 1961, it is reprinted here in an abridged format, leaving *some* of the original author's anecdote, whimsy and French quotations aside. I found this is a highly enjoyable paper, not least because it is something of a rarity in the modern medical journal, because of both its subject matter and narrative style. One can only assume that the then editor had a keen eye for the entertaining article and *bon mots*, offering the following quotation as a footnote after the first part, perhaps by way of justification! :

*"For all journals, above all, should convey excitement and the delight of the people making them"* Alan Hatch in About Town.

#### A Short Biography of Napoleon

For those who aren't scholars of French history, a resume of Napoleons life will allow these articles to be read within some frame of context.

Napoleon Bonaparte was born in 1769 on the French island of Corsica, the second of



Fig 2. The Empress Josephine.

eight children. After training at the Ecole Militaire in Paris he was commissioned into the Artillery and rose rapidly to the rank of Brigadier, ousting the British from mainland France at the siege of Toulon and achieving military prominence. In 1795 he was appointed commander of the French Armies in Italy, and married Josephine de Beauharnais, the following year.

She was the widow of a Vicomte executed during the revolution, mother of two children and mistress to many of the leading political figures of the time. After sweepingly successful campaigns through Italy and Austria, he took charge of further French Armies, departing for Egypt to confront the British and their trading alliances. After initial success at the Battle of the Pyramids he was defeated by Nelson at the Battle of the Nile, losing three quarters of his fleet. On his return to Paris, he and two others seized power from the Revolutionary 'Directory' in the Coup d'etat de Brumaire and became consuls, soon after which Napoleon manoeuvred to become First (and only) Consul. His ever-increasing popularity with the masses and rapprochement with the Catholic Church after the strictures of the Revolution meant he was able to crown himself Emperor in 1804. His campaigns and wars continued, generally successfully, if trifling details such as Trafalgar are ignored, and spread the



Fig 1. Portrait in oils of Emperor Napoleon wearing both the Légion d'Honneur and the Iron Cross.

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influence of the French Empire across much of mainland Europe. Relations with the powerful Austrians were cemented when Napoleon married Marie-Louisa of Austria in 1809, having divorced Josephine as he remained without an heir. Tensions between Tsar Alexander of Russia and Napoleon, for many years cordial and cooperative, now degenerated and Napoleon led over half a million French soldiers to march on Moscow. In a tiring and bloody campaign with major battles at Smolensk and Borodino along the way, he eventually arrived in Moscow in 1812 to find it burning, as the Russians infinitely preferred ashes to the French, and provided Tchaikovsky with his inspiration. A series of defeats and reversals over the following 2 years drove his Marshals and Generals to force his abdication in 1814 and he went into exile on Elba, but for less than a year. Eleven months after leaving the soils of France he returned to depose the recently re-installed King Louis XVIII, and begin a further series of military campaigns. Initially successful, he was finally crushed by the Duke of Wellington at Waterloo on June 18th 1815, and returned to exile on the distant island of St Helena in the South Atlantic where he died in 1821. His remains were eventually repatriated and have lain in the mausoleum of Les Invalides in Paris since 1840.

### Froelich's syndrome

Froelich's syndrome (1), often known by a variety of synonyms including Babinski-Froelich syndrome, the further eponymous



Fig 3. A detail from a painting of the coronation of Emperor Napoleon in December 1804; it is fascinating to realise that Napoleon is actually crowning himself!

Launois-Cleret syndrome or the more useful descriptor adiposogenital dystrophy, is a rare disease affecting boys more than girls. Characteristic features are short stature with early onset obesity, small testis and pubertal delay. There is an increased risk of diabetes mellitus and sufferers may have mental retardation and visual defects. The underlying pathology is either a hypothalamic or anterior pituitary lesion with many of the outlined symptoms being secondary to alterations in the regulation of Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH) and Luteinising Hormone (LH) that occurs at puberty. The physiology of puberty is not well understood, given that pre-pubertal levels of FSH and LH are low, as are the levels of the gonadal hormones that act as the negative feedback mechanism. It is suspected that at the onset of puberty there is maturation of the hypothalamic neurons with increased excretion of gonadotrophin releasing hormone to increase FSH and LH secretion. The exact mechanism by which Froelich's syndrome supervenes is unknown but is probably due to a further resetting of the level of feedback inhibition. The pituitary lesion may be caused by tumour or destruction of the gland from tuberculosis or encephalitis or there may be a direct hypothalamic lesion; indeed in modern terms the eponymous syndrome is applied only to those children with the typical features *and* a hypothalamic lesion.

