

# **The Autobiography of Mother Jones**

Mother Jones

1925

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## Chapter I – Early Years

I was born in the city of Cork, Ireland, in 1830. My people were poor. For generations they had fought for Ireland's freedom. Many of my folks have died in that struggle. My father, Richard Harris, came to America in 1835, and as soon as he had become an American citizen he sent for his family. His work as a laborer with railway construction crews took him to Toronto, Canada. Here I was brought up but always as the child of an American citizen. Of that citizenship I have ever been proud.

After finishing the common schools, I attended the Normal school with the intention of becoming a teacher. Dressmaking too, I learned proficiently. My first position was teaching in a convent in Monroe, Michigan. Later, I came to Chicago and opened a dress-making establishment. I preferred sewing to bossing little children. However, I went back to teaching again, this time in Memphis, Tennessee. Here I was married in 1861. My husband was an iron moulder and a member of the Iron Moulders' Union.

In 1867, a fever epidemic swept Memphis. Its victims were mainly among the poor and the workers. The rich and the well-to-do fled the city. Schools and churches were closed. People were not permitted to enter the house of a yellow fever victim without permits. The poor could not afford nurses. Across the street from me, ten persons lay dead from the plague. The dead surrounded us. They were buried at night quickly and without ceremony. All about my house I could hear weeping and the cries of delirium. One by one, my four little children sickened and died. I washed their little bodies and got them ready for burial. My husband caught the fever and died. I sat alone through nights of grief. No one came to me. No one could. Other homes were as stricken as was mine. All day long, all night long, I heard the grating of the wheels of the death cart.

After the union had buried my husband, I got a permit to nurse the sufferers. This I did until the plague was stamped out.

I returned to Chicago and went again into the dressmaking business with a partner. We were located on Washington Street near the lake. We worked for the aristocrats of Chicago, and I had ample opportunity to observe the luxury and extravagance of their lives. Often while sewing for the lords and barons who lived in magnificence on the Lake Shore Drive, I would look out of the plate glass windows and see the poor, shivering wretches, jobless and hungry, walking along the frozen lake front. The contrast of their condition with that of the tropical comfort of the people for whom I sewed was painful to me. My employers seemed neither to notice nor to care.

Summers, too, from the windows of the rich, I used to watch the mothers come from the west side slums, lugging babies and little children, hoping for a breath of cool, fresh air from the lake. At night, when the tenements were stifling hot, men, women and little children slept in the parks. But the rich, having donated to the ice fund, had, by the time it was hot in the city, gone to seaside and mountains.

In October, 1871, the great Chicago fire burned up our establishment and everything that we had. The fire made thousands homeless. We stayed all night and the next day without food on

the lake front, often going into the lake to keep cool. Old St. Mary's church at Wabash Avenue and Peck Court was thrown open to the refugees and there I camped until I could find a place to go.

Near by in an old, tumbled down, fire scorched building the Knights of Labor held meetings. The Knights of Labor was the labor organization of those days. I used to spend my evenings at their meetings, listening to splendid speakers. Sundays we went out into the woods and held meetings.

Those were the days of sacrifice for the cause of labor. Those were the days when we had no halls, when there were no high salaried officers, no feasting with the enemies of labor. Those were the days of the martyrs and the saints. I became acquainted with the labor movement. I learned that in 1865, after the close of the Civil War, a group of men met in Louisville, Kentucky. They came from the North and from the South; they were the "blues" and the "greys" who a year or two before had been fighting each other over the question of chattel slavery. They decided that the time had come to formulate a program to fight another brutal form of slavery-industrial slavery. Out of this decision had come the Knights of Labor.

From the time of the Chicago fire I became more and more engrossed in the labor struggle and I decided to take an active part in the efforts of the working people to better the conditions under which they worked and lived. I became a member of the Knights of Labor.

One of the first strikes that I remember occurred in the Seventies. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad employees went on strike and they sent for me to come help them. I went. The mayor of Pittsburgh swore in as deputy sheriffs a lawless, reckless bunch of fellows who had drifted into that city during the panic of 1873. They pillaged and burned and rioted and looted. Their acts were charged up to the striking workmen. The governor sent the militia.

The Railroads had succeeded in getting a law passed that in case of a strike, the train-crew should bring in the locomotive to the round-house before striking. This law the strikers faithfully obeyed. Scores of locomotives were housed in Pittsburgh.

One night a riot occurred. Hundreds of box cars standing on the tracks were soaked with oil and set on fire and sent down the tracks to the roundhouse. The roundhouse caught fire. Over one hundred locomotives, belonging to the Pennsylvania Railroad Company were destroyed. It was a wild night. The flames lighted the sky and turned to fiery flames the steel bayonets of the soldiers.

The strikers were charged with the crimes of arson and rioting, although it was common knowledge that it was not they who instigated the fire; that it was started by hoodlums backed by the business men of Pittsburgh who for a long time had felt that the Railroad Company discriminated against their city in the matter of rates.

I knew the strikers personally. I knew that it was they who had tried to enforce orderly law. I knew they disciplined their members when they did violence. I knew, as everybody knew, who really perpetrated the crime of burning the railroad's property. Then and there I learned in the early part of my career that labor must bear the cross for others' sins, must be the vicarious sufferer for the wrongs that others do.

These early years saw the beginning of America's industrial life. Hand and hand with the growth of factories and the expansion of railroads, with the accumulation of capital and the rise of banks, came anti-labor legislation. Came strikes. Came violence. Came the belief in the hearts and minds of the workers that legislatures but carry out the will of the industrialists.

## Chapter II – The Haymarket Tragedy

From 1880 on, I became wholly engrossed in the labor movement. In all the great industrial centers the working class was in rebellion. The enormous immigration from Europe crowded the slums, forced down wages and threatened to destroy the standard of living fought for by American working men. Throughout the country there was business depression and much unemployment. In the cities there was hunger and rags and despair. Foreign agitators who had suffered under European despots preached various schemes of economic salvation to the workers. The workers asked only for bread and a shortening of the long hours of toil. The agitators gave them visions. The police gave them clubs.

Particularly the city of Chicago was the scene of strike after strike, followed by boycotts and riots. The years preceding 1886 had witnessed strikes of the lake seamen, of dock laborers and street railway workers. These strikes had been brutally suppressed by policemen's clubs and by hired gunmen. The grievance on the part of the workers was given no heed. John Bonfield, inspector of police, was particularly cruel in the suppression of meetings where men peacefully assembled to discuss matters of wages and of hours. Employers were defiant and open in the expression of their fears and hatreds. The Chicago Tribune, the organ of the employers, suggested ironically that the farmers of Illinois treat the tramps that poured out of the great industrial centers as they did other pests, by putting strychnine in the food.

The workers started an agitation for an eight-hour day. The trades unions and the Knights of Labor endorsed the movement but because many of the leaders of the agitation were foreigners, the movement itself was regarded as "foreign" and as "un-American." Then the anarchists of Chicago, a very small group, espoused the cause of the eight-hour day. From then on the people of Chicago seemed incapable of discussing a purely economic question without getting excited about anarchism.

The employers used the cry of anarchism to kill the movement. A person who believed in an eight-hour working day was, they said, an enemy to his country, a traitor, an anarchist. The foundations of government were being gnawed away by the anarchist rats. Feeling was bitter. The city was divided into two angry camps. The working people on one side hungry, cold, jobless, fighting gunmen and police clubs with bare hands. On the other side the employers, knowing neither hunger nor cold, supported by the newspapers, by the police, by all the power of the great state itself.

The anarchists took advantage of the widespread discontent to preach their doctrines. Orators used to address huge crowds on the windy, barren shore of Lake Michigan. Although I never endorsed the philosophy of anarchism, I often attended the meetings on the lake shore, listening to what these teachers of a new order had to say to the workers.

Meanwhile the employers were meeting. They met in the mansion of George M. Pullman on Prairie Avenue or in the residence of Wirt Dexter, an able corporation lawyer. They discussed means of killing the eight-hour movement which was to be ushered in by a general strike. They discussed methods of dispersing the meetings of the anarchists.

A bitterly cold winter set in. Long unemployment resulted in terrible suffering. Bread lines increased. Soup kitchens could not handle the applicants. Thousands knew actual misery.

On Christmas day, hundreds of poverty stricken people in rags and tatters, in thin clothes, in wretched shoes paraded on fashionable Prairie Avenue before the mansions of the rich, before their employers, carrying the black flag. I thought the parade an insane move on the part of the anarchists, as it only served to make feeling more bitter. As a matter of fact, it had no educational value whatever and only served to increase the employers' fear, to make the police more savage, and the public less sympathetic to the real distress of the workers.

