

The Russian "Joan of Arc's" Own Story



Austrians Dead in a Trench, Surprised by a Cossack Charge on the Galician Frontier—as Described in Mme. Kokovtseva's Letter.

Colonel Mme. Alexandra Kokovtseva, Wounded Twice and Just Decorated by the Czar for Her Heroism, Tells How It Is Possible for a Woman to Bear the Horrors of Trench and Battle Field---and What She Did to Win Her Cross

TWICE wounded by German or Austrian bullets and forced to spend some days in a field hospital, Mme. Kokovtseva, who has suddenly leaped into fame as the "Russian Joan of Arc," found time to write to a member of her mother's family in Petrograd. This letter, vividly describing her experiences as an officer of a Cossack regiment which participated in the Russian advance into Galicia, was recently forwarded, via Archangel, to another relative in New York—a well-known member of the Russian colony—who has translated from it the portions which are printed on this page.

Mme. Kokovtseva is the colonel commanding the Sixth Ural Cossack Regiment. For bravery and distinguished ability she has recently been awarded the Cross of St. George—a decoration much coveted by Russian army officers—and listed for a military pension.

Thousands of women, many of them successfully disguising their sex, are fighting in the Russian ranks. Nearly five hundred of these, who had been able to escape the suspicions of recruiting officers, by their bravery have won their right to go on fighting, though recognized as wives and daughters, in some cases as mothers.

Of these Russian amazons, Kokovtseva appears to be the most gifted and capable in a

military sense. As shown by her photograph reproduced on this page, she is a handsome, almost a beautiful, woman, apparently under thirty. She is of a good family of Cossack origin. All her life up to mature womanhood was spent in the bracing open air of the Ural Mountain region. From early childhood she has been an athlete, practically born to the saddle and riding like a Cossack.

She married a Cossack officer, and when the present war broke out she successfully disguised herself as a Cossack cavalryman and gained entrance to her husband's regiment. Before she had revealed herself even to him she had gained promotion by her courage and soldierly qualities. When she had advanced to the officer grade equivalent to our lieutenant her secret was discovered. But she had "made good" so emphatically that after this her advance was even more rapid.

She is photographed here in the high boots, belted tunic and shoulder straps of her rank as a Cossack colonel. One of several medals won by her for gallantry appears on her left breast.

The following paragraphs translated from the Russian script of Mme. Kokovtseva's letter create a vivid impression that she has sacrificed none of her womanliness in winning her high recognition as a soldier.

God," said my gallant Cossack, as he reverently crossed himself. "Ah," I said, "afterwards you went back and with your bayonet skewered each Austrian cap where it lay beside its dead owner." "No," he replied gravely, "with my bayonet I skewered each cap with the same thrust that sent its owner to God." And again he crossed himself.

It was all true—there were witnesses of the encounter—seven to one, and all the seven now "with God."

Do you shudder when I write to you of these things? Do you say to yourself that "this terrible war" has robbed me of all my estimable "woman's weaknesses"? Do you picture me brazenly calloused to scenes of human agony and violent deaths for thousands in a single engagement which probably has no effect upon the final outcome?

You would be wrong. It is simply that if you are a soldier it is your duty to kill, and perhaps to be killed, in defense of your country. No matter how dreadful the things that happen, they are inseparable from war and you must get used to them. Gradually you do get used to them. If you did not your services to your country would be of no value. You would not be a true soldier, who must be able always to shrug his shoulders and say to himself, "Well, such things happen," and then go on faithfully with his soldier's work.

But believe me, these duties performed as well as I am able to perform them, promotion, honors—afterward they will be as nothing compared with what is dear to me as a woman. Through all this violence and carnage and misery I know that I shall have gained in all that becomes a woman—in faithfulness, tenderness, pity for the poor and unfortunate, and in charity.



Mme. Alexandra Kokovtseva, Colonel Commanding the Sixth Ural Cossack Regiment. When this Photograph Was Taken She Had Already Received Medals for Efficiency as an Officer. Lately the Czar Has Awarded Her the High Military Honor of the Cross of St. George.

By Mme. Alexandra Kokovtseva, the "Russian Joan of Arc"

Translated from a Letter Forwarded from Petrograd to Friends in New York.

AS Jessaul (Colonel) of my dashing Cossack regiment I must be discreet in my letter writing. Only last week one of my officers—in fact the Sotnik (Captain) himself—let himself in for a nice wiggling from the department censor for heading a letter to his mother in Moscow with the name of the nearest village to our regimental headquarters and the exact date. All such details are "verboten," as the Austrians would say whose bullet has given me this nice little rest in the field hospital.

Do not worry on my account. In a week I shall sit just as firmly in my saddle as ever. Never was a woman soldier of either sex more petted and coddled than I am. Every day my little ones (Cossacks of her regiment) almost bury me under Spring flowers.

