



Napoleon's Poisoned Chalice: The Emperor and His Doctors on St Helena

Martin Howard

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In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte arrived on the island of St. Helena to begin his imprisonment following Waterloo. By 1821 he was dead. During his brief stay, he crossed paths with six medical men, all of whom would be changed by the encounter, whether by court martial, the shame of misdiagnosis, or resulting celebrity. What would seem to be a straightforward post became entangled with politics, as Governor Hudson Lowe became paranoid as to the motivations of each doctor and brought their every move into question. Martin Howard addresses the political pitfalls navigated with varying success by the men who were assigned to care for the most famous man in Europe—the hostility that sprang up between individuals thrown together in isolation, the impossible situations the doctors found themselves in, and the fear of censure when Napoleon finally began to die.

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