The first of May, which was to usher in the eight-hour day uprising, came. The newspapers had done everything to alarm the people. All over the city there were strikes and walkouts. employers quaked in their boots. They saw revolution. The workers in the McCormick Harvester Works gathered outside the factory. Those inside who did not join the strikers were called scabs. Bricks were thrown. Windows were broken. The scabs were threatened. Some one turned in a riot call.

The police without warning charged down upon the workers, shooting into their midst, clubbing right and left. Many were trampled under horses' feet. Numbers were shot dead. Skulls were broken. Young men and young girls were clubbed to death.

The Pinkerton agency formed armed bands of ex-convicts and hoodlums and hired them to capitalists at eight dollars a day, to picket the factories and incite trouble.

On the evening of May 4th, the anarchists held a meeting in the shabby, dirty district known to later history as Haymarket Square. All about were railway tracks, dingy saloons and the dirty tenements of the poor. A half a block away was the Desplaines Street Police Station presided over by John Bonfield, a man without tact or discretion or sympathy, a most brutal believer in suppression as the method to settle industrial unrest.

Carter Harrison, the mayor of Chicago, attended the meeting of the anarchists and moved in and about the crowds in the square. After leaving, he went to the Chief of Police and instructed him to send no mounted police to the meeting, as it was being peacefully conducted and the presence of mounted police would only add fuel to fires already burning red in the workers' hearts. But orders perhaps came from other quarters, for disregarding the report of the mayor, the chief of police sent mounted policemen in large numbers to the meeting.

One of the anarchist speakers was addressing the crowd. A bomb was dropped from a window overlooking the square. A number of the police were killed in the explosion that followed.

The city went insane and the newspapers did everything to keep it like a madhouse. The workers' cry for justice was drowned in the shriek for revenge. Bombs were "found" every five minutes. Men went armed and gun stores kept open nights. Hundreds were arrested. Only those who had agitated for an eight-hour day, however, were brought to trial and a few months later hanged. But the man, Schnaubelt, who actually threw the bomb was never brought into the case, nor was his part in the terrible drama ever officially made clear.

The leaders in the eight hour day movement were hanged Friday, November the 11th. That day Chicago's rich had chills and fever. Rope stretched in all directions from the jail. Police men were stationed along the ropes armed with riot rifles. Special patrols watched all approaches to the jail. The roofs about the grim stone building were black with police. The newspapers fed the public imagination with stories of uprisings and jail deliveries.

But there were no uprisings, no jail deliveries, except that of Louis Lingg, the only real preacher of violence among all the condemned men. He outwitted the gallows by biting a percussion cap and blowing off his head.

The Sunday following the executions, the funerals were held. Thousands of workers marched behind the black hearses, not because they were anarchists but they felt that these men, whatever their theories, were martyrs to the workers' struggle. The procession wound through miles and miles of streets densely packed with silent people.

In the cemetery of Waldheim, the dead were buried. But with them was not buried their cause. The struggle for the eight hour day, for more human conditions and relations between man and man lived on, and still lives on.

Seven years later, Governor Altgeld, after reading all the evidence in the case, pardoned the three anarchists who had escaped the gallows and were serving life sentences in jail. He said the verdict was unjustifiable, as had William Dean Howells and William Morris at the time of its execution. Governor Altgeld committed political suicide by his brave action but he is remembered by all those who love truth and those who have the courage to confess it.



## Chapter III – A Strike in Virginia

It was about 1891 when I was down in Virginia. There was a strike in the Dietz mines and the boys had sent for me. When I got off the train at Norton a fellow walked up to me and asked me if I were Mother Jones.

“Yes, I am Mother Jones.”

He looked terribly frightened. “The superintendent told me that if you came down here he would blow out your brains. He said he didn’t want to see you ‘round these parts.”

“You tell the superintendent that I am not coming to see him anyway. I am coming to see the miners.”

As we stood talking a poor fellow, all skin and bones, joined us.

“Do you see those cars over there, Mother on the siding?” He pointed to cars filled with coal.

“Well, we made a contract with the coal company to fill those cars for so much, and after we had made the contract, they put lower bottoms in the cars, so that they would hold another ton or so. I have worked for this company all my life and all I have now is this old worn-out frame.” We couldn’t get a hall to hold a meeting. Every one was afraid to rent to us. Finally the colored people consented to give us their church for our meeting. Just as we were about to start the colored chairman came to me and said: “Mother, the coal company gave us this ground that the church is on. They have sent word that they will take it from us if we let you speak here.”

I would not let those poor souls lose their ground so I adjourned the meeting to the four corners of the public roads. When the meeting was over and the people had dispersed, I asked my co-worker, Dud Hado, a fellow from Iowa, if he would go with me up to the post office. He was a kindly soul but easily frightened.

As we were going along the road, I said, “Have you got a pistol on you?”

“Yes,” said he, “I’m not going to let any one blow your brains out.”

“My boy,” said I, it is against the law in this county to carry concealed weapons. I want you to take that pistol out and expose a couple of inches of it.”

As he did so about eight or ten gunmen jumped out from behind an old barn beside the road, jumped on him and said, “Now we’ve got you, you dirty organizer. They bullied us along the road to the town and we were taken to an office where they had a notary public and we were tried. All those blood-thirsty murderers were there and the general manager came in.

“Mother Jones, I am astonished,” said he. “What is your astonishment about!” said I. “That you should go into the house of God with anyone who carries a gun.”

“Oh that wasn’t God’s house,” said I. “That is the coal company’s house. Don’t you know that God Almighty never comes around to a place like this!”

He laughed and of course, the dogs laughed, for he was the general manager.

They dismissed any charges against me and they fined poor Dud twenty-five dollars and costs. They seemed surprised when I said I would pay it. I had the money in my petticoat.

I went over to a miner’s shack and asked his wife for a cup of tea. Often in these company-owned towns the inn-keepers were afraid to let me have food. The poor soul was so happy to

have me there that she excused herself to “dress for company.” She came out of the bedroom with a white apron on over her cheap cotton wrapper.

One of the men who was present at Dud’s trial followed me up to the miner’s house. At first the miner’s wife would not admit him but he said he wanted to speak privately to Mother Jones. So she let him in.

“Mother,” he said, “I am glad you paid that bill so quickly. They thought you’d appeal the case. Then they were going to lock you both up and burn you in the coke ovens’ at night and then say that you had both been turned loose in the morning and they didn’t know where you had gone.”

Whether they really would have carried out their plans I do not know. But I do know that there are no limits to which powers of privilege will not go to keep the workers in slavery.

## Chapter IV – Wayland’s Appeal To Reason

In 1893, J. A. Wayland with a number of others decided to demonstrate to the workers the advantage of co-operation over competition. A group of people bought land in Tennessee and founded the Ruskin Colony. They invited me to join them.

“No,” said I, “your colony will not succeed. You have to have religion to make a colony successful, and labor is not yet a religion with labor.”

I visited the colony a year later. I could see in that short time disrupting elements in the colony. I was glad I had not joined the colony but had stayed out in the thick of the fight. Labor has a lot of fighting to do before it can demonstrate. Two years later Wayland left for Kansas City. He was despondent.

A group of us got together; Wayland, myself, and three men, known as the “Three P’s” -Putnam, a freight agent for the Burlington Railway; Palmer, a clerk in the Post Office; Page, an advertising agent for a department store. We decided that the workers needed education. That they must have a paper devoted to their interests and stating their point of view. We urged Wayland to start such a paper. Palmer suggested the name, “Appeal to Reason.”

“But we have no subscribers,” said Wayland.

“I’ll get them,” said I. “Get out your first edition and I’ll see that it has subscribers enough to pay for it.”

He got out a limited first edition and with it as a sample I went to the Federal Barracks at Omaha and secured a subscription from almost every lad there. Soldiers are the sons of working people and need to know it. I went down to the City Hall and got a lot of subscriptions. In a short time I had gathered several hundred subscriptions and the paper was launched. It did a wonderful service under Wayland. Later Fred G. Warren came to Girard where the paper was published, as editorial writer. If any place in America could be called my home, his home was mine. Whenever, after a long, dangerous fight, I was weary and felt the need of rest, I went to the home of Fred Warren.

Like all other things, “The Appeal to Reason” had its youth of vigor, its later days of profound wisdom, and then it passed away. Disrupting influences, quarrels, divergent points of view, theories, finally caused it to go out of business.

## Chapter V – Victory at Arnot

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Before 1899 the coal fields of Pennsylvania were not organized. Immigrants poured into the country and they worked cheap. There was always a surplus of immigrant labor, solicited in Europe by the coal companies, so as to keep wages down to barest living. Hours of work down under ground were cruelly long. Fourteen hours a day was not uncommon, thirteen, twelve. The life or limb of the miner was unprotected by any laws. Families lived in company owned shacks that were not fit for their pigs. Children died by the hundreds due to the ignorance and poverty of their parents. Often I have helped lay out for burial the babies of the miners, and the mothers could scarce conceal their relief at the little ones' deaths. Another was already on its way, destined, if a boy, for the breakers; if a girl, for the silk mills where the other brothers and sisters already worked.