Whilst actually first described by Joseph Babinski (2) in 1900, the definitive description from which it takes its most common name was made by Alfred Froelich, an Austrian neurologist, one year later when he outlined a case of tumour of the anterior pituitary gland with marked obesity and infantilism but without acromegaly. The differential diagnosis is said to include Prader-Willi syndrome and the vanishingly rare Bardet-Biedl and Borjeson Syndromes, whilst Richardson raises the possibility of Klinefelter's syndrome being the correct diagnosis, given that there appears to have been a change in Napoleon's appearance in his mid-thirties, which would mitigate against a disease with an onset at puberty. This cornerstone of General Richardson's discourse, namely the diagnosis of Froelich's syndrome, is attributed to Raoul Brice, a French military surgeon who was apparently present at the Emperor's post-mortem, which revealed a short obese man with the genitals of a boy. In addition, numerous ante mortem comments report on his feminine hands and downy hair, and even Napoleon himself was known to pass comment on his feminine appearance and splendid breasts! It is on this combination of features that the diagnosis was made, and on which all subsequent supposition is founded. Richardson's rider that an "authoritative medical textbook states that the

*syndrome is often associated with intellectual ability 'above normal'*”, avoids scrutiny as modern authoritative textbooks of endocrinology barely mention this condition and such a statement is not replicated.

### The Napoleonic Legend

General Richardson writes as an unabashed ‘Wellingtonian’ and despite his protestations to the contrary, the main thrust of the articles seem to be to sully the stature of the Napoleonic legend and ascribe to him many physical, psychological and sexual characteristics that whilst potentially explaining some of his behaviour, cannot be looked on as desirable. As part of his justification for doing so he invokes the great French tradition, which began during Napoleon’s own lifetime, of vilifying him, and claims that his reputation is probably incapable of being further blackened beyond what his own countrymen have already achieved. Whilst to some degree that may be true, the assertion that the integrity of the Napoleonic legend is a NATO asset is probably stretching the grounds of credibility a little too far! Some of the opening remarks about the sanctity of the Napoleonic memory being relatively safe from ‘the modern sport of knocking down popular idols’ reminds us that the current epidemic of ‘knocking down’ and media assassination is perhaps not so modern as we would make out. Perhaps the Press Complaints Commission should take note!

### On Leadership

By mere virtue of the fact that Napoleon commanded his armies for as long as he did, in as many battles as he did, he must have been an able leader; however, his style of leadership, it would seem, leaves a lot to be desired by modern standards. His pre-occupation with the dead, and unfeeling pride in the mountains of corpses of his own soldiers who died at the likes of Borrodino\* reflect badly on the man. Such brutality can have done nothing to endear him to his Generals, who all seem to have suffered under his leadership. This callousness is but one reflection, so Richardson says, of his cold-heartedness which precluded him being able to make friends or indulge in cordial relationships with either sex. His aggressiveness could be explained by what the Austrian psychiatrist Alfred Adler termed ‘organ inferiority’ (3), a concept that describes the development of ones drives in a reaction to perceived inferiority of an organ. Such a concept seems plausible; certainly the realisation that ones genitals are small, imperfectly formed and dysfunctional would engender feelings of aggressiveness in most males.

