

Brusiloff, Hero of the Hour in Russia, Described Intimately by One Who Knows Him Well

American, Married to Sister of Russian Leader's Wife, Tells Striking Personal Traits of the Man in Command of Great Offensive of the Czar's Armies

The fact that the wife of Charles Johnston, author of this article, is the sister of Mme. Brusiloff, wife of General Alexei Alexeievitch Brusiloff, enables the author of the following analytical study of the great Russian commander to present a portrait not merely authentic but intimately tracing his progress from youthful ambitions to his remarkable accomplishments of the last few days. Mr. Johnston has contributed numerous articles to THE NEW YORK TIMES, and is therefore well known to readers of this newspaper.

By Charles Johnston.

ON Monday last a charming and ingenious writer in THE NEW YORK TIMES declared that General Brusiloff was fast becoming a solar myth; that men are telling of him the time-old tales they told of Hannibal, of Caesar, of Alexander; that he seems to be, like the King of Salem, devoid of authentic biography—without beginning of days or end of years.

Let me hasten to supply somewhat of the element that appears to be lacking, the element of authentic biography. Alexei Alexeievitch Brusiloff was born, nearer sixty than fifty years ago, in the Russian Caucasus, in the little, semi-Oriental city of Kutais, which lies about halfway between Poti, the Black Sea port, and the icy summit of Kazbek, some 3,000 feet higher than Mont Blanc. The second element in the Russian General's name—Alexeievitch—means the son of Alexei; the elder Alexei Brusiloff was also a soldier, a General, trained, like so many Russian warriors, in the century-long Caucasian wars. The Brusiloffs have for generations been distinguished in Russian military and political history, and the present General Alexei Brusiloff has a curious packet of ancient documents, each of which conveys the thanks and esteem of a sovereign of Russia to a former member of his house. One may add that the collection has been recently enriched by several autographs.

Born at Kutais, Alexei Alexeievitch Brusiloff went to school in Tiflis, the capital of the Caucasus; thence to one of the Russian military schools, where he greatly distinguished himself and laid the foundations of future staff appointments; thence once more to the wild, magnificent, semi-Oriental Caucasus, as a Lieutenant in the dragon regiment which bears the name of Tver, an ancient town on the railroad between Moscow and Petrograd.

As a subaltern Alexei Brusiloff entered thoroughly into the daring and adventurous life which was traditional with regiments quartered in the Caucasus, in the midst of some of the grandest scenery and some of the wildest, most warlike tribes on earth; the life that both Lermontoff and Tolstoy have depicted; he had a heart for every adventure, but, most of all, perhaps, loved the wild and rather perilous boar and bear hunts in the mountain forests, which are a part of the regular training of officers and men stationed there. Alexei Brusiloff earned a reputation as one of the best riders in that whole region, whether after hounds or in regimental steeplechases.

In a sense that reputation determined his future destiny. In the late Spring of 1877, Czar Alexander II. declared war against Turkey, and sent his army southward to deliver Bulgaria from oppression. His brother, the Grand Duke Nicholas—father of the present Grand Duke Nicholas—was put in command of the Russian armies operating in European Turkey, while another brother, the Grand Duke Michael, commanded against the Turks in Asia, fighting southward by way of Ardahan and Kars toward Erzerum.

Though taking part in the war on this front, Alexei Brusiloff saw little or no actual fighting, but, after the war, when the Grand Duke Nicholas the elder undertook to reorganize the famous Cavalry School for Officers at Petrograd, which had been founded by his uncle, the Emperor Alexander I, he chose to head the school. Colonel Vladimir Sukhomlinoff, (later to be War Minister,) and Sukhomlinoff in his

turn chose as his right-hand man the brilliant young cavalry officer who had the name of being the best horseman in the whole of the hard-riding Caucasus, Alexei Brusiloff.

Thus transferred from the sunny south to the rather forbidding climate of Petrograd, Alexei Brusiloff was brought, by the same fact, into close touch with the elder Grand Duke Nicholas and with his sons, who were deeply interested in the Cavalry School, both as a scene of the finest military training and as a field for the brilliant social functions for which the crack regiments of the capital are famous.

