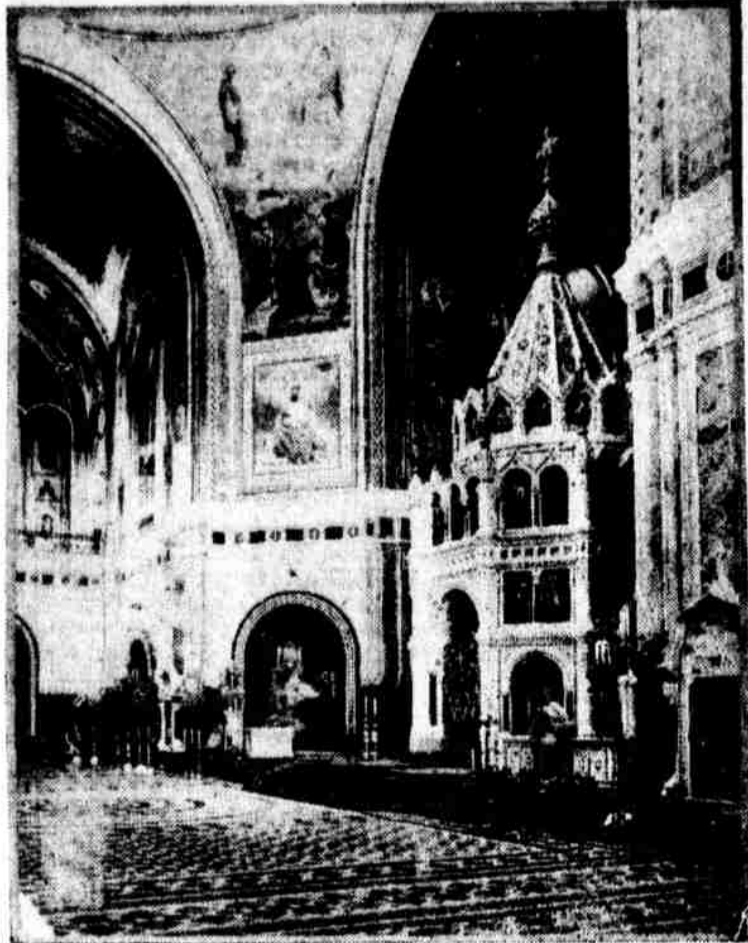


BOTCHKAREVA HAS MASS CELEBRATED IN CATHEDRAL OF CHRIST THE SAVIOUR

On the Day Church and State Are Severed Impressive Services Are Held in Commemoration of Her Miraculous Escape From Death.

(Copyright, 1919, by Frederick A. Stokes Co.) This story told by Maria Botchkareva was translated into English by her husband, Leonine, and published by the Frederick A. Stokes Company under the title of "Yasha."

THIS STARTS THE STORY
In the summer of 1917 Maria Botchkareva formed the Battalion of Death, a woman's fighting unit in the Russian army. A peasant girl thus stepped into the international hall of fame. This is her story. In the earlier installments she told of the hardships of childhood, the brutalities of her married life and the realization of her wish to become a soldier. She told of battles fought and won and of the demoralization of the soldiers following the overthrow of the Czar. It was to shame the mass intonations that the woman's battalion was formed. The battalion saw some action, but was at least forced by the men to disband. Botchkareva later, at the instance of Russian officers in Petrograd who were dissatisfied with the way the government was being run, undertook a mission to General Kornilov, which was crowned with success though accompanied by many dangers.



Interior of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour

once saved, on the eve of her execution. The execution was postponed. She then prayed to God again, and a divine voice informed her that her life would be spared. She vowed to offer public prayers in this cathedral in the event of her release. The Lord mercifully granted her freedom, and she is now here to fulfill the vow.

The priest then asked the deacon to bring me up to the altar. When I was led there, a murmur went through the assembly.

"Lord! It's Botchkareva!"
Candles were lit and for fifteen minutes prayers of praise to the Lord were read, glorifying His name.

I returned to the Vasilievs by trolley. On the car there were many soldiers, and again their conversation cheered me up.

"A fine end we have come to! The Germans are moving nearer and nearer, and here they are shooting and arresting the people!" the men said to one another. "Why don't they send the Red Guard to resist the enemy? We are being sold to the Germans."

This was my second encounter with sober-thinking soldiers in one day. I arrived at Daria Maximovna's in high spirits. The awakening of the Russian soldier had begun!

I had left my medals and crosses in Petrograd before starting out on the fateful errand. Borrowing some money from Madame Vasilieva, I went for them to Petrograd. The railway carriage in which I traveled was packed with about 150 soldiers. But they were no longer the cut-throats, the incensed and revengeful ruffians of two months ago. They did not threaten. They did not brag. The kindness of their real souls had again asserted itself. They even made a place for me, inviting me to sit down.

"Please, Madame Botchkareva," they said, "take this seat."
"Thank you, comrades," I answered. "No, don't call us comrades any more. It's disgraceful now. The comrades are at present fleeing from the front, when the Germans threaten Moscow," some of them remarked.

