

BOTCHKAREVA, TWICE BADLY INJURED, SPENDS NINE MONTHS IN HOSPITAL

Many Hardships and Difficulties Attend Her Return to Her Regiment, but She Is Given Wonderful Reception When She Arrives There

(Copyright, 1919, by Frederick A. Stokes Co.) This story, told by Maria Botchkareva and translated and arranged by Leon Levine, is published by Frederick A. Stokes Company under the title of "Yashka."

THIS STARTS THE STORY
When in 1917 Maria Botchkareva formed the Battalion of Death, a woman's fighting unit, the world was thrilled and a peasant girl stepped into the international hall of fame. Here she tells her own story. The first installments told of her childhood and marriage. Forced to leave her husband because of his jealousy, she joins an infantry regiment. She sees fighting, is decorated for bravery and is shocked to see signs of treachery among the highest officers of the Russian command. She was severely wounded in the battle of Postovoy.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES
THE boys were jubilant. "Yashka alive! God speed you to recovery Yashka!" I could only reply in a whisper. They took me to the first-aid station, cleansed my wound and dressed it. I suffered much. Then I was sent on to Moscow, where I lay in the Ekaterina Hospital, ward No. 29.

I was lonely in the hospital, where I spent nearly three months. The other patients would have had their visitors or receive parcels from home, but nobody visited me, nobody sent anything to me. March, April, May came and went in the monotony of ward No. 29. Finally, one day in the beginning of June I was declared fit again to return to the fighting line. My regiment was just then being transferred to the Lutsk front.

On June 29 I caught my first cold. The reception accorded me even surpassed that of the previous year. I was showered with fruit and sweets. The soldiers were in a happy mood. The Germans had just been driven back at this sector by General Brusilov for scores of versts. The country was criss-crossed by their evacuated camps. Here and there enemy corpses were still unburied. Our men, though overjoyed, were worn out by forced marches and the long pursuit.

It was midsummer, and the heat was oppressive. We marched on June 21 a distance of fifteen versts and stopped for rest. There were many prostrations among us, but the commander prayed us to keep going, promising a rest in the trenches. It was twenty versts to the front line, and we made it on the second day.

As we marched along we observed on both sides of the road that crops that had not been destroyed by the swaying armies were ripening. The fighting line ran near a village called Dubova Kortcha. We found in its neighborhood a manor hastily left by the Germans. The estate was half-ruined, fowl, potatoes and other food. That night we had a feast royal.

We occupied abandoned German trenches. It was not the time for rest. The artillery opened up early in the evening and continued ceaselessly throughout the night. It could mean nothing but an immediate attack. We were not deceived. At in the morning we received word that the Germans had left their positions and started for our side. At this moment our beloved commander, Grishaninov, was struck to the ground. He was wounded. We attended to him quickly and had him detached to the rear. There was no time to waste. We met the advancing Germans by repeated volleys, and when they approached our positions we climbed out and charged them with fixed bayonets.

Suddenly a terrific explosion deafened me, and I fell to the ground. A German shell had struck me, as part of it still carries in my body. I felt terrific pains in my back. I had been hit by a fragment at the end of the spinal column. My agony lasted long enough to attract a couple of soldiers. They carried me to a dressing station. The wound was so serious that the physician in charge did not believe that I could survive. I was placed in an ambulance and taken to Lutsk. I required electrical treatments, but the Lutsk hospitals were not supplied with the necessary apparatus. It was decided to send me to Kiev. My condition, however, was so grave that for three days the doctors considered it dangerous to move me.

In Kiev the flow of wounded was so great that I was compelled to lie in the street on a stretcher for a couple of hours before I was taken to a hospital. I was informed after an X-ray examination, that a fragment of shell was imbedded in my body and asked if I wished an operation to have it removed. I could not imagine living with a piece of shell in my flesh, and so requested its removal. Whether because of my condition or for some other reason, the surgeons finally decided not to operate, and told me that I would have to be sent either to Petrograd or to Moscow for treatment. As I was given the choice, I decided on Moscow, because I had spent the spring months of the year in the Ekaterina Hospital there.

The wound in the spine paralyzed me, to such an extent that I could not move even a finger. I lay in the Moscow Hospital hovering between life and death for some weeks, resembling a log more than a human body. Only my mind was active and my heart full of pain. Every day I was massaged, carried on a stretcher and bathed. Then the physician would attend me, probing my wound with iodine, and treating it with electricity and with iodine. I was bathed again and my wound dressed. This daily procedure was a torture that could not be paralleled, in spite of the morphine injected into me. There was little peace in the ward in which I was kept. All the beds were occupied by serious cases, and the groans and moans must have reached to heaven.



GENERAL BRUSILOV

It was a miracle. And I offered thanks to God with all the fervor that I could command.

One day a woman by the name of Daria Maximovna Vasileva came to see me. I searched my mind and came to an acquaintance of that name as I had her shown to my bed. But as I was perhaps the only patient in the ward that had no visitors and received no parcels one can imagine how joyous I was over the call. She introduced herself as the mother of Stepan, my company. Of course I knew Stepan well. He was a student before the war and volunteered as an under-officer.