Alexei Brusiloff rose steadily, until he came to command a section of the Cavalry Guard, which is the corps d'élite of the Russian Army. He had developed the theory, then novel in Russia, that the training of an officer in time of peace should conform as closely as possible to the conditions of war,



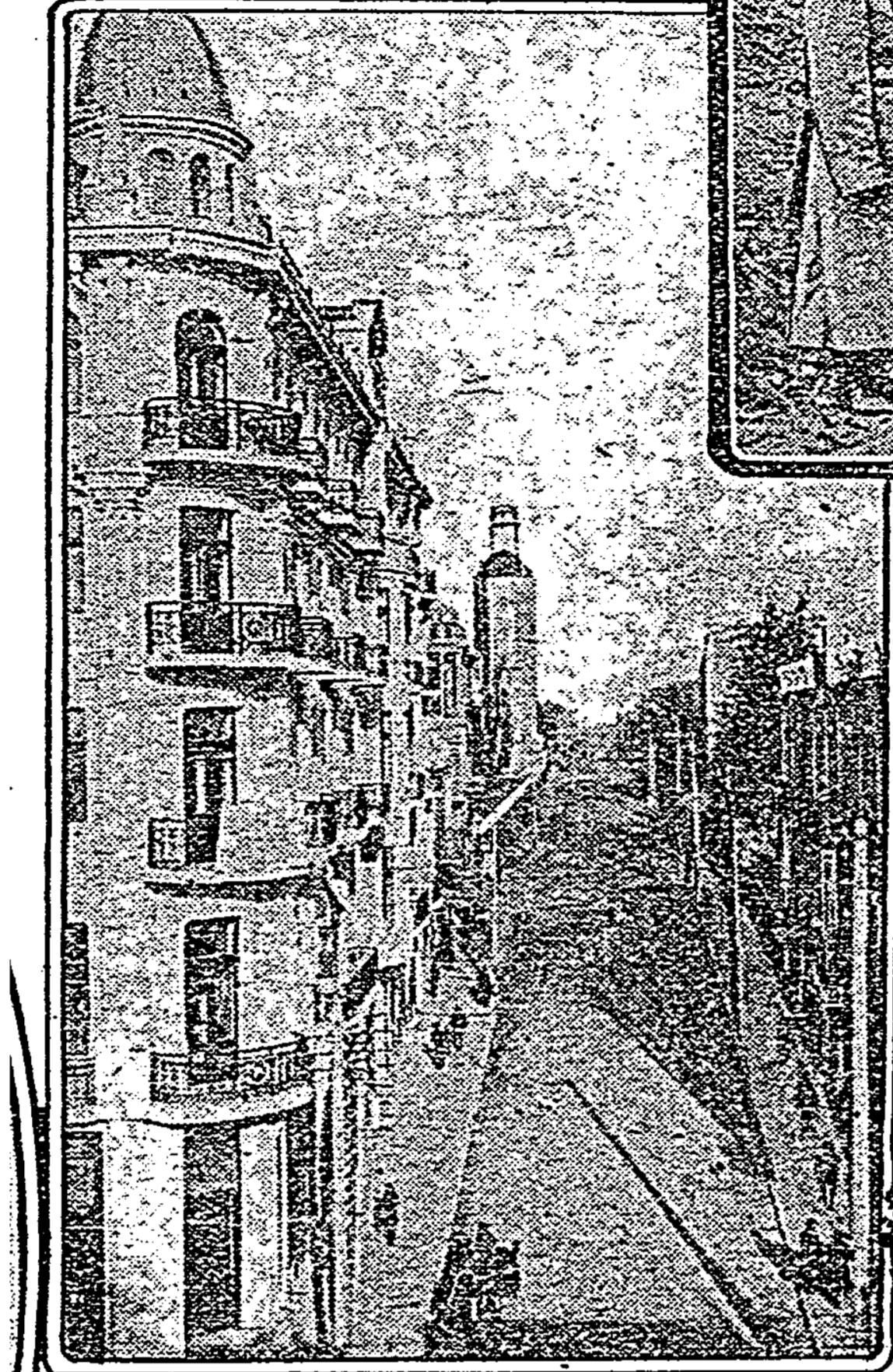
Mme. Brusiloff, who was at the front with her husband.

and he put his theory into practice, demanding from the officers under him very rigorous tests in the way of horsemanship, including long, hard cross-country rides at night and in bad weather.