\* *Borrodino was a particularly bloody battle in the Russian campaign of 1812 in which 33,000 Napoleonic troops and over 40,000 Russians died.*

### Relationships

Napoleon’s numerous amorous liaisons, both imaginary and actual, are summarised within the article and great effort is made to draw out those strands that may give lie to his reputation as a great lover and producer of offspring, even to the point of suggesting that his heir by Maria Louisa of Austria was conceived by artificial insemination as he was not up to the job. The multitude of women with whom he is supposed to have lain is a reflection partly upon the times when such male promiscuity was commonplace, and also, according to Richardson, an attempt to prove his ardent heterosexuality. If, as the article alludes, Napoleon was indeed infertile and even impotent, truly a ‘bon-a-rien . . . able to do nothing’, then it is difficult to imagine how anyone, with even the power of Napoleon can create an edifice of illusion such that it may stand the test of two centuries of inquisition without this fact becoming common knowledge and the list of sexual achievements being summarily edited.

### Sexuality

This is General Richardson’s major tilt at the Napoleonic legend, namely that he was an undisclosed homosexual. As one might imagine the evidence for this is largely circumstantial, but the author takes considerable pain to assemble a variety of comments and observations that support his supposition with the overriding premise being that like many homosexual men, he sought to be promiscuous with women to rid himself of doubts about his true sexual nature.

Napoleon is arbitrarily given a score of 3 on the Kinsey rating, which is a seven point scale devised and published by Alfred Kinsey in 1948 (4), which views male sexuality as a continuum from the exclusively heterosexual male (scoring 0) to the exclusively homosexual male who scores 6. This mid-range score of three is defined as ‘equally heterosexual and homosexual’. But on what ‘evidence’ does General Richardson make such a judgement. Aside from his alleged promiscuity with women, he was known to be fond of young men, often sparing them the torrid trials that older and more respected men received, his generals amongst them. Interestingly this has in part been attributed to a desire for legend-making by praising those who were likely to live longest and extol Napoleons virtues the better. He was notoriously tactile with his younger soldiers, even to the extent of pulling their ears and noses, a further attribute of the closet homosexual according to the quoted article from the British Medical Journal entitled “A Factual Study of Male Homosexuality”. When discussing his ex-

wife Josephine he decried that he had ever loved her nor did he respect her, but she had 'the prettiest little tail imaginable', a comment described by Richardson as 'slightly significant'. The circumstantial evidence for his homosexuality culminates with the saga of Gourgaud, his devoted follower who fled his exile in St Helena saying that Napoleon had wished him to do things "contrary to his honour". Napoleon's reply that he "was not his wife and cannot sleep with him" does little to damn such theories of his sexuality.

### Summary

This article, some forty-odd years old now sheds an interesting light on one of the great men of history; whether he was homosexual or not I think matters little, as he will be remembered for his Empire building and battles far more than his penis and prowess.

The fact that a medical condition can tentatively be put forward as a mitigating circumstance against his less laudable behaviours, is of interest more for the value of the medical detective work that was involved, than the expunging of the blemishes from his legend. As a testament to the breadth of interest portrayed by the Journal all those years ago I feel it is a splendid reminder that articles other than randomised controlled trials or evidence based guidelines still make for enjoyable, if not directly practical, relevant reading.

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### **NAPOLEON'S SEX LIFE**

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Napoleon has less to fear than most great names of the past from the modern sport of knocking down popular idols. The humiliation of defeat was soothed by the memories of past glories, and Napoleonic literature grew into a mountain. The failure in 1870 of "Napoléon le Petit" merely increased the glory of "Napoléon Le Grand." The Napoleonic legend is essential to French national morale, and is thus a NATO asset which should be approached with caution, though it is obviously indestructible, having survived the undoubted fact that millions of Frenchmen execrated his name when he was alive and at the peak of his fame. This is well illustrated in a book by a Dutch writer, Pieter Geyl (translated into English) in which the anti- and pro-Napoleon literature is analysed. Jacques Bainville is slightly hostile, and Jean Savant (1954) positively venomous in his *Napoleon in his Time*, which is a miscellany of quotations from those who knew him best.

