



# The Illustrious Dead: The Terrifying Story of How Typhus Killed Napoleon's Greatest Army

By Stephan Talty

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“Gripping . . . a compelling story of personal hubris and humbling defeat.”  
—Jack Weatherford, author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World*

In a masterful dual narrative that pits the heights of human ambition and achievement against the supremacy of nature, *New York Times* bestselling author Stephan Talty tells the story of a mighty ruler and a tiny microbe, antagonists whose struggle would shape the modern world.

In the spring of 1812, Napoleon Bonaparte was at the height of his powers. Forty-five million called him emperor, and he commanded a nation that was the richest, most cultured, and advanced on earth. No army could stand against his impeccably trained, brilliantly led forces, and his continued sweep across Europe seemed inevitable.

Early that year, bolstered by his successes, Napoleon turned his attentions toward Moscow, helming the largest invasion in human history. Surely, Tsar Alexander’s outnumbered troops would crumble against this mighty force.

But another powerful and ancient enemy awaited Napoleon’s men in the Russian steppes. Virulent and swift, this microscopic foe would bring the emperor to his knees.

Even as the Russians retreated before him in disarray, Napoleon found his army disappearing, his frantic doctors powerless to explain what had struck down a hundred thousand soldiers. The emperor’s vaunted military brilliance suddenly seemed useless, and when the Russians put their own occupied capital to the torch, the campaign became a desperate race through the frozen landscape as troops continued to die by the thousands. Through it all, with tragic heroism, Napoleon’s disease-ravaged, freezing, starving men somehow rallied, again and again, to cries of “Vive l’Empereur!”

Yet Talty's sweeping tale takes us far beyond the doomed heroics and bloody clashes of the battlefield. *The Illustrious Dead* delves deep into the origins of the pathogen that finally ended the mighty emperor's dreams of world conquest and exposes this "war plague's" hidden role throughout history. A tale of two unstoppable forces meeting on the road to Moscow in an epic clash of killer microbe and peerless army, *The Illustrious Dead* is a historical whodunit in which a million lives hang in the balance.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

When Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812, typhus ravaged his army, killing hundreds of thousands and ensuring his defeat, according to this breathless combination of military and medical history. After summarizing the havoc this disease wreaked on earlier armies and sketching Napoleon's career, the book describes his invasion of Russia with more than 600,000 men. Almost immediately typhus struck. Infected lice excrete the microbe in their feces, and victims acquire the disease by scratching the itchy bite. Talty (*Mulatto America*) describes the effects in graphic detail: severe headache, high fever, delirium, generalized pain and a spotty rash. Death may take weeks, and fatalities approached 100% among Napoleon's increasingly debilitated, filthy, half-starved soldiers. Talty makes a good case that it was typhus, not General Winter, that crushed Napoleon. Readers should look elsewhere for authoritative histories of Napoleon's wars and of infectious diseases, but Talty delivers a breezy, popular account of a gruesome campaign, emphasizing the equally gruesome epidemic that accompanied it. 12 maps. (June)

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Review

"An eloquent and vivid portrait that includes a view through the telescopes of rear-echelon commanders, the rifle sights of front-line skirmishers, and the clouded spectacles of field surgeons laboring in candlelit abattoirs . . . the finest kind of popular history."

—William Rosen, author of *Justinian's Flea: The First Great Plague* and *the End of the Roman Empire*

### Praise for *Empire of Blue Water*

"A swashbuckling adventure . . . [the] characters leap to life."

—*The New York Times Book Review*

"Reeking of authentic blood and thunder, and as richly detailed as a work of fiction . . . dramatically evokes the rough and tumble age when pirates owned the seas. A thrilling and fascinating adventure."

—Caroline Alexander, author of *The Endurance*

"Stephan Talty's vigorous history of seventeenth-century pirates of the Caribbean will sate even fickle Jack Sparrow fans. A pleasure to read from bow to stern."

—*Entertainment Weekly*

"Serves up swashbuckling history at its briny, blood-soaked best, with enough violence and passion to keep the pages flying by."

—Tom Reiss, author of *The Orientalist*

"Talty's delicious new book succeeds where other volumes of history fail. . . . A ripping yarn, worthy of its gaudy subject."

—*Dallas Morning News*

*From the Hardcover edition.*

About the Author

STEPHAN TALTY is a widely published journalist who has contributed to *The New York Times Magazine*, *GQ*, *Men's Journal*, *Time Out New York*, *Details*, and many other publications. He is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Empire of Blue Water* and *Mulatto America: At the Crossroads of Black and White Culture*.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Hazel Mishler:**

Here thing why that The Illustrious Dead: The Terrifying Story of How Typhus Killed Napoleon's Greatest Army are different and trusted to be yours. First of all reading through a book is good however it depends in the content from it which is the content is as delightful as food or not. The Illustrious Dead: The Terrifying Story of How Typhus Killed Napoleon's Greatest Army giving you information deeper as different ways, you can find any publication out there but there is no book that similar with The Illustrious Dead: The Terrifying Story of How Typhus Killed Napoleon's Greatest Army. It gives you thrill looking at journey, its open up your current eyes about the thing that will happened in the world which is probably can be happened around you. It is possible to bring everywhere like in recreation area, café, or even in your approach home by train. Should you be having difficulties in bringing the imprinted book maybe the form of The Illustrious Dead: The Terrifying Story of How Typhus Killed Napoleon's Greatest Army in e-book can be your option.

#### **Roberta Bourland:**

Typically the book The Illustrious Dead: The Terrifying Story of How Typhus Killed Napoleon's Greatest Army will bring you to the new experience of reading any book. The author style to explain the idea is very unique. Should you try to find new book you just read, this book very acceptable to you. The book The Illustrious Dead: The Terrifying Story of How Typhus Killed Napoleon's Greatest Army is much recommended to you to study. You can also get the e-book from official web site, so you can more readily to read the book.

#### **Princess Bequette:**

A lot of people always spent their own free time to vacation or go to the outside with them friends and family or their friend. Did you know? Many a lot of people spent many people free time just watching TV, or playing video games all day long. If you would like try to find a new activity here is look different you can read a new book. It is really fun for yourself. If you enjoy the book that you simply read you can spent all day every day to reading a book. The book The Illustrious Dead: The Terrifying Story of How Typhus Killed Napoleon's Greatest Army it is quite good to read. There are a lot of folks that recommended this book. We were holding enjoying reading this book. In the event you did not have enough space bringing this book you can buy typically the e-book. You can m0ore quickly to read this book from the smart phone. The price is not very costly but this book features high quality.

**Edmond Pounds:**

The Illustrious Dead: The Terrifying Story of How Typhus Killed Napoleon's Greatest Army can be one of your beginning books that are good idea. All of us recommend that straight away because this book has good vocabulary which could increase your knowledge in vocab, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nonetheless delivering the information. The writer giving his/her effort that will put every word into enjoyment arrangement in writing The Illustrious Dead: The Terrifying Story of How Typhus Killed Napoleon's Greatest Army yet doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest in addition to based confirm resource data that maybe you can be among it. This great information can drawn you into new stage of crucial pondering.

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