

## New Light on the Mystery of Napoleon's Heart



An Old French Print Illustrating the Funeral of Napoleon at St. Helena, in 1821.



A Curious Cartoon, Published During Napoleon's Exile, Evidencing the Prevalence of Rats at St. Helena.

### Just Discovered Diary Refutes the Old Assertions That Rats Devoured It---The Emperor's Coffin Was Made from a Dining Room Table

**T**HE baffling and gruesome mystery concerning the great Napoleon's heart seems at last to have been authoritatively settled.

For nearly a century reports have been prevalent in France and England that the heart was not buried with the body. According to some versions it was "appropriated" by the Emperor's physician, Dr. Antommarchi, or by some other Frenchman. Other accounts say that it was devoured by rats during the funeral preparations and a sheep's heart substituted for it.

This controversy had reached such a point that shortly before the present war Dr. Raspail and Dr. Cabanes, both well-known French physicians and writers, petitioned the French Government to have Napoleon's tomb in the Invalides opened to decide the question.

The discovery which appears to end the dispute has been made by Major F. M. Foulds, the medical officer now in charge of British troops at St. Helena. He has found the diary of Andrew Darling, an upholsterer, who had charge of various repairs and finally of the arrangements for Napoleon's funeral at Longwood House, St. Helena, where the great Emperor died on May 5, 1821.

Darling describes with great detail how he helped to enclose the Emperor's heart in a silver vase or tureen, which was then placed in the coffin. Darling, although somewhat illiterate, is evidently a very careful and conscientious man, and there is every reason to believe that his statements are absolutely reliable. The precise details he gives go to prove this. (See extracts herewith.—Editor.) Then he wrote with no idea of the controversy that would arise over Napoleon's heart, and his diary was mislaid shortly after he wrote it in 1821, and has not been brought to light again until to-day. A curious confirmation of the accuracy of Darling's details has been furnished by Mrs. Owen, an aged lady of ninety-five, who was a baby in St. Helena at the time of Napoleon's death and is still living in London. She was the daughter of Captain Bennett, of the British army and remembers hearing her family tell that they had sold a mahogany dining table with a remarkably thick top to furnish wood for Napoleon's coffin. Darling, it will be noticed, speaks of the difficulty in finding mahogany on the island to furnish a coffin of that material.

It may still be argued that Darling's diary does not prove that Napoleon's heart was not stolen or destroyed and a

sheep's heart substituted for it. Darling, of course, did not know that the heart he helped to seal up was really that of Napoleon and not that of a sheep. He did not think of such a matter.

Apparently the heart and stomach had been lying in separate receptacles since the previous day, and something might have happened to them. Nevertheless, considered in connection with the inherent improbabilities of the sheep's heart story, Darling's diary does make very convincing evidence.

He knew that Dr. Antommarchi wished to secure Napoleon's heart and that some of the other Frenchmen wished it, and that the English authorities, who were in command, would not permit such a thing. It is not easy to go out and secure a sheep's heart and substitute it for a dead man's heart in charge of soldiers of a foreign nation.

The story of the substitution of the sheep's heart is certainly curious and rests on several pieces of evidence. It is most strongly stated in the "Memoirs" of Dr. Charles Thomas Carswell, an English physician, who took part in the autopsy. He writes:

"Dr. Antommarchi, assisted by Dr. Charles Thomas Carswell, proceeded to the autopsy of Napoleon. Night overtook them. When the doctors came in the next morning they discovered that the heart of the Emperor had been eaten by rats. They replaced it by that of a sheep, which they had killed immediately."

Dr. Carswell further states: "Through a board in the wall, as I entered, I could spy a rat just devouring the right ventricle."

Some plausibility is given to the rat story by the fact that there was undoubtedly a plague of rats at St. Helena at the time of Napoleon's death. The island was then an important calling point on the way to the East, the ships carried the rats there and the animals found conditions very favorable.

When Napoleon's body was taken to Paris in 1840 it was exposed to public view for a short time, but there is no mention of the disposition of the heart. The original coffin in which the body was brought from St. Helena was preserved, and around this was placed a coffin of iron, one of steel, one of lead and one of ebony. Around this last is the great sarcophagus hewn out of a single block of Siberian porphyry, which now meets the visitor's eyes in the Chapel of the Invalides.

I then came out and told the Governor; he was anxious to have the coffins made as soon as possible. I went back a little afterward, got a description of the coffins in writing from General Montholon, went with him into the room again to be more particular to his exact size; assisted by General Montholon. The net size was as follows: Length, 5 feet 7 inches, only 18 inches barely across the shoulders and



The Great Napoleon, in the Uniform in Which He Was Buried. From the Painting by Paul Delacroix.

scarcely 10 inches deep. The size of the coffin I made as follows: Length, 5 feet 11 inches; depth, 12 inches; width, at the head 10 1/2 inches, shoulders 21 inches, feet 8 inches. At that time I understood that he was to lay in state, and to be opened about two o'clock, but was not aware that he was to be put into coffin with his hat and clothes on, in the way that he used to dress when in full uniform.

**T**HE room in which he lay was by him generally used as a bedroom (the size small), by which means the people were admitted.

The iron bedstead on which he lay was about five feet ten inches by three feet, about nine inches from the main corner nearest the sitting room, and about twenty inches from the back wall, leaving bare room for a passage into the sitting room. The altar was at his head, next to the wall of the dining room. Above the bedstead hung a chandelier frame with twelve burners. In front of the bedstead stood two stands with marble tops, on each of which stood one four-branch chandelier of solid silver. On the altar stood two of the same with four large candlesticks and four pieces of

wood, made white in each, at the top of which was a candle to appear large.