It is not difficult to see why he eventually lost the confidence and affection of many of his marshals and his staff, as his megalomania and disregard for human life became more evident. Marmont, in excusing his so-called betrayal of Napoleon, which gave to the French language for Bonapartists a new word, "raguser," but which Wellington always denied was any betrayal, summed it all up like this: "When Napoleon said 'All for France' I served with enthusiasm; when he said 'France and I' I served with zeal; when he said 'I and France' I served obediently; but when he said 'I without France' I felt called upon to leave him." Sir John Fortescue

says that in 1809 he was "already succumbing to the defect which eventually brought him to ruin, namely a tendency to confound assumptions with facts." His categorical orders from France to his marshals in the distant peninsula, without regard for the facts as they knew them to be, must have been maddening. Lord Algernon Cecil, in his book *Metternich*, describes how on the way into his celebrated interview with Napoleon in 1813 Metternich was stopped by Berthier, Napoleon's chief of staff, whose grave disquiet was evident. "Do not forget" the marshal pleaded, 'that Europe requires peace, and especially France which will have nothing but peace.' Metternich passed in without a word, his hands, however, so much the stronger for the knowledge that the schism, of which Talleyrand and Fouché had apprised him as much as four years before, between France and Napoleon had spread even to the Emperor's very chief of staff. His policy, not Napoleon's was that of the French people." It was at that interview that Napoleon made his celebrated remark, "I was brought up in the field and a man such as I does not concern himself about the lives of a million men." He put his foot in it in many other ways, and it was not long of course after that interview that the marshals were compelling him, in Fontainebleau, to sign his abdication, and Ney was replying to his remark that the army would obey him, with the statement that the army would rather obey its generals.

There is a great deal of evidence, apart from the well-known remark, that his attitude to casualties was calculating and

brutally callous, and in marked contrast to that of Wellington, who wept over the casualties, and said to Lady Shelley, "I am wretched even at the moment of victory, and I always say that next to a battle lost, the greatest misery is a battle gained," Napoleon's morbid curiosity in looking at the casualties on a battlefield has been frequently described, and S. J. Watson in *By Command of the Emperor* (1957) suggested that "it reinforced his sense of power to see how many of his own troops had met with death and mutilation in doing his will." Viewing the ghastly slaughter at Borodino he said it was the most beautiful battlefield he had ever seen, and he described the piles of corpses on the dreadful field of Eylau as "small change" actually turning some of them over with his foot; and it was perhaps there that the affection of his adoring troops first began to waver.

J. G. Lockhart, writing in 1829, quoted Bourrienne, an old school companion of Napoleon and later his secretary, that, "his heart was naturally cold," and even in youth he was "very little disposed to form friendships" (*tres peu aimant*); and Lockhart says, "The most wonderful part of his story is the intensity of sway which he exerted over the minds of those in whom he so seldom permitted himself to contemplate anything more than the tools of his own ambition." It will surely not rock the NATO boat to attempt to understand how he achieved this sway, but taking a peep into some of the corners of that astounding mind, in all human beings there are elements of maleness and of femaleness in varying proportions; and just as variations in the proportions of male and female hormones result in wide variations of physical types, so do psychological mechanisms of great complexity growing within our minds from childhood influences and experiences, and from the conscious or unconscious interpretations which we put upon these, combine to produce variations in our emotional attitude to sex as many-hued as the rainbow, with, at opposite ends of the spectrum, the strongly heterosexual and the strongly homosexual. A good deal of unhappiness results from people not knowing just where they fit into the spectrum. Many unhappy marriages result from failure to realise the complexity of this range of colour; from one or other partner feeling deprived because the other does not perhaps live up to their imagined type of the perfect lover, founded upon romantic literature, the stage, or the screen.

Having read only an infinitesimal fraction of the massive Napoleonic literature I can present only a few symptoms, in attempting a diagnosis of where Napoleon fits into the sexual spectrum, but I suspect that a diligent search, and especially access to secret state papers, would yield a lot more.

For a start it is profitable to have a look at his physical characteristics, beginning at the end with a highly-significant post-mortem report. "The body was found enormously fat" with "a coat of fat an inch and a half thick" over the breast bone. This helps to dispel the popular fallacy that the cruel British let him die of cancer, and indeed a surgeon lieutenant-general of the French Army, Raoul Brice, in his big work *The Riddle of Napoleon* diagnoses the cause of death as the perforation into the stomach of an amoebic liver abscess, with subsequent gastric perforation and peritonitis. The "red spittle" which Bertrand describes as covering his vest towards the end, could have come from such an abscess. So much for cancer.