"Stepan has just written me about you," Madame Vasileva said, "urging me to look about you. Go to the Ekaterina Hospital and visit our Yashka," she writes. "She is lonely there, and I want you to do for her as much as you would do for me, for she saved my life once, and had been like a godmother to the boys here. She is a decent, patriotic young woman and my interest in her is but that of a comrade, for she is a soldier, and a brave and gallant soldier. He praised you so much, darling, that my heart just went out to you. May God bless you."

She brought me some dainties, and we became friends immediately. I told her all about her. Go to our life in the trenches. She wept and wondered how I had borne it. Her attachment to me grew so strong that she wanted to live with me several times a week, although she lived on the outskirts of the city. Her husband was assistant superintendent at a factory and they occupied a small but comfortable dwelling in keeping with their means. Daria Maximovna herself was a woman of middle-age, neatly dressed and of gentle appearance. She had a married daughter, Tometchka, and another son, a factory hand, who was a high school student.

My friend buoyed up my spirits and my recovery progressed. As I gradually regained full control of my limbs, I sometimes teased the doctor with remarks. "Well, doctor," I would say to him, "I am going to war again!"

"No, no," he would answer, "there is no more war for you, gotubushka!" I wondered whether I really would be able to return to the front. There the fragment of shell yet in my body. The doctor would not extract it. He advised me to await complete recovery and have it removed at some future date through an abdominal operation, as the fragment is lodged in the omentum. I have not yet found out the opportunity to undergo such a piece of shell. The slightest indigestion causes me to suffer from it even now.

I had to learn to walk as if I had never mastered that art before. I was not successful at the first attempt. Having asked the doctor for crutches, I tried to stand up, but fell back weakened and helpless into the bed. The attendants, however, placed me in a wheel-chair and took me out into the garden. This movement gave me deep satisfaction. One, in the absence of my attendant, I tried to stand up alone and make a step. It was very painful, but I maintained my balance, and tears of joy came streaming down my cheeks. It was only a week later, however, that I was permitted by the doctor to walk a little, supported by the attendants. But I made only ten steps, beaming with triumph and making every effort to overcome my pain, when I collapsed and fainted. The nurses were alarmed and called the doctor, who instructed them to be more cautious in the future. My improvement was, nevertheless, steady, and a couple of weeks later I was able to walk. Naturally I did not feel sure of my legs at first; they trembled and seemed so weak. Gradually they regained their former strength and at

Dinner With Officers Interrupted by Comrades Who Wished to Shake Her by the Hand and Commander Pins Medal on Her Breast

crowded and there was only standing room. On the platform my attention was attracted to a poor woman with a nursing baby in her arms, another tot on the floor and a girl of about five hanging on to her skirt. All the women and children were packed in a single bag. The children were crying for bread, the woman tried to calm them, evidently in dread of something. I touched my heart to watch this little group, and I offered some bread to the children.

Then the woman confided in me the cause of her fear. She had no money and no ticket and expected to be put off at the next station. She was the wife of a soldier from a village in German hands and was now bound for a town 3000 versts away, where she had some relatives. Something simply had to be done for this woman. I made an appeal to the soldiers that filled the car, but they did not respond immediately.

"She is the wife of a soldier, of one like you," I said. "Suppose she were the wife of one of you? For all you know, the wives of some of you here may be floating about the country in a similar state. Come, let us get off at the next station, go to the station master and request for her permission to go to her destination."

The soldiers softened and helped me to take the woman and her belongings off the train at the next stop. We went to the station master, who explained that he could do nothing in the matter and sent us to the military commandant. I went along with the woman, deserted by the soldiers, who had heard the train whistle and did not wish to miss it.

The commandant repeated the words of the station master. He had no right to provide her with a military pass, he said. "No right!" I exclaimed, beside myself. "She is the wife of a soldier and her husband is probably now, at this very moment, going into battle to defend the country, while you, safe and well-fed in the rear here, won't even take care of his wife and children. It is an outrage! Look at the woman. She needs medical attention and her children are starved."

"And who are you?" sharply asked the commandant. "I will show you who I am," I answered, taking off my medals and cross and showing him my certificate. "I have sired enough blood to be entitled to demand justice for the helpless wife of a soldier."

The commandant turned away and went out. There was nothing to be done but make a collection. I made my way into the first class waiting room, which was filled with officers and well-to-do passengers, took my cap in my hand and went the rounds, begging for a poor soldier's wife. When I got through there were eighty rubles in the cap. With this money I went to the commandant again, turned it over to him with a request that he provide accommodations for the woman and her children, who did not know how to express her gratitude to me.

The next train pulled in. I never before saw one so packed. There could be no thought of getting inside a car. The only space available was on the top of a coach. There were plenty of passengers even there. With the aid of some soldiers I climbed to the top, where I spent two days and two nights. It was impossible to get off at every station to take a walk. Even for the tea we had to send emissaries, and our food consisted of that and bread.