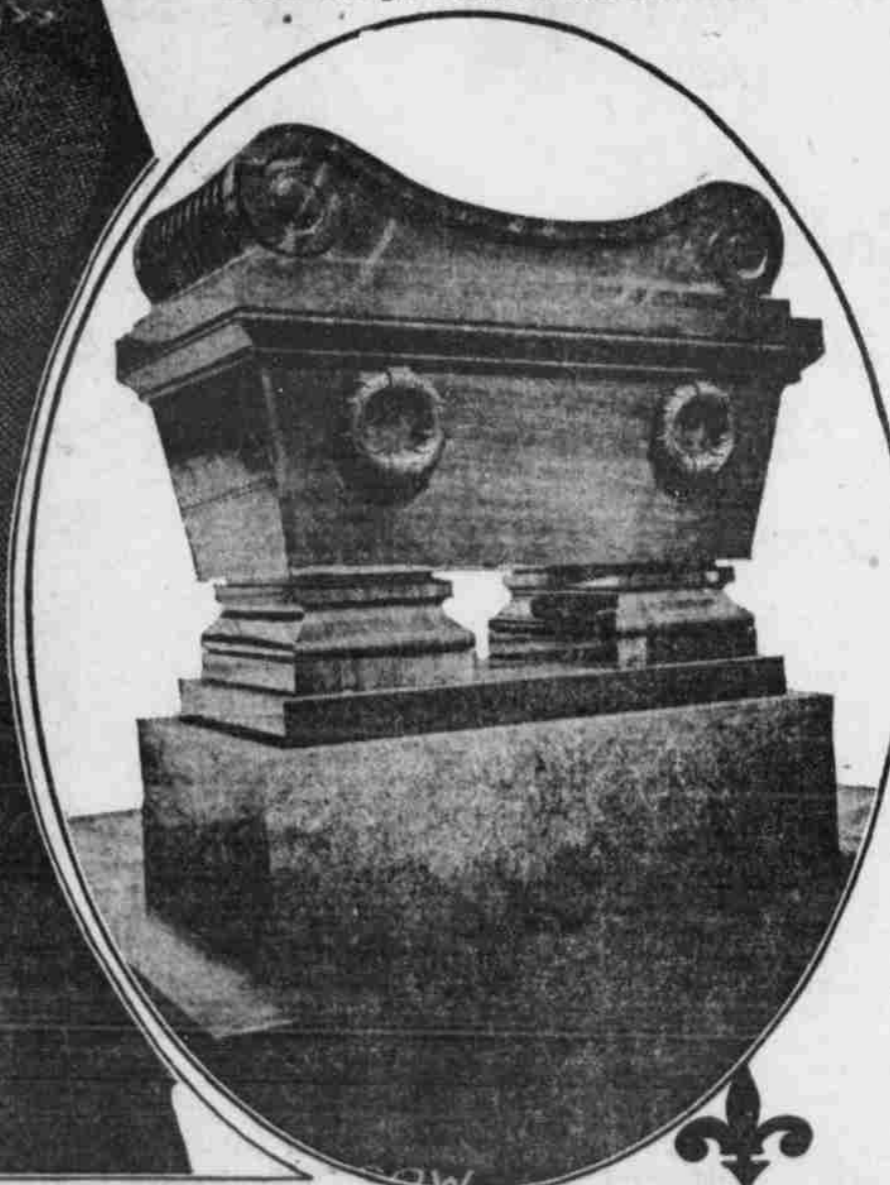
The altar was about two feet four inches wide and four feet six inches long, covered with black cloth and the letter "N" on the front, with a binding of yellow (taking from the drawing room window curtains round the front). On the top stood a "Jasupe" adorned with column, a dome and cupola, where the figure of our Savior on the Cross used to be deposited, but at that time was on General Bonaparte's breast, with the sword and scabbard on his right side, his heart and stomach on the left.

I having brought them in, Abraham Millington and Samuel Ley, the men who

made the tin coffin, Dr. Rutledge, of the 20th Regiment, being then in attendance (he having relieved Doctor Arnott), had orders not to let his heart be taken out of the room, I having received the same orders, the reason of this, as I was informed, was owing to Dr. Antommarchi wishing to have his stomach in his own possession to take to Europe with him, but the other French people did not wish that to be the case. I believe they wished his heart to be taken home with them, but did not get permission; therefore they wished to preserve it, which was accordingly done in the following manner:

His heart and stomach, as I have already mentioned, was in a silver vase or tureen, having been part of his plate, with a cover to it, on which was his coat-of-arms with an eagle on the top, which unscrewed with a nut; this having been soldered on fast, and then the heart having been put into the tureen by Dr. Rutledge in presence of Count Montholon. The top having been soldered on and a hole having been made in the bottom of the vessel, the spirits was (Sic) then poured in by Dr. Rutledge, and an old shilling soldered on the hole; a considerable delay having taken place, owing to the construction of the vessel, it was past 8 o'clock before the two men finished. During the time the different things were preparing, or, I may say, lay on the table in the library room ready, a silver spoon, fork and knife, with silver handles, one silver ewer or cream jug with rich workmanship on it, one of his silver plates, one of the same as now in my possession; a silver canister or mug with a top to it, in which was the stomach; the silver dish with his heart, two double Napoleons coined during the Republic, two ditto during Bonaparte's first Consulship, two ditto during his second Empire, and two ditto during his Imperial reign, with four single and three silver coins; I having had time to look at all the various articles while the men were soldering the rim on the top of the dish where the heart was, and likewise having put the coins and plate into the coffin myself.

Napoleon's Magnificent Tomb in the Invalides, Paris, in Which His Body Was Placed in the Coffin Brought From St. Helena.



Longwood Old House, St. Helena, Where Napoleon Lived During His Last Exile and Died.