Walter Henry, surgeon of the 66th Foot, who was present, thus describes his external genital organs, "*Partes viriles exiguitatis insignis, sicut pueri, videbantur*," and from this and other evidence Brice concludes that Napoleon suffered from a condition called Fröhlich's syndrome (*dystrophia adiposogenitalis*) which makes paternity highly improbable. His later portraits amply corroborate this diagnosis, though it may be a little harder to reconcile it with those early portraits of the hawk-like young general with spaniel ears and hair down to his shoulders. In several of them that hair is fine and silky as it is in Fröhlich's syndrome. By the time that he was famous enough for contemporaries to describe his appearance he seems to have been plump, with "beautiful little pink hands" (Duchess of Abrantes), "delicate and plump with taper fingers" (Meneval), which are characteristic of the condition, and help to produce the rather feminine appearance in these people. Captain Maitland of *Bellerophon* said, "His hands were also very small, and had the plumpness of a woman's rather than the robustness of a man's." Now this condition usually occurs at or before puberty, but may begin later from a number of causes, which include syphilis. Without probing too deeply it may be said that Napoleon seems to have incurred the risk of this, and one of the commissioners taking him to Elba remarked that he was suffering from an "amatory complaint" for which he applied treatment in their presence without reserve. Other possible symptoms need not be detailed. Incidentally an authoritative medical textbook states that the syndrome is often associated with intellectual ability "above normal."

If, as Ludwig suggests, Napoleon's whole outlook on life, his destiny, and the history of the world were profoundly affected by early mortification and affronts "suffered at the hands of a few silly young marquises"; and if, as so often happens, feelings of inferiority aroused by his small stature encouraged aggressive impulses, his poor sexual

endowment may well have intensified such feelings by what Adler calls a sense of “organ inferiority.” This would certainly account for his rather aggressive attitude towards sex, the interest he took in that part of other people’s private lives, and particularly for the besetting anxiety about his inability to produce an heir by which he is well known to have been tormented. Perhaps it also helped to drive him into the arms of Josephine, an experienced and loose-living widow whom he took off the very knee of Barras. Josephine had little cause for complaint, for if Barras is to be believed, her bargainings for a husband were just as blatant, and she seems to have been, like Napoleon’s sister Pauline, a nymphomaniac who was ready to have affairs with generals, their aides-de-camp or their grooms. Josephine had not much money, but the “dowry” was enough—for it was command of the army in Italy. Both of them confided in Barras before marriage was proposed, and Napoleon’s remarks included, “I’ve not been trying to seduce a virgin. I am the kind of man who would rather find love ready-made than have to make it.”

Savant mentions altogether five women with whom Napoleon contemplated marriage before he asked Josephine. The best known is his attractive young sister-in-law Desirée Clary from whose marriage to Bernadotte the Swedish royal family are descended. Savant says that she was his mistress but gives no authority for this. Napoleon at St. Helena described her as his first love, and said she was most upset by his marriage to Josephine. He said to Bertrand that she once hid under his bed, and he claimed that “it was because he had taken her maidenhead that he created Bernadotte a marshal, prince and king.” But it was certainly not he who made Bernadotte a prince or a king, and it is probable that his claim to have seduced her sprang partly from a desire to hurt Bernadotte for whom he had long had a jealous hatred, which was cordially reciprocated, and partly from his habit of boasting of his successes with women, to which he often gave way in St. Helena. Much earlier Caulaincourt had noticed that he took great pleasure in talking of early love affairs, and of “the preference a number of society women had given him over some of his comrades then more prominent than himself.” People who talk a lot of their love affairs have not necessarily had any; indeed they may feel the need to bolster up their self-esteem in this way if they are a bit doubtful of their prowess in this sphere. It seems far more likely, considering his physical handicap, that he felt doubtful of his ability to satisfy an attractive young bride, and sought not only material advantages but sexual help and encouragement from the only too