The United Mine Workers decided to organize these fields and work for human conditions for human beings. Organizers were put to work. Whenever the spirit of the men in the mines grew strong enough a strike was called.

In Arnot, Pennsylvania, a strike had been going on four or five months. The men were becoming discouraged. The coal company sent the doctors, the school teachers, the preachers and their wives to the homes of the miners to get them to sign a document that they would go back to work.

The president of the district, Mr. Wilson, and an organizer, Tom Haggerty, got despondent. The signatures were overwhelmingly in favor of returning on Monday.

Haggerty suggested that they send for me. Saturday morning they telephoned to Barnesboro, where I was organizing, for me to come at once or they would lose the strike.

"Oh Mother," Haggerty said, "Come over quick and help us! The boys are that despondent! They are going back Monday."

I told him that I was holding a meeting that night but that I would leave early Sunday morning.

I started at daybreak. At Roaring Branch, the nearest train connection with Arnot, the secretary of the Arnot Union, a young boy, William Bouncer, met me with a horse and buggy. We drove sixteen miles over rough mountain roads. It was biting cold. We got into Arnot Sunday noon and I was placed in the coal company's hotel, the only hotel in town. I made some objections but Bouncer said, "Mother, we have engaged this room for you and if it is not occupied, they will never rent us another."

Sunday afternoon I held a meeting. It was not as large a gathering as those we had later but I stirred up the poor wretches that did come.

"You've got to take the pledge," I said. "Rise and pledge to stick to your brothers and the union till the strike's won!"

The men shuffled their feet but the women rose, their babies in their arms, and pledged themselves to see that no one went to work in the morning.

"The meeting stands adjourned till ten o'clock tomorrow morning," I said. "Everyone come and see that the slaves that think to go back to their masters come along with you."

I returned to my room at the hotel. I wasn't called down to supper but after the general manager of the mines and all of the other guests had gone to church, the housekeeper stole up to my room and asked me to come down and get a cup of tea.

At eleven o'clock that night the housekeeper again knocked at my door and told me that I had to give up my room; that she was told it belonged to a teacher. "It's a shame, mother," she whispered, as she helped me into my coat.

I found little Bouncer sitting on guard down in the lobby. He took me up the mountain to a miner's house. A cold wind almost blew the bonnet from my head. At the miner's shack I knocked.

A man's voice shouted, "Who is there!"

"Mother Jones," said I.

A light came in the tiny window. The door opened.

"And did they put you out, Mother!"

"They did that."

"I told Mary they might do that," said the miner. He held the oil lamp with the thumb and his little finger and I could see that the others were off. His face was young but his body was bent over.

He insisted on my sleeping in the only bed, with his wife. He slept with his head on his arms on the kitchen table. Early in the morning his wife rose to keep the children quiet, so that I might sleep a little later as I was very tired.

At eight o'clock she came into my room, crying.

"Mother, are you awake!"

"Yes, I am awake."

"Well, you must get up. The sheriff is here to put us out for keeping you. This house belongs to the Company."

The family gathered up all their earthly belongings, which weren't much, took down all the holy pictures, and put them in a wagon, and they with all their neighbors went to the meeting. The sight of that wagon with the sticks of furniture and the holy pictures and the children, with the father and mother and myself walking along through the streets turned the tide. It made the men so angry that they decided not to go back that morning to the mines. Instead they came to the meeting where they determined not to give up the strike until they had won the victory.

Then the company tried to bring in scabs. I told the men to stay home with the children for a change and let the women attend to the scabs. I organized an army of women housekeepers. On a given day they were to bring their mops and brooms and "the army" would charge the scabs up at the mines. The general manager, the sheriff and the corporation hirelings heard of our plans and were on hand. The day came and the women came with the mops and brooms and pails of water.

I decided not to go up to the Drip Mouth myself, for I knew they would arrest me and that might rout the army. I selected as leader an Irish woman who had a most picturesque appearance. She had slept late and her husband had told her to hurry up and get into the army. She had grabbed a red petticoat and slipped it over a thick cotton night gown. She wore a black stocking and a white one. She had tied a little red fringed shawl over her wild red hair. Her face was red and her eyes were mad. I looked at her and felt that she could raise a rumpus.

I said, "You lead the army up to the Drip Mouth. Take that tin dishpan you have with you and your hammer, and when the scabs and the mules come up, begin to hammer and howl. Then all of you hammer and howl and be ready to chase the scabs with your mops and brooms. Don't be afraid of anyone."

Up the mountain side, yelling and hollering, she led the women, and when the mules came up with the scabs and the coal, she began beating on the dishpan and hollering and all the army joined in with her. The sheriff tapped her on the shoulder.

"My dear lady," said he, "remember the mules. Don't frighten them."

She took the old tin pan and she hit him with it and she hollered, "To hell with you and the mules!"

He fell over and dropped into the creek. Then the mules began to rebel against scabbing. They bucked and kicked the scab drivers and started off for the barn. The scabs started running down hill, followed by the army of women with their mops and pails and brooms.

A poll parrot in a near by shack screamed at the superintendent, "Got hell, did you! Got hell!"

There was a great big doctor in the crowd, a company lap dog. He had a little satchel in his hand and he said to me, impudent like, "Mrs. Jones, I have a warrant for you."

"All right," said I. "Keep it in your pill bag until I come for it. I am going to hold a meeting now."

From that day on the women kept continual watch of the mines to see that the company did not bring in scabs. Every day women with brooms or mops in one hand and babies in the other arm wrapped in little blankets, went to the mines and watched that no one went in. And all night long they kept watch. They were heroic women. In the long years to come the nation will pay them high tribute for they were fighting for the advancement of a great country.

I held meetings throughout the surrounding country. The company was spending money among the farmers, urging them not to do anything for the miners. I went out with an old wagon and a union mule that had gone on strike, and a miner's little boy for a driver. I held meetings among the farmers and won them to the side of the strikers.

Sometimes it was twelve or one o'clock in the morning when I would get home, the little boy asleep on my arm and I driving the mule. Sometimes it was several degrees below zero. The winds whistled down the mountains and drove the snow and sleet in our faces. My hands and feet were often numb. We were all living on dry bread and black coffee. I slept in a room that never had a fire in it, and I often woke up in the morning to find snow covering the outside covers of the bed.

There was a place near Arnot called Sweedy Town, and the company's agents went there to get the Swedes to break the strike. I was holding a meeting among the farmers when I heard of the company's efforts. I got the young farmers to get on their horses and go over to Sweedy Town and see that no Swede left town.

They took clotheslines for lassos and any Swede seen moving in the direction of Arnot was brought back quick enough.

After months of terrible hardships the strike was about won. The mines were not working. The spirit of the men was splendid. President Wilson had come home from the western part of the state. I was staying at his home. The family had gone to bed. We sat up late talking over matters when there came a knock at the door. A very cautious knock.

"Come in," said Mr. Wilson.

Three men entered. They looked at me uneasily and Mr. Wilson asked me to step in an adjoining room. They talked the strike over and called President Wilson's attention to the fact that there were mortgages on his little home, held by the bank which was owned by the coal company, and

they said, "We will take the mortgage off your home and give you \$25,000 in cash if you will just leave and let the strike die out."

I shall never forget his reply:

"Gentlemen, if you come to visit my family, the hospitality of the whole house is yours. But if you come to bribe me with dollars to betray my manhood and my brothers who trust me, I want you to leave this door and never come here again."

The strike lasted a few weeks longer. Meantime President Wilson, when strikers were evicted, cleaned out his barn and took care of the evicted miners until homes could be provided. One by one he killed his chickens and his hogs. Everything that he had he shared. He ate dry bread and drank chicory. He knew every hardship that the rank and file of the organization knew. We do not have such leaders now.

The last of February the company put up a notice that all demands were conceded. "Did you get the use of the hall for us to hold meetings?" said the women.

"No, we didn't ask for that."

"Then the strike is on again," said they.

They got the hall, and when the President, Mr. Wilson, returned from the convention in Cincinnati he shed tears of joy and gratitude.

I was going to leave for the central fields, and before I left, the union held a victory meeting in Bloomsburg. The women came for miles in a raging snow storm for that meeting, little children trailing on their skirts, and babies under their shawls. Many of the miners had walked miles. It was one night of real joy and a great celebration. I bade them all good night. A little boy called out, "Don't leave us, Mother. Don't leave us!" The dear little children kissed my hands. We spent the whole night in Bloomsburg rejoicing. The men opened a few of the freight cars out on a siding and helped themselves to boxes of beer. Old and young talked and sang all night long and to the credit of the company no one was interfered with.