There were remonstrances from the mothers of darling sons threatened with pneumonia and broken necks; and these remonstrances, carried to Court, made their way at last to the Emperor. At a Court function he took Alexei Brusiloff to task. Brusiloff answered: "Very good, your Majesty. I will discontinue the rides if you will guarantee that the enemy will attack us only in sunshine!" I wonder, by the way, whether this has been told of Caesar or Hannibal? It has, indeed, a touch of solar myth; nonetheless it is quite authentic.

During the Japanese war, in which Kuropatkin seemed to lose a great reputation, (which he is now in the way of restoring to full lustre on the Dvinsk-Riga battle front,) the brunt of the conflict was carried on by the Siberian Army under General "Grandpa" Linévitch, who later superseded Kuropatkin as Commander in Chief. The single-track Siberian railroad could bring East only about one army corps a month, so that the bulk of the Russian European army was never involved.

So it came that Brusiloff, unlike Rennenkampf and Ruzski, for example, did not see service against Japan. He was one of a group of able, trusted commanders who remained in Europe, in case Russia's neigh-

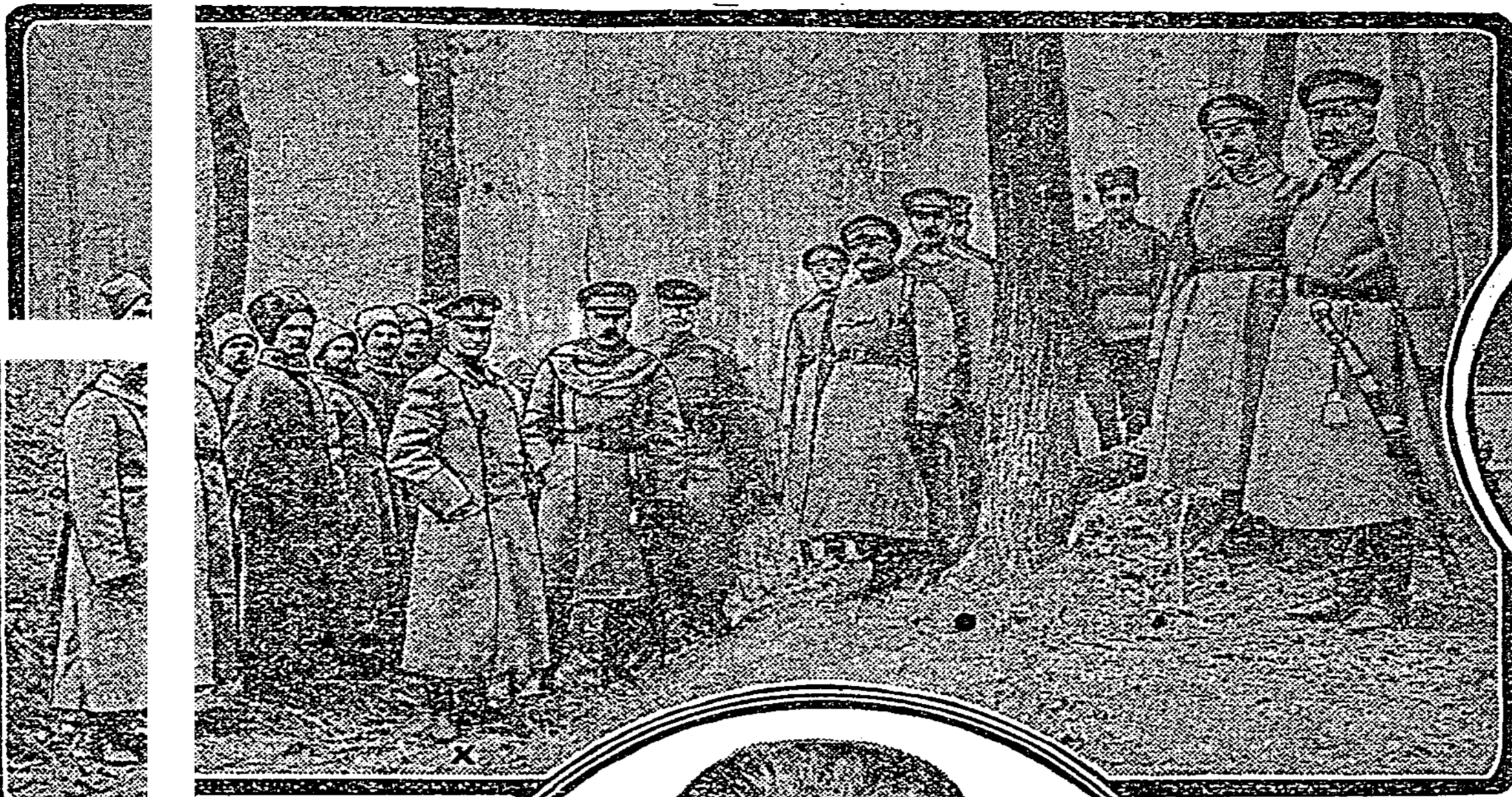


Brusiloff's headquarters when war broke out in town of Vinnitza.

bors to the west might feel inclined to take advantage of her Manchurian difficulties. This they did, in fact, three years later, when Austria annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kaiser Wilhelm "stood beside his ally in shining armor." To that incident the present war is directly due. The impression made by Austria's thus turning the Berlin Treaty into a "scrap of paper" sank deep into many Russian minds; among others, into the mind of General Brusiloff, who thenceforth began to look forward to inevitable war.

Brusiloff laid an excellent foundation for the great movements of modern warfare by the knowledge and experience which he gained, in association with the Grand Duke Nicholas, by visits to the grand manoeuvres in France. Speaking French perfectly, as do so many Russians of his class, he loves everything French, and has long heartily admired the French Army, the French theory and practice of the science of war. Naturally, since France was the ally of Russia—a result which the elder Grand Duke Nicholas had worked for enthusiastically—the Russian war leaders took a profound interest in the French Army and everything which concerns it. It was thus that both the Grand Duke and Brusiloff came to know both the French battlefields of the present war and the present war leaders of France, and to understand, what the whole world now knows and recognizes, the magnificent spirit and quality of the French armies. General Joffre, by the way, returned these visits, being present at the grand manoeuvres in Russia in 1913.