experienced Josephine. Indeed he more or less admitted this to Bertrand at St. Helena, saying, “To tell the truth I only married Josephine because I believed her to possess a considerable fortune. Also I wished to make myself appear more mature.” He claimed to have loved her, but to have had no respect for her, and he made the slightly significant comment that “she had the prettiest little tail imaginable.” He often treated Josephine most unkindly long before the final cruelty of the divorce, but she had her revenge in the way she spoke of him on what, as I have hinted, may have been the tenderest point. She spread the mot that “Bon-a-partie est bon-a-rien” and described his incapacity in crude and indecent terms. When she knew that he was contemplating a second marriage to get an heir she made to Mme. Duchatel and others such statements as “that the Emperor was *no use at all*, that she had had children by her first husband, and that whilst she was still a comparatively young woman she had married the Emperor who had been able to do *nothing*.”

Napoleon’s doubts of his fertility are reflected in the coarse remark he made when choosing his second wife. When told that her mother had had thirteen children he said “That’s the kind of womb I want to marry.”

Napoleon in his will acknowledged only two illegitimate children. The first, Florian-Alexander-Joseph, born on 4th May, 1810, was the illegitimate son of Maria Walewska, the widow of Count Walewska, who had a number of other children. The verdict on this child can be left to the Russian Emperor. After Napoleon’s divorce a marriage with a Russian princess was proposed, but the Dowager Empress would not hear of it, and told the Emperor Alexander about Josephine’s statements on Napoleon’s impotence. Incredible though it may seem, Josephine had been interviewed on this subject by a Prince de M. (believed to be Mecklenburg-Schwerin) who had carried out the task with so little finesse that Talleyrand had advised Napoleon to dismiss him from court. Alexander mentioned the Prince de M’s. report to the French Ambassador, “who objected that the Emperor already had a child by Mme. Walewska. ‘Yes yes’ exclaimed Alexander, ‘but everyone knows what young Polish women are like. She probably had other lovers.’” (Quoted in Bertrand’s memoirs). The second child to be considered is Charles, called Count Leon, born on 6th December, 1806, to Eleonore Denuelle de la Plaigne. Here is what Bertrand says “As it was Murat who had introduced the mother to him, Napoleon had at first assumed the child to have been his. But upon seeing the child the Emperor had been so struck by its

resemblance to himself, while Queen Hortense, to whom he had shown the child, had found that it bore such a striking resemblance to the Emperor, that he had acknowledged it to be his own son." This would hardly be accepted as evidence in a paternity case today, and there were widespread doubts about it at the time, as indeed there were about the paternity of Napoleon's one legitimate child, the King of Rome. It was common gossip at the Schönbrunn that whoever was the father of that child it certainly was not Napoleon. The obvious candidate is Neipperg, whom Chateaubriand called "the man who dared to lay his eggs in the eagle's nest." There is abundant evidence of his rudeness and unpleasantness to women, and Bourrienne sums it up: "Politeness to women was not one of Napoleon's habitual traits. He rarely found anything pleasant to say to them, or would say the most outrageous things." Though he seems to have been fond of children, he thought it amusing to accuse wrongly a little five-year-old niece of wetting the bed; and to snatch away little Betsy Balcombe's first party dress, and let her cry herself to sleep. Bourrienne says, "It was one of Bonaparte's greatest misfortunes not to believe in friendship or experience the need to love. How often I have heard him say 'Friendship is only a word. I care for nobody.'" Lord Rosebery in *Napoleon, The Last Phase* wrote "He wonders if he ever really loved anybody. If so it was Josephine – a little . . . Had she had a child of his she would never have left him."

He is said to have "taken liberties" with his sister Pauline; to have been the father of the elder child of his step-daughter Hortense, married to his brother Louis; to have had a daughter by Mme. de Montholon at St. Helena. He does not seem to have wasted much time making love to any of them, except perhaps to Desirée, and Masson describes him as being "unfamiliar with courteous phrases and not hiding sufficiently the contempt he felt for women who came to him on the message of a valet."