Those were the days before the extensive use of gun men, of military, of jails, of police clubs. There had been no bloodshed. There had been no riots. And the victory was due to the army of women with their mops and brooms.

A year afterward they celebrated the anniversary of the victory. They presented me with a gold watch but I declined to accept it, for I felt it was the price of the bread of the little children. I have not been in Arnot since but in my travels over the country I often meet the men and boys who carried through the strike so heroically.

## Chapter VI – War in West Virginia

One night I went with an organizer named Scott to a mining town in the Fairmont district where the miners had asked me to hold a meeting. When we got off the car I asked Scott where I was to speak and he pointed to a frame building. We walked in. There were lighted candles on an altar. I looked around in the dim light. We were in a church and the benches were filled with miners.

Outside the railing of the altar was a table. At one end sat the priest with the money of the union in his hands. The president of the local union sat at the other end of the table. I marched down the aisle.

“What’s going on?” I asked.

“Holding a meeting,” said the president.

“What for?”

“For the union, Mother. We rented the church for our meetings.”

I reached over and took the money from priest. Then I turned to the miners.

“Boys,” I said, “this is a praying institution. You should not commercialize it. Get up every one of you and go out in the open fields.”

They got up and went out and sat around a field while I spoke to them. The sheriff was there and he did not allow any traffic to go along the road while I was speaking. In front of us was a schoolhouse. I pointed to it and I said, “Your ancestors fought for you to have a share in that institution over there. It’s yours. See the school board, and every Friday night hold your meetings there. Have your wives clean it up Saturday morning for the children to enter Monday. Your organization is not a praying institution. It’s a fighting institution. It’s an educational institution along industrial lines. Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living!”

Tom Haggerty was in charge of the Fairmont field. One Sunday morning, the striking miners of Clarksburg started on a march to Monongia get out the miners in the camps along the way. We camped in the open fields and held meetings on the road sides and in barns, preaching the gospel of unionism. The Consolidated Coal Company that owns the little town of New England forbade the distribution of the notices of our meeting and arrested any one found with a notice. But we got the news around. Several of our men went into the camp. They went in twos. One pretended he was deaf and the other kept hollering in his ear as they walked around, “Mother Jones is going to have a meeting Sunday afternoon outside the town on the sawdust pile.” Then the deaf fellow would ask him what he said and he would holler to him again. So the word got around the entire camp and we had a big crowd. When the meeting adjourned, three miners and myself set out for Fairmont City. The miners, Jo Battley, Charlie Blakelet and Barney Rice walked but they got a little boy with a horse and buggy to drive me over. I was to wait for the boys just outside the town, across the bridge, just where the interurban car comes along. The little lad and I drove along. It was dark when we came in sight of the bridge which I had to cross. A dark building stood beside the bridge. It was the Coal Company’s store. It was guarded by gunmen. There was no light on the bridge and there was none in the store. A gunman stopped us. I could



not see his face. "who are you!" said he. "Mother Jones," said I, "and a miner's lad." "So that's you, Mother Jones," said he rattling his gun. "Yes, it's me I said, " and be sure you take care of the store tonight. Tomorrow I'll have to be hunting a new job for you." I got out of the buggy where the road joins the Interurban tracks, just across the bridge. I sent the lad home. "When you pass my boys on the road tell them to hurry up. Tell them I'm waiting just across the bridge." There wasn't a house in sight. The only people near were the gunmen whose dark figures I could now and then see moving on the bridge. It grew very dark. I sat on the ground, waiting. I took out my watch, lighted a match and saw that it was about time for the interurban. Suddenly the sound of "Murder! Murder! Police! Help!" rang out through the darkness. Then the sound of running and Barney Rice came screaming across the bridge toward me. Blakley followed, running so fast his heels hit the back of his head. "Murder! Murder!" he was yelling. I rushed toward them. "Where's Jo?" I asked. "They're killing Jo - on the bridge - the gunmen." At that moment the Interurban car came in sight. It would stop at the bridge. I thought of a scheme. I ran onto the bridge, shouting, "Jo! Jo! The boys are coming. They're coming! The whole bunch's coming. The car's most here!" Those bloodhounds for the coal company thought an army of miners was in the Interurban car. They ran for cover, barricading themselves in the company's store. They left Jo on the bridge, his head broken and the blood pouring from him. I tore my petticoat into strips, bandaged his head, helped the boys to get him on to the Interurban car, and hurried the car into Fairmont City. We took him to the hotel and sent for a doctor who sewed up the great, open cuts in his head. I sat up all night and nursed the poor fellow. He was out of his head and thought I was his mother. The next night Tom Haggerty and I addressed the union meeting, telling them just what had happened. The men wanted to go clean up the gunmen but I told them that would only make more trouble. The meeting adjourned in a body to go see Jo. They went to his room, six or eight of them at a time, Until they had all seen him.

We tried to get a warrant out for the arrest of the gunmen but we couldn't because the coal company controlled the judges and the courts. Jo was not the only man who was beaten by the gunmen. There were many and the brutalities of these bloodhounds would fill volumes. In Clarksburg, men were threatened with death if they even billed meetings for me. but the railway men billed a meeting in the dead of night and I went in there alone. The meeting was in the court house. The place was packed. The mayor and all the city officials were there. "Mr. Mayor," I said, "will you kindly chairman for a fellow American citizen?" He shook his head. No one would accept my offer. "Then," said I, "as chairman of the evening, I introduce myself, the speaker of the evening, Mother Jones."

The Fairmont field was finally organized to a man. The scabs and the gunmen were driven out. Subsequently, through inefficient organizers, through the treachery of the unions' own officials, the unions lost strength. The miners of the Fairmont field were finally betrayed by the very men who were employed to protect their interests. Charlie Battley tried to retrieve the losses but officers had become corrupt and men so discouraged that he could do nothing.

It makes me sad indeed to think that the sacrifices men and women made to get out from under the iron heel of the gunmen were so often in vain! That the victories gained are so often destroyed by the treachery of the workers' own officials, men who themselves knew the bitterness and cost of the struggle.

I am old now and I never expect to see the boys in the Fairmont field again, but I like to think that I have had a share in changing conditions for them and for their children.

The United Mine Workers had tried to organize Kelly Creek on the Kanawah River but without results. Mr. Burke and Tom Lewis, members of the board of the United Mine Workers, decided to go look the field over for themselves. They took the train one night for Kelly Creek. The train came to a high trestle over a steep canyon. Under some pretext all the passengers except the two union officials were transferred to another coach, the coach uncoupled and pulled across the trestle. The officials were on the trestle in the stalled car. They had to crawl on their hands and knees along the track. Pitch blackness was below them. The trestle was a one-way track. Just as they got to end of the trestle, a train thundered by.

When I heard of the coal company's efforts to kill the union officers, I decided myself to go to Kelly Creek and rouse those slaves. I took a nineteen-year-old boy, Ben Davis, with me. We walked on the east bank of the Kanawah River on which Kelly Creek is situated. Before daylight one morning, at a point opposite Kelly Creek, we forded the river. It was just dawn when I knocked at the door of a store run by a man by the name of Marshall. I told him what I had come for. He was friendly. He took me in a little back room where he gave me breakfast. He said if anyone saw him giving food to Mother Jones he would lose his store privilege. He told me how to get my bills announcing my meeting into the mines by noon. But all the time he was frightened and kept looking out the little window.

Late that night a group of miners gathered about a mile from town between the boulders. We could not see one another's faces in the darkness. By the light of an old lantern I gave them the pledge.

The next day, forty men were discharged, blacklisted. There had been spies among the men the night before. The following night we organized another group and they were all discharged. This started the fight. Mr. Marshall, the grocery man, got courageous. He rented me his store and I began holding meetings there. The general manager for the mines came over from Columbus and he held a meeting, too.

"Shame," he said, "to be led away by an old woman!"

"Hurrah for Mother Jones!" shouted the miners.

The following Sunday I held a meeting in the woods. The general manager, Mr. Jack Rowen, came down from Columbus on his special car. I organized a parade of the men that Sunday. We had every miner with us. We stood in front of the company's hotel and yelled for the general manager to come out. He did not appear. Two of the company's lap dogs were on the porch. One of them said, "I'd like to hang that old woman to a tree."

"Yes," said the other, "and I'd like to pull the rope."

On we marched to our meeting place under the trees. Over a thousand people came and the two lap dogs came sniveling along too. I stood up to speak and I put my back to a big tree and pointing to the curs, I said, "You said that you would like to hang this old woman to a tree. Well, here's the old woman and here's the tree. Bring along your rope and hang her!"