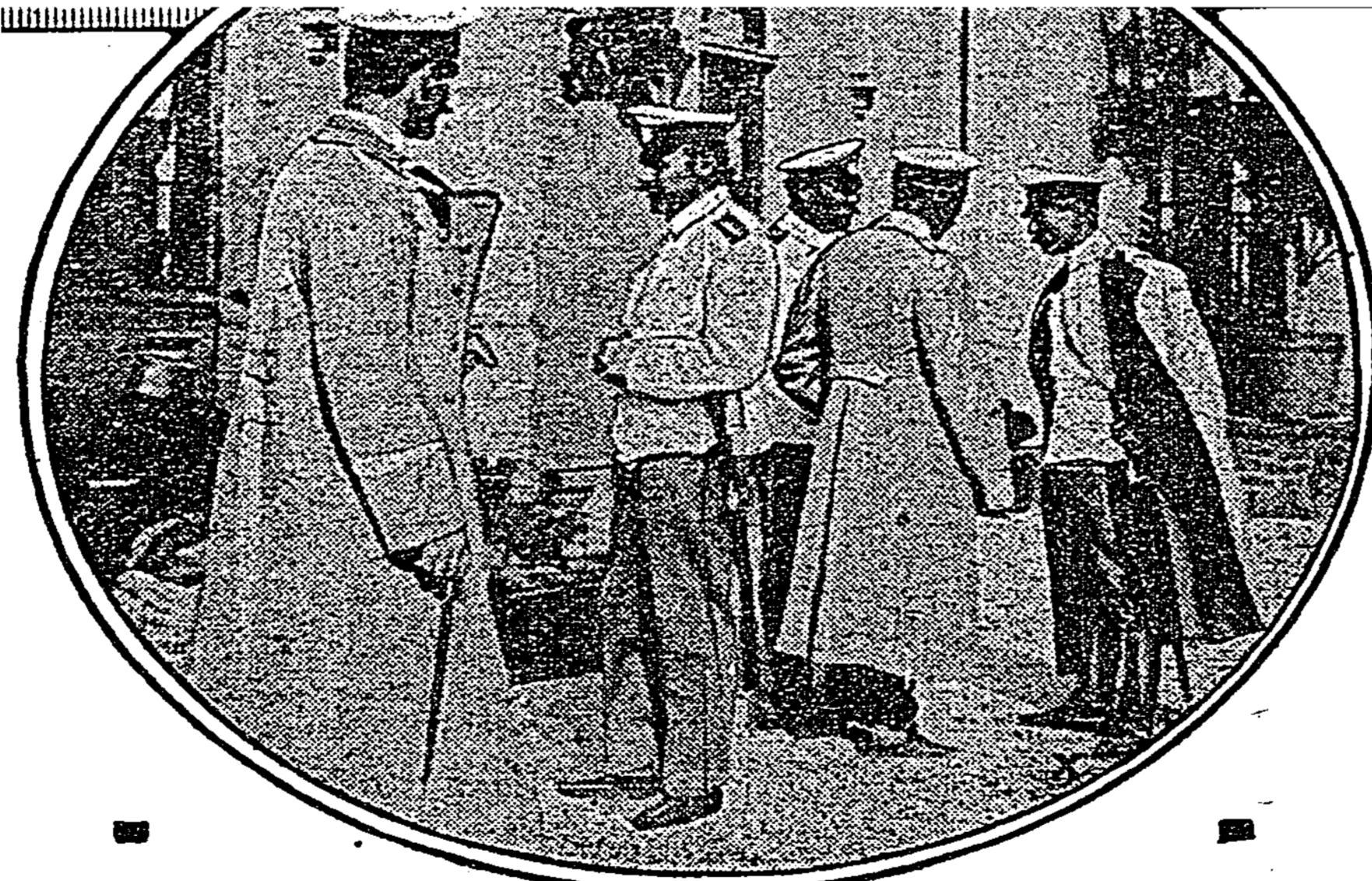
Two or three years before that date Alexei Brusiloff, having served first as General of Brigade and then as General of Division, in both cases with the highest distinction, was promoted to the rank of corps commander of the Fourteenth Army Corps, with headquarters at Lublin, a quaint old world town in Southern Poland, about half way between Warsaw and Lemberg. The last-named city, by the way, took its name



Brusiloff on the field of battle taken recently on the Russian front.