There was nothing very unusual in a public figure of his age having mistresses and making little effort to conceal the fact. Our own King George II, urged by his wife on her death-bed to marry again, said between sobs, "No, I shall have mistresses." But Napoleon's apparently relentless search for sexual adventures when he seems to have cared so little for women in every other way may well point to an urge to reassure himself and to exorcise his deep-seated doubts of his own masculinity. Three psychiatrists in *A Factual Study of Male Homosexuality* (1) emphasise that many homosexuals are sexually promiscuous with women. Presumably they cannot settle down to family life based on true love for one woman, of which they are incapable.

No one who has studied it in any detail could possibly claim that, even with Josephine, Napoleon's family life was very normal or happy. The undoubted fact that Napoleon for long feared that he was sterile, supported by the inference that Josephine's remarks were intended to imply as clearly as possible that he was also impotent, and by the strong evidence that physically he could be defined as "sexually deprived", by no means prove that he was not psychologically heterosexual, still less that he was homosexual. There is evidence to suggest that he had such leanings, even if not to a marked degree, though I have not so far heard of this suggestion being made. It is very well known that he liked to have physical contact with his soldiers. He used to embrace them, to grasp the buttons on their tunics, pull their ears and hold on to their noses. The latter gesture may be significant. In the *Factual Study* just mentioned a man is recorded who "was attracted by boys' noses; they were sexual objects, and if he grasped a boy's nose he had an orgasm." Pulling a man's nose was not an uncommon insult or incitement to a duel; but rubbing noses as a greeting is practiced in places like Polynesia where homosexuality is common. The Mameluke Roustam, a young Armenian who until he deserted Napoleon just before Elba was his constant personal attendant from the day when Napoleon picked him up in Egypt at the age of seventeen, has described their first meeting. "First thing he does to me he pulls my ears," and later whilst on board ship returning to France, "still pulling my ears, as every day."

In the pamphlet *Advice on Sex* in use in B.A.O.R. I have explained how young men through misunderstanding may linger in the normal homosexual period, a phase through which many pass unknowingly. It would not be at all surprising if Napoleon's "organ inferiority," small stature, and slightly feminine build, and other influences all reinforced this tendency to linger. It has been said that if all males were exclusively heterosexual (Kinsey rating 0) normal social life in clubs and messes would be impossible, since we would all behave like stags, rounding up as big a share as our strength allowed of the available hinds. It is the "continuity of the gradations between exclusively heterosexual and exclusively homosexual behaviour" which makes male friendships possible, but gives them such a varied nature, from David and Jonathan or Alexander and Hephaestion to what we would regard as normal friendship.

Napoleon when he chose could be completely charming, compelling, and magnetic. When he was a captive, Admiral Keith was determined not to let him meet the Prince Regent, as he was sure they would soon be the best of friends. Things

might have gone better for Napoleon in 1813 if he had tried on Metternich the tactics which so charmed the strange impressionable young Tsar Alexander on the raft at Tilsit. The spell was still strong more than a year later at Erfurt, when they kissed each other before the assembled grandees, who were “struck by their show of affection for each other.” Alexander, a handsome bachelor most attractive to women, was himself most strange and sought more for a “soul mate” than for what his mistresses expected. He became more and more of a mystic, almost a hermit, and died a bachelor. A Scots soldier recounted that the Tsar’s interest in the perennial question of what is worn under the kilt would not be satisfied short of actual inspection, and that even then to be sure that there were no pink silk tights he actually pinched the indignant Highlander’s behind.

I must here say clearly that I am not suggesting that there was anything overtly or even consciously homosexual in Napoleon’s approaches to men, though it is significant that they were made almost entirely to the younger set. He was positively horrid to many senior officers, including his marshals, even to Berthier, a man 16 years older than himself, to whom he owed so much.