And so the union was organized in Kelly Creek. I do not know whether the men have held the gains they wrested from the company. Taking men into the union is just the kindergarten of their education and every force is against their further education. Men who live up those lonely creeks have only the mine owners' Y.M.C.As, the mine owners' preachers and teachers, the mine owners' doctors and newspapers to look to for their ideas. So they don't get many.

## Chapter VII – A Human Judge

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In June of 1902 I was holding a meeting of the bituminous miners of Clarksburg, West Virginia. I was talking on the strike question, for what else among miners should one be talking of? Nine organizers sat under a tree near by. A United States marshal notified them to tell me that I was under arrest. One of them came up to the platform.

“Mother,” said he, “you’re under arrest. They’ve got an injunction against your speaking.”

I looked over at the United States marshal and I said, “I will be right with you. Wait till I run down.” I went on speaking till I had finished. Then I said, “Goodbye, boys; I’m under arrest. I may have to go to jail. I may not see you for a long time. Keep up this fight! Don’t surrender! Pay no attention to the injunction machine at Parkersburg. The Federal judge is a scab anyhow. While you starve he plays golf. While you serve humanity, he serves injunctions for the money powers.”

That night several of the organizers and myself were taken to Parkersburg, a distance of eighty-four miles. Five deputy marshals went with the men, and a nephew of the United States marshal, a nice lad, took charge of me. On the train I got the lad very sympathetic to the cause of the miners. When we got off the train, the boys and the five marshals started off in one direction and we in the other.

“My boy,” I said to my guard, “look, we a going in the wrong direction.”

“No, mother,” he said.

“Then they are going in the wrong direction lad.”

“No, mother. You are going to a hotel. They are going to jail.”

“Lad,” said I, stopping where we were, “Am I under arrest!” “You are, mother.” “Then I am going to jail with my boys.” I turned square around. “Did you ever hear Mother Jones going to a hotel while her boys were in jail!” I quickly followed the boys and went to jail with them. But the jailer and his wife would not put me in a regular cell.

“Mother,” they said, “you’re our guest.”

And they treated me as a member of the family, getting out the best of everything and “plumping me” as they called feeding me. I got a real good rest while I was with them.

We were taken to the Federal court for trial. We had violated something they called an injunction. Whatever the bosses did not want the miners to do they got out an injunction against doing it. The company put a woman on the stand. She testified that I had told the miners to go into the mines and throw out the scabs. She was a poor skinny woman with scared eyes and she wore her best dress, as if she were in church. I looked at the miserable slave of the coal company and I felt sorry for her: sorry that there was a creature so low who would perjure herself for a handful of coppers.

I was put on the stand and the judge asked me if I gave that advice to the miners, told them to use violence.

“You know, sir,” said I, “that it would be suicidal for me to make such a statement in public. I am more careful than that. You’ve been on the bench forty years, have you not, judge?”

“Yes, I have that,” said he.

“And in forty years you learn to discern between a lie and the truth, judge?”

The prosecuting attorney jumped to his feet and shaking his finger at me, he said

“Your honor – there is the most dangerous woman in the Country today. She called your honor a scab. But I will recommend mercy of the court – if she will consent to leave the state and never return.”

“I didn’t come into the court asking mercy,” I said, “but I came here looking for justice. And I will not leave this state so long as there is a single little child that asks me to stay and fight his battle for bread.”

The judge said, “Did you call me a scab!”

“I certainly did, judge.”

He said, “How came you to call me a scab?”

“When you had me arrested I was only talking about the constitution, speaking to a lot of men about life and liberty and a chance for happiness; to men who had been robbed for years by their masters, who had been made industrial slaves. I was thinking of the immortal Lincoln. And it occurred to me that I had read in the papers that when Lincoln made the appointment of Federal judge to this bench, he did not designate senior or junior. You and your father bore the same initials. Your father was away when the appointment came. You took the appointment. Wasn’t that scabbing on your father, judge?”

“I never heard that before,” said he.

A chap came tiptoeing up to me and whispered, “Madam, don’t say ‘judge’ or ‘sir’ to the court. Say ‘Your Honor.’”

“Who is the court?” I whispered back.

“His honor, on the bench,” he said, looking shocked.

“Are you referring to the old chap behind the justice counter? Well, I can’t call him ‘your honor’ until I know how honorable he is. You know I took an oath to tell the truth when I took the witness stand.”

When the court session closed I was told that the judge wished to see me in his chambers. When I entered the room, the judge reached out his hand and took hold of mine, and he said, “I wish to give you proof that I am not a scab; that I didn’t scab on my father.”

He handed me documents which proved that the reports were wrong and had been circulated by his enemies. “Judge,” I said, “I apologize. And I am glad to be tried by so human a judge who resents being called a scab. And who would not want to be one. You probably understand how we working people feel about it.”

He did not sentence me, just let me go, but he gave the men who were arrested with me sixty and ninety days in jail.

I was going to leave Parkersburg the next night for Clarksburg. Mr. Murphy, a citizen of Parkersburg, came to express his regrets that I was going away. He said he was glad the judge did not sentence me. I said to him, “If the injunction was violated I was the only one who violated it. The boys did not speak at all. I regret that they had to go to jail for me and that I should go free. But I am not trying to break into jails. It really does not matter much; they are young and strong and have a long time to carry on. I am old and have much yet to do. Only Barney Rice has a bad

heart and a frail, nervous wife. When she hears of his imprisonment, she may have a collapse and perhaps leave her little children without a mother's care."

Mr. Murphy said to me, "Mother Jones, I believe that if you went up and explained Rice's condition to the judge he would pardon him." I went to the judge's house. He invited me to dinner.

"No, Judge," I said, "I just came to see you about Barney Rice."

"What about him!" "He has heart disease and a nervous wife."

"Heart disease, has he!"

"Yes, he has it bad and he might die in your jail. I know you don't want that."

"No," replied the judge, "I do not." He called the jailer and asked him to bring Rice to the phone. The judge said, "How is your heart, Barney!"

"Me heart's all right, all right," said Barney. "It's that damn old judge that put me in jail for sixty days that's got something wrong with his heart. I was just trailing around with Mother Jones."

"Nothing wrong with your heart, eh!"

"No, there ain't a damn thing wrong wid me heart! Who are you anyhow that's talking!"

"Never mind, I want to know what is the matter with your heart!"

"Hell, me heart's all right, I'm telling you." The judge turned to me and said, "Do you hear his language!"

I told him I did not hear and he repeated to me Barney's answers. "He swears every other word," said the judge.

"Judge," said I, "that is the way we ignorant working people pray."

"Do you pray that way!"

"Yes, judge, when I want an answer quick."

"But Barney says there is nothing the matter with his heart."

"Judge, that fellow doesn't know the difference between his heart and his liver. I have been out to meetings with him and walking home down the roads or on the railroad tracks, lie has had to sit down to get his breath."

The judge called the jail doctor and told him to go and examine Barney's heart in the morning. Meantime I asked my friend, Mr. Murphy, to see the jail doctor. Well, the next day Barney was let out of jail.

## Chapter VIII – Roosevelt Sent for John Mitchell

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The strike of the anthracite miners which started in the spring with \$90,000 in the treasury, ended in the fall with over a million dollar in the possession of the United Mine Workers. The strike had been peaceful. The miners had the support of the public. The tie up of the collieries had been complete. Factories and railroads were without coal.

Toward fall New York began to suffer. In October, Mr. Roosevelt summoned "Divine Right Baer," President of the Coal Producers Union, and other officials of the coal interests to Washington. He called also the officials of the miners' union. They sat at the cabinet table, the coal officials on one side, the miners officials at the other and the president at the head of the table in between the two groups.

They discussed the matter and the mine owners would not consent to any kind of settlement. Mr. Baer said that before he would consent to arbitration with the union he would call out the militia and shoot the miners back into the mines.

The meeting adjourned without results. Mr. Roosevelt sent for John Mitchell. He patted him on the shoulder, told him that he was the true patriot and loyal citizen and not the mine owners. After the conference there was a deadlock.

Mr. Mitchell reported the conference to the miners. They said, "All right. We have money enough to see this thing through. We will fight to a finish. Until the coal operators recognize our union and deal with our demands."

Wall Street sent for Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan to come home from Europe. He came. The situation was serious for the mine operators. The public was indignant at their stubbornness. A Mr. - wrote to Montgomery where I was organizing and asked me to come to New York, saying he wished to discuss the strike with me. I went to headquarters at Wilkes-Barre and asked Mr. Mitchell what I should do.

He said, "Go, Mother, but whatever you do, do not consent to any outside group arbitrating this strike. The union won this strike. The operators know that they are beaten and that they must deal with the United Mine Workers."

"No," I said, "I will consent to no other group undertaking the settlement. I will report to you."

I met Mr. - and we went over the situation. He then went down to Mr. Morgan's office and I waited for him in his office until he returned. "Mr. Morgan is most distressed," he said on his return. "He says the miners have us!"