Gen. Alexei Brusiloff



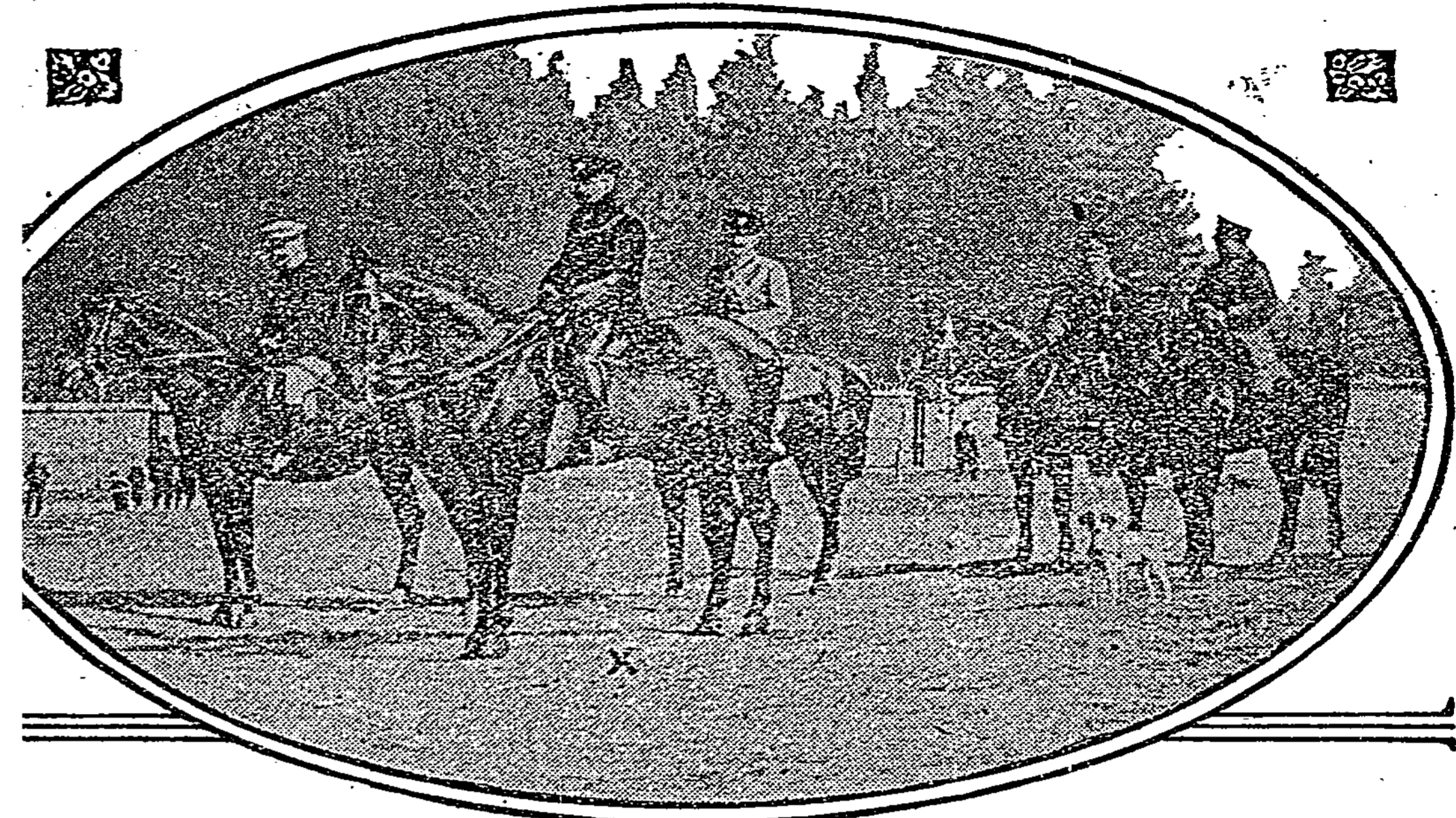
Gen. Brusiloff (X) at the Russian Railway station

from a Ruthenian Prince in 1259; Leopold is the Greek form of the name; Lvoff the Slavonic; all from variants of the name of Prince Lion. Lublin was once a great centre of the Roman Catholic life of Poland, with several convents and monasteries.