Accidents were not uncommon. On the very roof on which I traveled a man fell asleep and rolled off, being killed instantly. I almost suffered a similar fate, excepting by hair's breadth. I began to doze and drifted to the edge, and had not a soldier

caught me at the very last moment I would undoubtedly have gone over. That journey on the train was the symbol of the country's condition in the winter of 1918. The government machinery was breaking down. The soldiers had lost faith in their superiors, and the view that they were being led to slaughter by the thousands prevailed in many minds. Rumors flew thick and fast. The old soldiers were killed off and the fresh drafts were impatient for the end of the war. The spirit of 1917 was no more.

In Kiev I had to obtain information as to the location of my regiment. It was now near the town of Berestechko. In my absence the boys had advanced fifteen versts. The train from Kiev was also badly crowded and offered nothing but standing room. At stations we sent out five soldiers to fill our kettles with hot water. The men could seldom get in and out through the entrances, so they used the windows. The train really passed through Zhitomir and Zhmerinka on the way to Lutsk. There I changed to a branch road, going to the station Verba, within thirty versts of our position.

It was muddy on the road to the front. Overhead flew whole flocks of airplanes, raining bombs. I got used to them. In the afternoon there was a downpour, and I was thoroughly soaked. Dead tired, with water streaming from my clothes, I arrived at the first line. There was a regimental supply train camping on both sides of the road. I approached a sentry with the question: "What regiment is billeted here?"

"The Twenty-eighth Poletsk Regiment." My heart leaped with joy. The soldier did not recognize me. He was a new man. But the boys must have told him of me. "That was Yashka," I said. "That was a pass. They all knew the name and had heard from the veterans of the regiment many stories about me. I was taken to the colonel in command of the supply train, a funny old chap, who blessed me, on both sides and jumped about clapping his hands and shouting, 'Yashka! Yashka!'"

He was kind-hearted and immediately became solicitous for me. He promptly ordered an orderly to bring a new outfit and had the bath, used by the officers, prepared for me. Clean and in the new uniform, I accepted the invitation to sup with the colonel. There were several other officers at the table and all were glad to see me. The word went out that Yashka had arrived, and some soldiers could not restrain their desire to shake hands with me. Every nose and eye there would be a meek knock at the door and in answer to the colonel's question, "Who's there?" a plaintive voice would say, "Excelsior, may I be allowed to see Yashka?"

In time quite a number of comrades were admitted into the house. One part of it was occupied by the owner, a widow with a young daughter. I spent the night with the latter and in the morning started out to the front. Some of our companies were in reserve and my progress became a triumphal journey. I was feasted on the way and given several ovations. I presented myself to the commander of the regiment, who invited me to dine that afternoon with the regimental staff, unquestionably the first case of an under-officer receiving such an invitation in the history of the regiment. At dinner the commander toasted me, telling the history of my service with the regiment and wishing me many more years of such service.

At the conclusion he pinned a cross of the third degree on my breast, marked with a pencil three stripes on the way and given several ovations. The grade of senior under-officer. The staff crowded around me, pressing my hands, praising me and expressing their best wishes. I was profoundly shaken with this demonstration of sincere appreciation and affection on the part of the officers. This was my reward for all the suffering I had undergone.

And it was a reward very much worth while. What did I care for a paralysis in the spine and a four months' paralysis if this was the return that I received for my sacrifice? Trenches filled with bloody corpses told no horror for me then. No Man's Land seemed quite an attractive place in which to spend a day with a bleeding head. The scream of shells and the whistle of bullets presented themselves like music to my imagination. Ah, life was not so bleak and futile, after all. It had its moments of bliss that compensated for years of torment and misery.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

WHAT IS GUMMING THE WHEELS OF INDUSTRY?

Wages Stop when work ceases.

Prosperity will never come while the wheels of industry do not turn. It doesn't matter what stops them—when they stop, production stops; work must cease; money cannot be earned.

Under present conditions, the most important things to consider are: Whether the demands of the men and women are fair and just; whether the Managements are able to meet these demands. And what concerns Men and Management alike is:

How will the granting of these demands affect the textile industry?

If these demands are granted, will the workers' condition be bettered?

Will he or she make more money?

If we are going to lay a solid foundation for permanent future prosperity, the most vital thing to do right now is:

START TO WORK AND KEEP AT WORK

Production must come first in order to reduce the cost of living. The wheels must start—and keep on—turning, so that money can start—and keep on—circulating. Any decrease in Production, raises prices and lessens the value of the dollar in your pocket.

Do not listen to the Paid Agitators and Bolsheviks—enemies both of the steady, conscientious, dependable Worker and of the Management—these agitators are trying to sow discord and hatred by malicious mis-statement or ignorant lies. Don't let them shout or bully or wheedle you out of your job! Don't let their influence build up a barrier between you and your Managements.

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Get together and work together.

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