

THE HIGHWAY OF DEATH

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649130504

The highway of death by Earl Bishop Downer

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EARL BISHOP DOWNER

**THE HIGHWAY
OF DEATH**

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BY

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AMERICAN RED-CROSS SURGEON TO SERBIA, 1915; DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL
PRIVATE MISSION IN RUSSIA; SURGEON TO HOSPITAL MILI-
TAIRE, BELGRADE, SERBIA; MEMBER AMERICAN MEDICAL
ASSOCIATION, COLUMBUS (O.); ACADEMY OF
MEDICINE, ETC.

Copiously Illustrated with Numerous Half-tone Engravings
from Original Photographs.



PHILADELPHIA
F. A. DAVIS COMPANY, PUBLISHERS
ENGLISH DEPOT
STANLEY PHILLIPS, LONDON
1916

1126
76

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NO. 1126
76

Philadelphia, Pa., U. S. A.
Press of F. A. Davis Company
1914-1916 Cherry Street

PREFACE.

THE author of this book wishes to convey to its readers a graphic description of his experiences in Serbia during its frightful epidemic of typhus fever and the thrilling events which befell the thrice-captured city of Belgrade.

In Belgrade the writer spent a period of nine months directly upon the firing line, serving in the capacity of a surgeon with the American Red Cross, so close to the Hungarian border that very frequently in the lull of battle it was possible to converse with the Austro-Teutonic forces, which were stationed directly across the Rivers Save and Danube, not over three hundred yards distant.

The Hospital Militaire, occupied by Units Nos. 1, 2, and 3 of the American Red Cross, was situated in the center of the city, in a commanding position, upon a high hill, so that it was possible for the doctors and nurses to witness every movement of either side while the battles raged.

This little band of Americans saw the city of Belgrade pass like a shuttle, first from the hands of the Serbians to those of the Austrians, later to be retaken by the Serbians, and, lastly, to again be retaken by the combined Austro-Teutonic forces. During this

time the tide of battle raged most fiercely about the American hospital; in fact, centered in that particular vicinity in which heavy infantry and hand-to-hand fighting played an important part.

Perhaps never in the world's history has so splendid a spectacle been staged for the spectator as the fall of Belgrade. From our vantage point we could witness every move in the desperate undertaking. Across the river the combined Austro-Hungarian and German heavy artillery were hurling their great projectiles against the city. The city all around us was ploughed by the monster shells searching for the Allies' artillery positions. Allied artillery were dropping shells into Semlin, trying vainly to reach the guns that were slowly battering down their defenses. As night fell the city took fire, from which we could see the dull, angry glow reflected in the heavens.

It is commonly thought by the laity that Red Cross surgeons and nurses do not run the dangerous risks that are encountered by the average soldier in the trenches. Such, however, is not the case; for the Red Cross worker nowadays must be directly upon the firing line, and not only do they suffer a fearful mortality from gunshot wounds, but they have an added danger to face in the form of epidemics, from which the average soldier is practically exempt.

During the typhus epidemic which swept over Serbia in the early months of 1915, through which

the author successfully passed, at the beginning there were three hundred doctors in all Serbia, but before the epidemic was overcome it had claimed as victims two hundred and forty of the three hundred,—a fearfully high mortality of 80 per cent.

In presenting this picture of modern warfare the author has exhibited facts as they came before his vision with kaleidoscopic vividness. If this narration of events does not come up to the reader's expectations it will be because words fail to express the conditions as they exist in the land of blood and death.

To further add to the value of the book, the author has profusely illustrated it with original photographs taken mostly by himself. For the balance he is deeply indebted to Drs. Shadworth O. Beasley, W. A. Jolley, Morton P. Lane, and John Zymanski, former members of the Red Cross mission in Serbia.

E. B. D.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.	
OCEAN TRAVEL IN WAR TIMES	PAGE 9
CHAPTER II.	
TYPHUS AND ITS FRIGHTFUL RAVAGES	18
CHAPTER III.	
WHAT WAR AND PESTILENCE DOES TO A CITY	28
CHAPTER IV.	
DEATH'S HILL	41
CHAPTER V.	
THE MOST BESIEGED TOWN OF THE WORLD	49
CHAPTER VI.	
PEASANT SOLDIERS OF SERBIA	70
CHAPTER VII.	
COMMITTADJII, THE BANDIT HEROES OF THE BALKANS	92
CHAPTER VIII.	
MISTAKEN FOR AN AUSTRIAN SPY	105
CHAPTER IX.	
PASTIMES OF THE WOUNDED	120