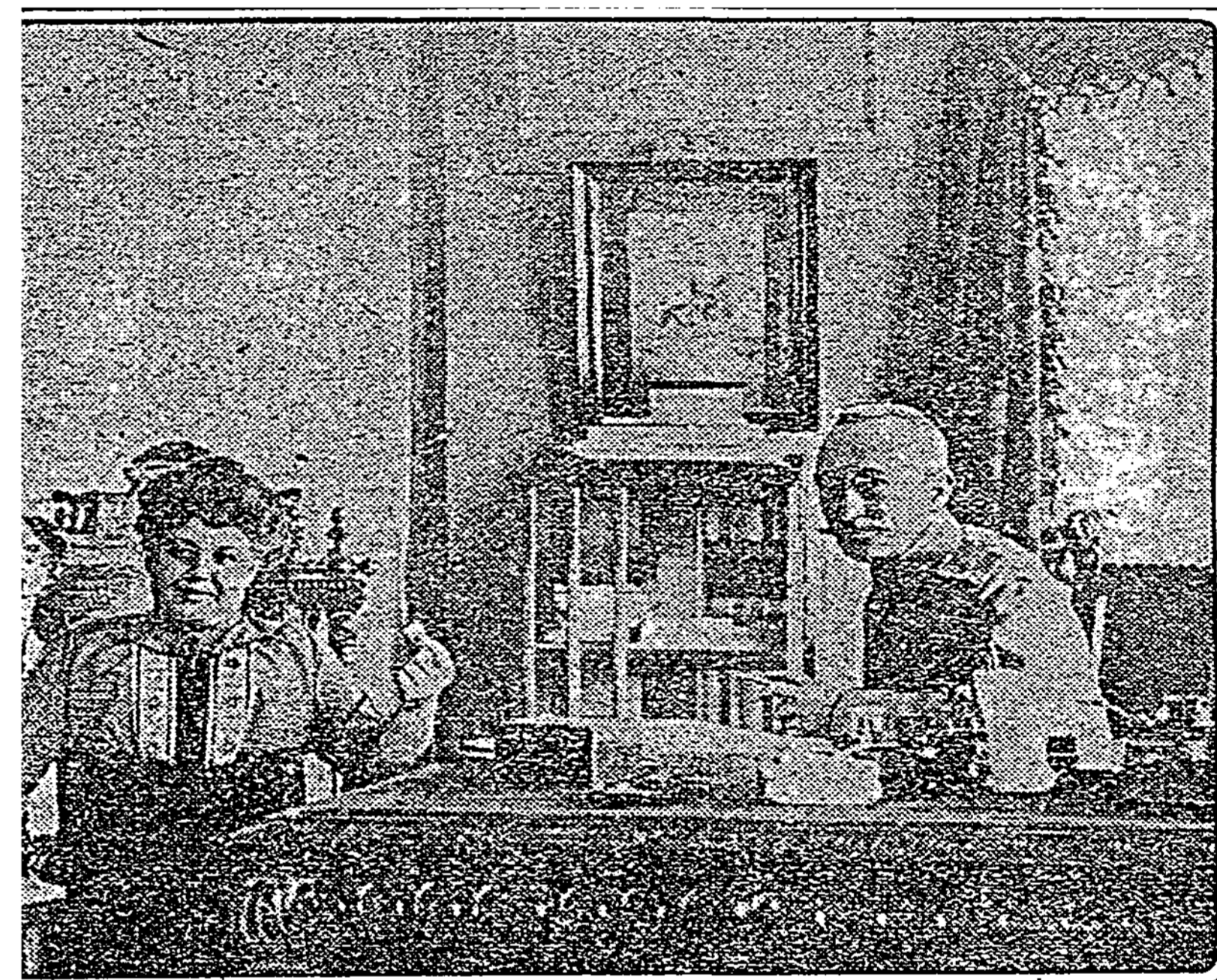
In one of the latter General Brusiloff had his headquarters. Married early, General Brusiloff has a soldier son, likewise Alexei—the third, in this narrative; though the name has been traditional in the family for many generations. Early left a widower, he married a second time, not long before his transfer to Lublin, Nadejda, ("Hope,") the second daughter of the late Mme. Jellhovskii, the well-known Russian novelist, one of whose sons—for many years a close friend of Alexei Brusiloff—is also fighting on the Galician front, with the rank of General.

Mme. Brusiloff has worked like a Trojan since the beginning of the war, particularly in hospital and Red Cross work; at Easter this year she visited her husband and brother at the front, and brought with her from Moscow, Kieff, Odessa, and Vinnitza, four carloads of Easter gifts for the Russian soldiers of her husband's army.

The nucleus of the Fourteenth Army Corps, as of each of the twenty-seven corps of Russia's European army, (the Caucasus and Siberian armies are quite distinct from the European army,) consists of two divisions of infantry, each numbering 16,000 and each commanded by a General of Division. Each of these divisions, in its turn, is divided into two infantry brigades, commanded by Brigadier Generals and numbering 8,000. A brigade is built up of two regiments, each commanded by a Colonel;



Gen. Brusiloff and Russian officers



Gen. Brusiloff, his wife and pet dog

rather a regiment is formed of four battalions, each numbering 1,000 men, and commanded by a Lieutenant Colonel or a Major; the battalion is divided into four companies of 250 each, commanded by Captains, the sub-divisions of the company being commanded by Lieutenants and Sub-Lieutenants.