"Listen, Batjuschka," I had to say just now to the grimmest and fiercest of them—a grizzled giant who only yesterday captured six Austrians single-handed—"do you wish to see your Jessaul shedding tears, like a mere woman? For shame! About face—march!"

But the wretch had the audacity to try and kiss my hand—he left a tear on it, anyway. When I'm out I shall have to discipline him severely!

My splendid Cossack! Who would have thought that I, who would consent to be commanded by a woman? Often have I told you of their superior attitude toward women. They expect their women to work for them, to serve them and be always submissive. Evidently my fierce little ones consider me as a sort of superwoman. Or, perhaps they do not consider me a woman at all—except now that I am wounded and in the hospital—and respect merely my colonel's uniform. Truly it has little in common with the Tartar shirt, half-coat and foot-gear and kerchief of their sisters and wives. At any rate they obey my slightest wish, perform the most reckless deeds, gaily court death, to win my approval.

If you should be writing to Paul—or to Anna in America, be sure and tell them to believe none of those German lies. Not one of my fire-eating Cossacks has been guilty of offering indignities to a woman of the enemy. Maybe my little ones do some burning and looting—if my back is turned—but to act in a beastly way to women and children!

Do you hear that the Little Father (the Czar) permits us to go hungry, or in rags? It is false! The soup boiler runs swiftly on its two wheels,

and with the boiler for the tea it is never far from the trenches. My little ones, so much of the time far in advance of the line, well know how to see to their own stomachs, but there is always the well-stocked and cleanly field kitchen to fall back upon in case of need.

You have heard of us in the enemy's country. Ah, there was fat living! Eggs by the hundred thousand; egg pancakes to tighten the belts of a whole army, and mutton and beef without stint. We grew fat. Our ragged and gaunt Austrian prisoners looked upon us with envy. Soon they also were fat!

You know that we of the Cossack regiments have little to do with the fighting in trenches. For us it is to make forays, to make whirlwind attacks upon detachments of the enemy guarding their line of communications, and to capture positions badly defended by artillery. I may be permitted to instance our usefulness on the frontier of Galicia, between the Dniester and Pruth. It was my Cossacks who surprised the Austrians at Okna.

The Austrians were entrenched. Our infantry attacked, but were repulsed. Ah, then you should have beheld my little ones! There were two Cossack regiments—two thousand dashing, fierce fellows— itching for a hand-to-hand encounter with the despised Teutons. As the infantry were retreating my little ones were given their chance.

Yelling madly and firing their carbines, they galloped west and east, covering a long front to convince the Austrians that they were in large force. The ruse worked. The enemy started to retreat to the southwest. Before they were clear of their trenches the Cossacks were riding them down, slaying the cold steel right and left and cutting off large bodies for prisoners— finally taking the position.

That is the work at which my fine fire-eaters are famous. The Sotnik (Captain) of my regiment sent to me a bloodstained, grizzled victor in a hundred battles who begged the privilege of presenting to me seven caps belonging to the Austrian infantry service uniforms, each pierced through its crown. Like so many grouse, they were skewered upon my brave Cossack's bayonet.

"Thank you, Batjuschka, but I am not hungry," I said, for my little ones do not mind being teased. "Neither are they hungry who lately wore them," was the quick answer. "Where are those seven Austrians?" I asked, looking about in pretended stupidity. "With



Col. Kokovtseva as She Appears Mounted in Active Command of Her Cossack Regiment.

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Eat More Fruit and You'll Need Less Medicine

EVERYBODY should eat more fresh fruit during the Summer, not only because it is so cheap and plentiful, but because it contains valuable medicinal qualities which help to ward off all sorts of hot weather ills.

Blackberries, for instance, contain a great deal of iron. On this account they sometimes have a very perceptible effect in making pale children rosy when they eat freely of them.

Black currants have a great household reputation as a remedy for colds and coughs. A couple of teaspoonfuls of black currant jam are put into a tumblerful of hot water, with a pinch of salt, and drunk hot at bedtime.

Nature offers us few better tonics than pineapple, the juice of which contains the natural ferments of healthy digestion to a high degree. A famous specialist on stomach troubles is

said to have declared: "If you have one foot in the grave and are a nervous wreck from dyspepsia, drink clear pineapple juice."

Grapes are a wholesome and delightful food. They are in the class of demulcents and are highly beneficial to those suffering from various illnesses. Apples are correctives, and are very useful in overcoming nausea from seasickness and other causes. They are also very cooling and act as stomach sedatives.

Red and white currants, like melons, apples, oranges, limes, lemons and gooseberries are also cooling and therefore most acceptable hot weather foods.

Both raisins and figs, split open, make good poultices for boils. A split raisin, placed over the gum, often gives relief to the toothache sufferer. Figs are also valuable as a laxative.