One felt among friends. This comradeship was what endeared the Russian soldier to my heart. Not the comradeship of the agitators, not the comradeship so loudly proclaimed in the Bolshevik manifestos and proclamations, but the true comradeship that made the three years in the trenches the happiest of my life. That old spirit again filled the air. It was almost too good to be real. After the nightmare of the revolution and terror, it felt like a dream. The soldiers were actually cursing Bolshevism, denouncing Lenin and Trotsky.

"How does it happen that you all talk so sanely?" I asked.
"Because the Germans are moving on Moscow, and Lenin and Trotsky don't even snap their fingers," came in answer. "A soldier has escaped from Kiev and just telegraphed that the Germans are seizing Russians and sending them to Germany to help fight the Allies. Lenin and Trotsky told us that the Allies were our enemies. We now see that they are our friends."

Another soldier, who had been home on leave, told of an armed Red Guard detachment that descended on his village one fair day and robbed the peasants of all the bread they had, the product of their sweat and blood, exposing them to starvation.

"The people are hungry, that's why they join the Red Guard," one of the men remarked. "At least then they get food and arms with which to plunder. It is getting so that one is not safe unless he belongs to the Red Guard."

"But why don't you do something?" I addressed myself to them. "Everywhere I see the people are aroused, but they do nothing to overthrow the yoke."

"We have demanded more than once the resignation of Lenin and Trotsky. There were large majorities against them at several elections. But they lean on the Red Guard and keep themselves in power in spite of the will of the people. The peasants are almost all against them."

"The more reason why you should act," I said. "Something ought to be done."
"What? Tell us what!" several wanted to know.
"Even to get together, for instance, and re-establish the front!" I suggested.

"We would, but we have nobody we

can trust to lead us. All our good people are fighting among themselves," they argued. "Besides, we would need arms and food."
"But whom could we choose as our leader?" the men persisted. "All our chiefs are divided. Some are reputed to be monarchists. Others are said to be exploiters of the poor laboring people. Still others are declared to be German agents. Where could we find a man that would not belong to one of these or other parties?"
"What if I, for instance, took charge and became your leader?" I made bold to ask. "Would you follow me?"
"Yes, yes!" they cried. "We could trust you. You are a peasant yourself. But what could you do?"
"What could I do? You know that these scoundrels are destroying Russia. The Germans are grasping everything they can lay hold on. I would try to restore the front!"
"But how?" they quizzed.
"Here the idea of going to America originated in my mind. We had all heard that America was now one of the Allies."
"What if I should go to America to ask there for help?" I ventured.
"But if I did get there and to the other Allies," I insisted, "and came back with an army and equipment, would you join me then, and would you have all your friends come with you?"
"Yes, we would! Yes! We know that you could not be bought. You are one of us," they shouted.
"In that event I will go to America!" I announced resolutely, there and then making up my mind to go. The soldiers wouldn't believe me. When I reached Petrograd and I parted from them affectionately, with their blessings following me, I did not forget to warn them to remember their pledge upon hearing of my arrival from foreign lands with troops.

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)

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AND HERE IT CONTINUES

Bearing a Message from My People

THE Vasilievs were the only people I could go to in Moscow. They lived on the outskirts of the city. I made an attempt to walk to their house, but was too weak to proceed more than two blocks. There was a cabman at the curb, but he wanted twenty-five rubles to take me to my friends. I tried to bargain, offering fifteen, and he would not hear of it. As I had no money, I finally hired the cab in the hope that Daria Maximovna would pay for it. The alternative was to remain on the curb.

Madame Vasilieva received me as if I were her own daughter. She was overwhelmed with joy at my release. I was too emaciated and worn out to react fully to my miraculous deliverance from the clutches of torture and death. I was served some light food, and Daria Maximovna went about preparing a bath for me. I had not changed my garments for several weeks, and my body was blacker than it ever had been during my life in the trenches. My skin was in a terrible condition from vermin. The bath was a greater deliverance at the moment than my release itself. And the long hours of sleep following it were even more welcome. I doubt if sleep ever tasted so sweet to me.

One could not remain long as a guest in Moscow in those early days of March, 1918. Stepan lived away from his home, as his parents differed sharply with him on the political situation. The family consisted of Daria Maximovna, her husband and the younger son. The daughter, Tonetchka, was married and lived apart. The three Vasilievs received fifty-a-pound and one-eighth of bread!

The weekly meat ration was a pound and a half. I therefore promptly realized what a burden I was bound to be. But I could not make up my mind where to go and what to do. The Vasilievs offered to buy me a ticket home, but the document I had from the Soldiers' Section was in itself a ticket.

I recalled that some of my maimed girls had been sent to Moscow to be quartered in the House of Invalids, and thought of looking them up. I took a walk to the city. When I approached the block in which the House for Invalids was situated, I saw several crowds, largely composed of soldiers, in the street, holding meetings of indignation. As I reached the place I found a number of maimed soldiers, some of them without legs or arms, scattered about the front grounds.