The nucleus of 32,000 infantry (who should be counted as so many "bayonets," rather than so many "rifles," according to the Russian soldier's pet saying, "the bullet is a fool, but the bayonet is all right!") is supplemented by artillery; cavalry, engineers, sappers, and so forth, and thus brought up to 40,000; as a corps commander, therefore, General Brusiloff was head of a complete little army, officered by half-a-dozen Generals. He had, however, wider opportunities to study the practical art of war, in the yearly manoeuvres, in which he always gained a decision from the umpires. It was his plan to "watch the other fellow's game," to divine what he would be likely to do, and then to counter him; this subtle sensitiveness, almost second sight, is one of the things that make him so great a commander; in Wellington's fine phrase, "he can see what is going on at the other side of the hill."

General Brusiloff did such fine work in many ways at Lublin that he was soon transferred to Warsaw, which was the advance post of the Russian army toward the west. At that time, General Skalon was in command there; General Rennenkampf, who had added to a high reputation in the Manchurian campaign, and had written a book about his work there, was in command of the military district of Vilna, further north, which faces East Prussia; General Ruzsky was commander of the military district to the south, which faces Galicia, with his headquarters at Kieff.

Of these three great Russian army com-

ward across the frontier of Galicia against Lublin and Kholm; while General Auffenberg struck northeastward toward the now world-famous "Volhynia triangle," the triad of forts: Lutsk, Dubno, Rovno, which formed Russia's defense against precisely such an invasion, just as the group, Epinal-Toul-Verdun, form France's defense against an attack from the Rhine.

But Auffenberg never got across the frontier; for Ruzski and Brusiloff, moving on centres some sixty miles apart, came rapidly forward to Galicia, got into touch with Auffenberg's advance guard, drove it back upon his main force, and attacked him with tremendous vigor, forcing him rapidly back on the line from Lemberg to Halicz. The decisive battle was fought on this line in the opening days of September—before the battle of the Marne—and was splendidly won by the Russians, being the first great allied success. Ruzski captured Lemberg; Brusiloff at the same time captured Halicz; and the victory was complete. Indeed, the Austrian Army never recovered from this blow; unless stiffened by German troops it never afterward made any real headway against the Russians.

Ruzski fought westward toward Cracow, the capital of Galicia, while Brusiloff fought on a line running parallel, some seventy miles further south, being the extreme left wing of the entire Russian forces which, on the right, touched the Baltic. Przemysl was invested, but not assaulted, because the Russians were already feeling the lack of guns and shells, and the Russian army swept forward, round the fortress, toward the Carpathians, locking up three army corps in Przemysl.

A strong Austrian force was gathered in Eastern Hungary, to attempt to relieve the beleaguered garrison; but, as it made its way through the Lupka Pass of the Carpathian chain, Brusiloff, with his base at Baligrad, met and smashed the Austrian rescue force, with the result that Przemysl surrendered.

Then, as Brusiloff fought his way into the Carpathian passes, Mackensen gathered on the little Dunajets River to the east of Cracow the vast weight of guns and ammunition with which he was to carry out his famous drive. He did not try to push back the whole Russian line; he simply sawed at it, at a single point; and, by threatening to cut it through there, compelled the whole line to move backward, which it did, unbroken and undisturbed.

Brusiloff had to take his part in the general retreat; but, as along the whole Russian line, the withdrawal was finely carried out, and he himself never wholly relinquished Galicia. He was, in fact, on enemy soil for the first twelve months of the war, an honor shared with him by few allied Generals.

Now he begins again, with higher command, with far larger and more vigorous forces, with vastly greater supplies of guns and ammunition, with riper experience, with indomitable faith and hope, with the enthusiasm of a great, united nation behind him. One may illumine the situation by asking in what way, in what regard, the position of his adversaries is better than it was in August, 1914.