On Sunday afternoon, Mr. Baer and his group met on Mr. Morgan's yacht out in the bay of New York. Mr. Root came down from Washington to represent Roosevelt. Not a newspaperman was permitted out on that yacht. There were no telegrams, no telephones, no messages. How to lose the strike without apparently losing it was what they discussed. But give the victory to the union they would not!

Mr. Root proposed the way out. The President should appoint "an impartial board of inquiry." This method of settling the strike would avoid capitulation to the union, put the operators in the position of yielding to public opinion, make the miners lose public support if they refused to submit their cause to the board.

The next morning, Monday, my friend, Mr. – met Mr. Morgan at 209 Madison Avenue. He returned from that appointment, crying "The strike is settled." I went back to Wilkes-Barre and found that Mr. Mitchell had already been to Washington and had consented to the arbitration of the strike by a board appointed by the president.

"It would never do to refuse the president," he said, when I tried to dissuade him from taking part in the conferences.

"You have a good excuse to give the president," I replied. "Tell him that when you came home from the last conference in the cabinet room, Mr. Baer said he would shoot the miners back before he would deal with their union." Tell him that the miners said, 'All right. We will fight to a finish for the recognition of The United Mine Workers'."

"It would not do to tell the president that," he replied.

That night, Mr. Mitchell, accompanied by Mr. Wellman, Roosevelt's publicity man, went to Washington. He had an audience with the president the next morning. Before he left the White House, the newspapers, magazines and pulpits were shouting his praises, calling him the greatest labor leader in all America. Mr. Mitchell was not dishonest but he had a weak point, and that was his love of flattery; and the interests used this weak point in furtherance of their designs.

When he returned to Wilkes-Barre, priests, ministers and politicians fell on their knees before him. Bands met him at the station. The men took the horses from his carriage and drew it themselves. Parades with banners marched in his honor beside the carriage. His black hair was pushed back from his forehead. His face was pale. His dark eyes shone with excitement. There were deep lines in his face from the long strain he had been under.

Flattery and homage did its work with John Mitchell. The strike was won. Absolutely no anthracite coal was being dug. The operators could have been made to deal with the unions if Mr. Mitchell had stood firm. A moral victory would have been won for the principle of unionism. This to my mind was more important than the material gains which the miners received through the later decision of the president's board.

Mr. Mitchell died a rich man, distrusted by the working people whom he once served.

From out that strike came the Irish Hessian law—the establishment of a police constabulary. The bill was framed under the pretext that it would protect the farmer. Workingmen went down to Harrisburg and lobbied for it. They hated the coal and iron police of the mine owners and thought anything preferable to them. They forgot that the coal and iron police could join the constabulary and they forgot the history of Ireland, whence the law came: Ireland, soaked with the blood of men and of women, shed by the brutal constabulary.

"No honorable man will join," said a labor leader to me when I spoke of my fears.

"Then that leaves the workers up against the bad men, the gunmen and thugs that do join," I answered. And that's just where they have been left.

I attended the hearings of the board of inquiry, appointed by President Roosevelt. Never shall I forget the words of John Mitchell as he appeared before the commission:

"For more than twenty years the anthracite miners have groaned under most intolerable and inhuman conditions. In a brotherhood of labor they seek to remedy their wrongs."

Never shall I forget the words of President Baer, speaking for the operators:

“The rights and interests of the laboring man will be protected not by the labor agitator but by the Christian men and women to whom God in His infinite wisdom has given the control of the property interests of this country.”

Never shall I forget the words of labor’s great pleader, Clarence Darrow:

“These agents of the Almighty have seen men killed daily; have seen men crippled, blinded and maimed and turned out to alms-houses and on the roadsides with no compensation. They have seen the anthracite region dotted with silk mills because the wages of the miner makes it necessary for him to send his little girls to work twelve hours a day, a night, in the factory . . . at a child’s wage. President Baer sheds tears because boys are taken into the union but he has no tears because they are taken into the breakers.”

Never, never shall I forget his closing words, words which I shall hear when my own life draws to its close: “This contest is one of the important contests that have marked the progress of human liberty “since the world began. Every advantage that the human race has won has been at fearful cost. Some men must die that others may live. It has come to these poor miners to bear this cross not for themselves alone but that the human race may be lifted up to a higher and broader plane.”

The commission found in favor of the miners in every one of their demands. The operators gracefully bowed to their findings. Labor walked into the House of Victory through the back door.



## Chapter IX – Murder in West Virginia

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At the close of the anthracite strike in October, 1902, I went into the unorganized sections of West Virginia with John H. Walker of Illinois. Up and down along both sides of the New River we held meetings and organized – Smithersfield, Long Acre, Canilton, Boomer.

The work was not easy or safe and I was lucky to have so fearless a co-worker. Men who joined the union were blacklisted throughout the entire section. Their families were thrown out on the highways. Men were shot. They were beaten. Numbers disappeared and no trace of them found. Store keepers were ordered not to sell to union men or their families. Meetings had to be held in the woods at night, in abandoned mines, in barns.

We held a meeting in Mount Hope. After the meeting adjourned, Walker and I went back to our hotel. We talked till late. There came a tap on the door.

“Come in,” I said.

A miner came into the room. He was lean and tall and coughed a lot.

“Mother,” he said, “there are twelve of us here and we want to organize.” I turned to Walker.

“Mother,” he said, “the National Board told us to educate and agitate but not to Organize; that was to come later.”

“I’m going to Organize these men tonight,” said I.

“I’m reckoning I’m not going to be mining coal so long in this world and I thought I’d like to die organized,” said the spokesman for the group.

I brought the other miners in my room and Mr. Walker gave them the obligation.

“Now, boys, you are twelve in number. That was the number Christ had. I hope that among your twelve there will be no Judas, no one who will betray his fellow. The work you do is for your children and for the future. You preach the gospel of better food, better homes, a decent compensation for the wealth you produce. It is these things that make a great nation.”

The spokesman kept up his terrible coughing. He had miner’s consumption. As they had no money to pay for their charter I told them that I would attend to that.

Three weeks afterward I had a letter from one of the group. He told me that their spokesman was dead but they had organized eight hundred men and they sent me the money for the charter.

In Caperton Mountain camp I met Duncan Kennedy, who is now commissioner for the mine owners. He and his noble wife gave shelter and fed us when it was too late for us to go down the mountain and cross the river to an inn. Often after meetings in this mountain district, we sat through the night on the river bank. Frequently we would hear bullets whizz past us as we sat huddled between boulders, our black clothes making us invisible in the blackness of the night.

Seven Organizers were sent into Laurel Creek. All came back, shot at, beaten up, run out of town.

One Organizer was chased out of town with a gun.

“What did you do?” I said.

“I ran.”

"Which way?" said I.

"Mother," he said, "you mustn't go up there. They've got gunmen patrolling the roads."

"That means the miners up there are prisoners," said I, "and need me."

A week later, one Saturday night I went with eight or ten trapper boys to Thayer, a camp about six miles from Laurel Creek. Very early Sunday morning we walked to Laurel Creek. I climbed the mountain so that I could look down on the camp with its huddle of dirty shacks. I sat down on a rock above the camp and told the trapper boys to go down to the town, and tell the boys to come up the mountain side.. That Mother Jones was going to speak at two o'clock and tell the superintendent that Mother Jones extends a cordial invitation him to come.

Then I sent two boys across a little gully a log cabin to get a cup of tea for me. The mine came out and beckoned to me to come over. I went and as I entered the door, my eyes rested on a straw mattress on which rested a beautiful young girl. She looked at me with the most gentle eyes I ever saw in a human-being. The wind came in through the cracks of the floor and would raise the bed clothes a little.

I said to the father, "What is wrong with your girl?"

"Consumption," said he. "I couldn't earn enough in the mines and she went to work in boarding house. They worked her so hard she took sick - consumption."

Around a fireplace sat a group of dirty children, ragged and neglected-looking. He gave us tea and bread.

A great crowd came up the mountains that afternoon. The superintendent sent one of his lackeys, a colored fellow. When the miners told me who he was and that he was sent there as a spy, I said to him, "See here, young man, don't you know that the immortal Lincoln a white man, gave you freedom from slavery? Why do you now betray your white brothers who are fighting for industrial freedom?"

"Mother," said he, "I can't make myself scarce but my hearing and my eyesight ain't extra today."

That afternoon, up there on the mountain-side, we organized a strong union.

The next day the man who gave me food-his name was Mike Harrington-went to the mines to go to work, but he was told to go to the office and get his pay. No man could work in the mines, the superintendent said, who entertained agitators in his home.

Mike said to him, "I didn't entertain her. She paid me for the tea and bread."

"It makes no difference," said he, "you had Mother Jones in your house and that is sufficient."