If his methods of wooing the affections of the young and impressionable contributed greatly to his magnetic sway as a military leader, it certainly also helped to establish the Napoleonic Legend. These were the men who survived him long enough to foster it. The elder ones, many of whom had won titles and riches under his rule, knew him better but had a vested interest in silence or consent. A psychiatric diagnosis made without examining the patient must be slightly suspect, though these are made every week when coroners and their juries record verdicts “of unsound mind” in cases of suicide. To sum up I would say that although Mme. Mère was certainly not the kind of mother who makes homosexual sons, Napoleon’s physical disability and somewhat feminine appearance, and various early influences, combined to give him homosexual tendencies, with a Kinsey rating of about 3; compared with Alexander the Great at about 3.5, and Frederick the Great and Richard Coeur de Lion between 5 and 6. If the last name causes surprise, read *The Lute Player*, the theme of which is Richard’s homosexual friendship with Blondel. Berengaria’s married life was a complete fraud, and if Napoleon had known about this he might have been displeased with the German scholar Ritterstein who claimed to have proved that Blondel’s real name was Buonaparte, and that he was Napoleon’s ancestor. Napoleon, being Napoleon, had to have a finger in every pie,

and be, as it seems many homosexuals are, promiscuous with women.

#### *Postscript*

More thousands of millions of words have been written about Napoleon than about any other character in history. Many thousands of them were dictated or inspired by the man himself in the process of diligently creating and fostering what came to be known as the Napoleonic Legend. His unique character was so many-sided that, by assiduous and partisan reading, one could probably “prove” almost any theory about him which one cared to adopt. Doctors have differed about him ever since those present at his post-mortem examination quarrelled furiously about whether his liver was or was not enlarged and diseased. But it is with Napoleon’s psychological make-up that I am concerned. Another book published since I wrote my essay (*The Last Years of Napoleon* by Ralph Korngold) has some odd things to tell about the relations between Napoleon and Gourgaud, who is said to have “conceived an affection for Napoleon which bordered on the pathological”. When relations became strained and Gourgaud decided to leave St. Helena, he said to the Governor that Napoleon wished him to do things “contrary to his honour,” and later wrote that he was troubled by dysentery, to which had recently been added afflictions of a “moral nature.” Napoleon himself after Gourgaud had left, said “Speak to me no more of that man. He is mad. He was jealous, in love with me. What the devil! I am not his wife and can’t sleep with him. I know he will write libels about me, but I don’t care.” What are we to make of all this? It may well have been all Gourgaud’s fault. Nobody could really be negative about Napoleon and Lord Rosebery said that Gourgaud was “devoted to his master with an unreasonable, petulant jealousy, which made his devotion intolerable.”

I do not want to seem eager to blacken Napoleon’s character. Whatever may have been the many springs which fed his desire to dominate, one can hardly fail to be sorry for so domineering a man, whose attitude to men and women alike was so masculine and overbearing in his lust for power, when one realises how he must have been tortured by his fears of sterility, and probably also of impotence, and have seen his body becoming more and more feminine in appearance. What were his real feelings when, as de Ménèval says, he “loved to joke about the fatness of his breasts”? More than one contemporary writer spoke of a “roundness of figure, not of our own sex”; and he was once taken for “an elderly governess.” He himself saw in his body a resemblance to a young female beauty, and made an often-quoted remark to Antommarchi, differently translated in different books, but on these lines “See

Doctor, what lovely arms, what smooth white skin without a single hair! what rounded breasts – any beauty would be proud of a bosom like mine.” A great military leader could hardly have liked looking like that, and there is something pathetic in his drawing attention to it, and even boasting about it. I should like to hear the views of someone with a good knowledge of endocrinology, or even of genetics. Would a physician of today amend Brice’s diagnosis to Klinefelter’s syndrome? If, as is suggested by some writers, a marked change in his physical appearance began at about the age of 38, could this account for the infantile external genital organs, or must they have been more or less in that condition all his life?

In a book called *Personality and Power* there is to be found this surprising remark about Napoleon. “He . . . was without religious feeling in the Christian sense, and, finding himself incapable of giving her a child to be his heir, caused his wife, Maria Lousia of Austria, to be artificially inseminated, and successfully.” Unfortunately the author, the late Mr. Shaw Desmond, who says that, “the love personality of Napoleon is one of the most elusive phenomena in history,” does not give us a clue as to where he found his information about the method of securing an heir to the throne of France.

### Reference

1. *Brit Med J* (1958) 2, 1317-1323.