On inquiry I learned that the Bolshevik authorities had turned the hundreds of crippled inmates into the street. Many of them, including my girls, had already disappeared, some undoubtedly spreading out to beg, others gathered up by charitable people and societies. But still a goodly number remained, crying, cursing Lenin and Trotsky, and asking passersby for food and shelter. It was a pathetic sight. The cruelty of the order made one's blood boil. It was an order apparently promulgated just for the sake of cruelty. The excuse that the government needed the building certainly did not justify the wanton act.

There were about two hundred soldiers in the crowd, and I stopped to listen to their conversation. All of them had been attracted to the place by the complaints of the ever-invalids. Their cry came as a revelation to me. They were in a mutinous state, aroused against Lenin and Trotsky's regime. For several hours I listened about the various groups, sometimes participating in the discussions.

"See what you have brought on by your own action and wickedly!" one of them yelled. "You have abandoned God and destroyed the church. Now this is the result of your deeds!" In some such manner I addressed the men, and they answered something like this:

"We believed that by overthrowing our officers and our wealthy class we would have plenty of bread and land. But now the factories are demolished and there is no work. We are terrorized by the Red Guard, which is composed mostly of drunkards and criminals. If there are any honest soldiers in it, it is because hunger and poverty force them to enlist in order to escape starvation. If we demand justice and a square deal, we are shot down by the Red hangmen. And all the while the Germans are advancing into Russia, and nobody is sent to fight them, our real enemies."

At these words I crossed myself, thanking the Almighty for the deep change He had wrought in the minds of the people.

The crowd became so demonstrative that the authorities were notified and a Red Guard detachment was sent to suppress it. It arrived suddenly and by firing a volley into the air warned us to disperse. The gathering split up and vanished from the street. A group of about ten soldiers, including myself, rushed into a neighboring courtyard and continued the conversation there behind the gates.

"See, what you get now! If you were armed they would not dare to treat you like that. They made you surrender your arms and now oppress you worse than the Czar. Who ever heard of a thousand invalids thrown out into the street under the old regime?" I asked.

"Yes, we have been sold out. It is a shame now. The Germans are taking all our bread, occupying our houses, and our country, demanding money, and our people are being

"Ah, so you are beginning to see the fact that I was penniless and could not pay for the service. At the conclusion of the communion the priest announced:

"There has just come here a Christian woman, who had suffered greatly for the country, and whose name is known throughout the land. A miracle saved her in a desperate moment. God listened to her prayers and sent her an old friend, whose life she had

Accompanied by a couple of soldiers I walked away. One of them told me he had seen a girl of mine, thrown out of the home, begin begging. My heart pained at the thought, but I was absolutely without means. What could I have done for her? We reached the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and I remembered the vow I had made to have a public mass served in commemoration of my miraculous escape from death.

I took leave of my companions and entered the church. There were about five or six hundred people there. On that very day, I believe, the order was promulgated separating the church from the state. All the devout members of the Cathedral went to the communion service that afternoon.

I went to see the deacon in the vestry and told him of the miracle that was vouchsafed me and the vow I had made. I did not fail to mention

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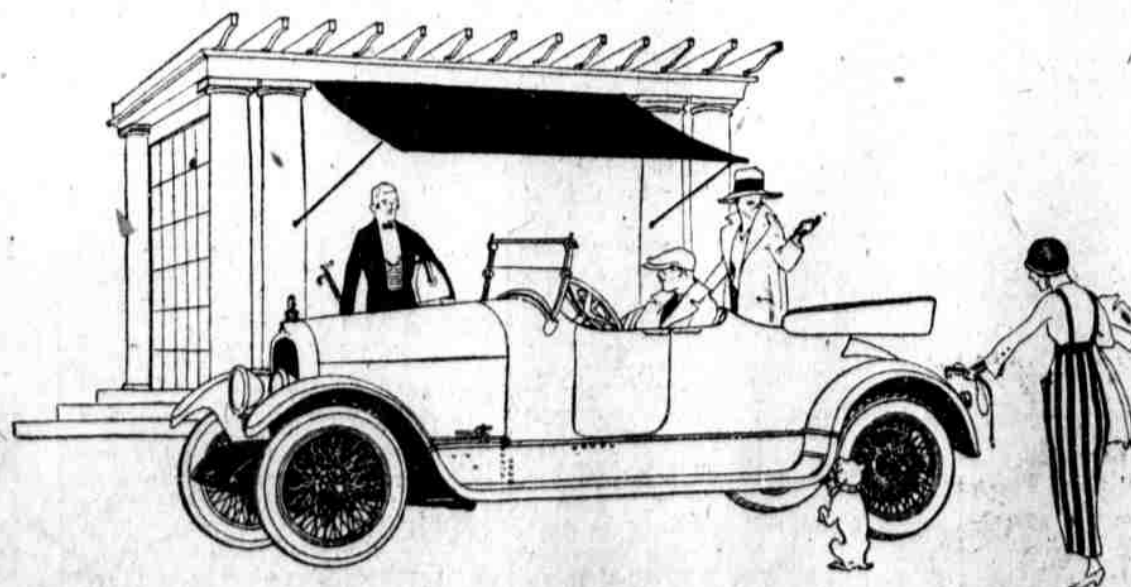
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