He went home and when he opened the door, his sick daughter said, "Father, you have lost your job." She started to sob. That brought on a coughing fit from which she fell back on the pillow exhausted-dead.

That afternoon he was ordered to leave his house as it was owned by the company. They buried the girl and moved to an old barn.

Mike was later made an organizer for the United Mine Workers and he made one of the most faithful workers I have ever known.

In February of 1903, I went to Stanford Mountain where the men were on strike. The court had issued an injunction forbidding the miners from going near the mines. A group of miners walked along the public road nowhere near the mines. The next morning they held meeting in their own hall which they themselves had built. A United States deputy marshal came into the meeting with warrants for thirty members for violating the injunction.

The men said, "We did not break any law. We did not go near the mines and you know we were on the public road."

"Well," said the deputy, "we are going to arrest you anyway."

They defied him to arrest them, insisting they had not violated the law. They gave him twenty-five minutes to leave town. They sent for his brother, who was the company doctor and told him to take him out.

That night I went to hold a meeting with them. They told me what had happened.

I said, "Boys, it would have been better if you had surrendered, especially as you had truth on your side and you had not been near the mines."

"After the meeting I went to a nearby camp – Montgomery – where there was a little hotel and the railway station. Before leaving, the boys, who came to the edge of the town with me said, "You will be coming back soon Mother?"

I had no idea how soon it would be.

The next morning I went to the station to get an early train. The agent said to me, "Did you hear what trouble they had up in Stanford Mountain last night?"

"I think you are mistaken," I answered, "for I just came down from there myself last night."

"Well," he said, "they have had some trouble there, all the same."

"Anyone hurt?"

"Yes; I was taking the railway messages and couldn't get all the details. Some shooting."

I said, "Take back my ticket. I must go up to those boys."

I took the short trail up the hillside to Stanford Mountain. It seemed to me as I came toward the camp as if those wretched shacks were huddling closer in terror. Everything was deathly still. As I came nearer the miners' homes, I could hear sobbing. Then I saw between the stilts that propped up a miner's shack the clay red with blood. I pushed open the door. On a mattress, wet with blood, lay a miner. His brains had been blown out while he slept. His shack was riddled with bullets.

In five other shacks men lay dead. In one of them a baby boy and his mother sobbed over the father's corpse. When the little fellow saw me, he said, "Mother Jones, bring back my papa to me. I want to kiss him."

The coroner came. He found that these six men had been murdered in their beds while they peacefully slept; shot by gunmen in the employ of the coal company.

The coroner went. The men were buried on the mountain side. And nothing was ever done to punish the men who had taken their lives.

## Chapter X – The March of the Mill Children

In the spring of 1903 I went to Kensington, Pennsylvania, where seventy-five thousand textile workers were on strike. Of this number at least ten thousand were little children. The workers were striking for more pay and shorter hours. Every day little children came into Union Headquarters, some with their hands off, some with the thumb missing, some with their fingers off at the knuckle. They were stooped things, round shouldered and skinny. Many of them were not over ten years of age, the state law prohibited their working before they were twelve years of age.

The law was poorly enforced and the mothers of these children often swore falsely as to their children's age. In a single block in Kensington, fourteen women, mothers of twenty-two children all under twelve, explained it was a question of starvation or perjury. That the fathers had been killed or maimed at the mines.

I asked the newspaper men why they didn't publish the facts about child labor in Pennsylvania. They said they couldn't because the mill owners had stock in the papers.

"Well, I've got stock in these little children," said I, "and I'll arrange a little publicity."

We assembled a number of boys and girls one morning in Independence Park and from there we arranged to parade with banners to the court house where we would hold a meeting. A great crowd gathered in the public square in front of the city hall. I put the little boys with their fingers off and hands crushed and maimed on a platform. I held up their mutilated hands and showed them to the crowd and made the statement that Philadelphia's mansions were built on the broken bones, the quivering hearts and drooping heads of these children. That their little lives went out to make wealth for others. That neither state or city officials paid any attention to these wrongs. That they did not care that these children were to be the future citizens of the nation.

The officials of the city hall were standing the open windows. I held the little ones of the mills high up above the heads of the crowd and pointed to their puny arms and legs and hollow chests. They were light to lift.

I called upon the millionaire manufactures to cease their moral murders, and I cried to the officials in the open windows opposite, "Some day the workers will take possession of your city hall, and when we do, no child will be sacrificed on the altar of profit."

The officials quickly closed the windows, as they had closed their eyes and hearts.

The reporters quoted my statement that Philadelphia mansions were built on the broken bones and quivering hearts of children. The Philadelphia papers and the New York papers got into a squabble with each other over the question. The universities discussed it. Preachers began talking. That was what I wanted. Public attention on the subject of child labor.

The matter quieted down for a while and I concluded the people needed stirring up again. The Liberty Bell that a century ago rang out for freedom against tyranny was touring the country and crowds were coming to see it everywhere. That gave me an idea. These little children were striking for some of the freedom that childhood ought to have, and I decided that the children and I would go on a tour.

I asked some of the parents if they would let me have their little boys and girls for a week or ten days, promising to bring them back safe and sound. They consented. A man named Sweeny was marshal for our "army." A few men and women went with me to help with the children. They were on strike and I thought, they might well have a little recreation.

The children carried knapsacks on their backs which was a knife and fork, a tin cup and plate. We took along a wash boiler in which to cook the food on the road. One little fellow had drum and another had a fife. That was our band. We carried banners that said, "We want more schools and less hospitals." "We want time to play." "Prosperity is here. Where is ours?"

We started from Philadelphia where we held a great mass meeting. I decided to go with the children to see President Roosevelt to ask him to have Congress pass a law prohibiting the exploitation of childhood. I thought that President Roosevelt might see these mill children and compare them with his own little ones who were spending the summer on the seashore at Oyster Bay. I thought too, out of politeness, we might call on Morgan in Wall Street who owned the mines where many of these children's fathers worked.

The children were very happy, having plenty to eat, taking baths in the brooks and rivers every day. I thought when the strike is over and they go back to the mills, they will never have another holiday like this. All along the line of march the farmers drove out to meet us with wagon loads of fruit and vegetables. Their wives brought the children clothes and money. The interurban trainmen would stop their trains and give us free rides.

Marshal Sweeny and I would go ahead to the towns and arrange sleeping quarters for the children, and secure meeting halls. As we marched on, it grew terribly hot. There was no rain and the roads were heavy with dust. From time to time we had to send some of the children back to their homes. They were too weak to stand the march.

We were on the outskirts of New Trenton, New Jersey, cooking our lunch in the wash boiler, when the conductor on the interurban car stopped and told us the police were coming down to notify us that we could not enter the town. There were mills in the town and the mill owners didn't like our coming.

I said, "All right, the police will be just in time for lunch." Sure enough, the police came and we invited them to dine with us. They looked at the little gathering of children with their tin plates and cups around the wash boiler. They just smiled and spoke kindly to the children, and said nothing at all about not going into the city.

We went in, held our meeting, and it was the wives of the police who took the little children and cared for them that night, sending them back in the morning with a nice lunch rolled up paper napkins.

Everywhere we had meetings, showing up with living children, the horrors of child labor. At one town the mayor said we could not hold a meeting because he did not have sufficient police protection. "These little children have never known any sort of protection, your honor" I said, "and they are used to going without it." He let us have our meeting. One night in Princeton, New Jersey, we slept in the big cool barn on Grover Cleveland's great estate. The heat became intense. There was much suffering in our ranks, for our little ones were not robust. The proprietor of the leading hotel sent for me. "Mother," he said "order what you want and all you want for your army, and there's nothing to pay."

I called on the mayor of Princeton and asked for permission to speak opposite the campus of the University. I said I wanted to speak on higher education. The mayor gave me permission. A great crowd gathered, professors and students and the people; and I told them that the rich robbed

these little children of any education of the lowest order that they might send their sons and daughters to places of higher education. That they used the hands and feet of little children that they might buy automobiles for their wives and police dogs for their daughters to talk French to. I said the mil owners take babies almost from the cradle. And I showed those professors children in our army who could scarcely read or write because they were working ten hours a day in the silk mills of Pennsylvania.

“Here’s a text book on economics,” I said pointing to a little chap, James Ashworth, who was ten years old and who was stooped over like an old man from carrying bundles of yarn that weighed seventy-five pounds. “He gets three dollars a week and his sister who is fourteen gets six dollars. They work in a carpet factory ten hours a day while the children of the rich are getting their higher education.”

That night we camped on the banks of Stony Brook where years and years before the ragged Revolutionary Army camped, Washington’s brave soldiers that made their fight for freedom.

From Jersey City we marched to Hoboken. I sent a committee over to the New York Chief of Police, Ebstein, asking for permission to march up Fourth Avenue to Madison Square where I wanted to hold a meeting. The chief refused and forbade our entrance to the city.

I went over myself to New York and saw Mayor Seth Low. The mayor was most courteous but he said he would have to support the police commissioner. I asked him what the reason was for refusing us entrance to the city and he said that we were not citizens of New York.

“Oh, I think we will clear that up, Mr. Mayor,” I said. “Permit me to call your attention to an incident which took place in this nation just a year ago. A piece of rotten royalty came over here from Germany, called Prince Henry. The Congress of the United States voted \$45,000 to fill that fellow’s stomach three weeks and to entertain him. His highness was getting \$4,000,000 dividends out of the blood of the workers in this country. Was he a citizen of this land?”

“And it was reported, Mr. Mayor, that you and all the officials of New York and the University Club entertained that chap.” And repeated, “Was he a citizen of New York!”

“No, Mother,” said the mayor, “he was not.”

“And a Chinaman called Lee Woo was also entertained by the officials of New York. Was he a citizen of New York?”

“No, Mother, he was not.”

“Did they ever create any wealth for our nation!”

“No, Mother, they did not,” said he.

“Well, Mr. Mayor, these are the little citizens of the nation and they also produce its wealth. Aren’t we entitled to enter your city!”

“Just wait!” says he, and he called the commissioner of police over to his office. Well, finally they decided to let the army come in. We marched up Fourth Avenue to Madison Square and police officers, captains, sergeants, roundsmen and reserves from three precincts accompanied us. But the police would not let us hold a meeting in Madison Square. They insisted that the meeting be held in Twentieth Street.

I pointed out to the captain that the single taxers were allowed to hold meetings in the square. “Yes,” he said, “but they won’t have twenty people and you might have twenty thousand.” We marched to Twentieth Street. I told an immense crowd of the horrors of child labor in the mills around the anthracite region and I showed them some of the children. I showed them Eddie Dunphy, a little fellow of twelve, whose job it was to sit all day on a high stool, handing in the right thread to another worker. Eleven hours a day he sat on the high stool with dangerous

machinery all about him. All day long, winter and summer, spring and fall, for three dollars a week.

And then I showed them Gussie Rangnew, a little girl from whom all the childhood had gone. Her face was like an old woman's. Gussie packed stockings in a factory, eleven hours a day for a few cents a day.

We raised a lot of money for the strikers and hundreds of friends offered their homes to the little ones while we were in the city. The next day we went to Coney Island at the invitation of Mr. Bostick who owned the wild animal show. The children had a wonderful day such as they never had in all their lives. After the exhibition of the trained animals, Mr. Bostick let me speak to the audience. There was a back drop to the tiny stage of the Roman Coliseum with the audience painted in and two Roman emperors down in front with their thumbs down. Right in front of the emperors were the empty iron cages of the animals. I put my little children in the cages and they clung to the iron bars while I talked.

I told the crowd that the scene was typical of the aristocracy of employers with their thumb down to the little ones of the mills and factories, and people sitting dumbly by.

"We want President Roosevelt to hear the wail of the children who never have a chance to go to school but work eleven and twelve hours a day in the textile mills of Pennsylvania; who weave the carpets that he and you walk upon and the lace curtains in your windows, and the clothes of the people. Fifty years ago there was a cry against slavery and men gave up their lives to stop the selling of black children on the block. Today the white child is sold for two dollars a week to the manufacturers. Fifty years ago the black babies were sold C. O. D. Today the white baby is sold on the installment plan.

"In Georgia where children work day and night in the cotton mills they have just passed a bill to protect song birds. What about little children from whom all song is gone?

"I shall ask the president in the name of the aching hearts of these little ones that he emancipate them from slavery. I will tell the president that the prosperity he boasts of is the prosperity of the rich wrung from the poor and the helpless.

"The trouble is that no one in Washington cares. I saw our legislators in one hour pass three bills for the relief of the railways but when labor cries for aid for the children they will not listen.

"I asked a man in prison once how he happened to be there and he said he had stolen a pair of shoes. I told him if he had stolen a railroad he would be a United States Senator.

"We are told that every American boy has the chance of being president. I tell you that these little boys in the iron cages would sell their chance any day for good square meals and a chance to play. These little toilers whom I have taken from the mills – deformed, dwarfed in body and soul, with nothing but toil before them have never heard that they have a chance, the chance of every American male citizen, to become the president.

"You see those monkeys in those cages over there." I pointed to a side cage. "The professors are trying to teach them to talk. The monkeys are too wise for they fear that the manufacturers would buy them for slaves in their factories."

I saw a stylishly dressed young man down in the front of the audience. Several times he grinned. I stopped speaking and pointing to him I said, "Stop your smiling, young man! Leave this place! Go home and beg the mother who bore you in pain, as the mothers of these little children bore them, go home and beg her to give you brains and a heart."

He rose and slunk out, followed by the eyes of the children in the cage. The people stone still and out in the rear a lion roared.

The next day we left Coney Island for Manhattan Beach to visit Senator Platt, who had made an appointment to see me at nine o'clock in the morning. The children got stuck in the sand banks and I had a time cleaning the sand off the littlest ones. So we started to walk on the railroad track. I was told it was private property and we had to get off. Finally a saloon keeper showed us a short cut into the sacred grounds of the hotel and suddenly the army appeared in the lobby. The little fellows played "Hail, hail, the gang's all here" their fifes and drums, and Senator Platt when he saw the little army ran away through the back door to New York.

I asked the manager if he would give children breakfast and charge it up to Senator as we had an invitation to breakfast that morning with him. He gave us a private room and he gave those children such a breakfast as they had never had in all their lives. I had breakfast too, and a reporter from of the Hearst papers and I charged it all to Senator Platt.

We marched down to Oyster Bay but the president refused to see us and he would not answer my letters. But our march had done its work. We had drawn the attention of the nation to the crime of child labor. And while the strike of the textile workers in Kensington was lost and the children driven back to work, not long afterward the Pennsylvania legislature passed a child labor law that sent thousands of children home from the mills, and kept thousands of others from entering the factory until they were fourteen years of age.



## Chapter XI – Those Mules Won't Scab Today

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Lattimer was an eye-sore to the miners. It seemed as if no one could break into it. Twenty-six organizers and union men had been killed in that coal camp in previous strikes. Some of them had been shot in the back. The blood of union men watered the highways. No one dared go in.

I said nothing about it but made up my mind that I was going there some night. After the raid of the women in Coaldale in the Panther Creek, the general manager of Lattimer said that if I came in there I would go out a corpse. I made no reply but I set my plans and I did not consult an undertaker.

From three different camps in the Panther Creek I had a leader bring a group of strikers to a junction of the road that leads into Lattimer. There I met them with my army of women again. As I was leaving the hotel the clerk said, "Mother, the reporters told me to ring their bell if I saw you go out."

"Well, don't see me go out. Watch the front door carefully and I will go out the back door."

We marched through the night, reaching Lattimer just before dawn. The strikers hid themselves in the mines. The women took up their position on the door steps of the miners' shacks. When a miner stepped out of his house to go to work, the women started mopping the step, shouting, "No work today!"

Everybody came running out into the dirt streets. "God, it is the old mother and her army," they were all saying.

The Lattimer miners and the mule drivers were afraid to quit work. They had been made cowards. They took the mules, lighted the lamps in their caps and started down the mines, not knowing that I had three thousand miners down below ground waiting for them and the mules.

"Those mules won't scab today," I said to the general manager who was cursing everybody. "They know it is going to be a holiday."

"Take those mules down!!" shouted the general manager.

Mules and drivers and miners disappeared down into the earth. I kept the women singing patriotic songs so as to drown the noise of the men down in the mines.

Directly the mules came up to the surface without a driver, and we women cheered for the mules who were the first to become good Union citizens. They were followed by the miners who began running home. Those that didn't go up were sent up. Those that insisted on working and thus defeating their brothers were grabbed by the women and carried to their wives.

An old Irish woman had two sons who were scabs. The women threw one of them over the fence to his mother. He lay there still. His mother thought he was dead and she ran into the house for a bottle of holy water and shook it over Mike.

"Oh for God's sake, come back to life," she hollered.

"Come back and join the union." He opened his eyes and saw our women standing around him. "Sure, I'll go to hell before I'll scab again," says he.

The general manager called the sheriff who asked me to take the women away. I said "Sheriff, no one is going to get hurt, no property is going to be destroyed but there are to be no more killings of innocent men here."

I told him if he wanted peace he should put up a notice that the mines were closed until the strike was settled.

The day was filled with excitement. The deputies kept inside the office; the general manager also. Our men stayed up at the mines to attend to the scabs and the women did the rest. As a matter of fact the majority of the men those with any spirit left in them after years of cowardice, wanted to strike but had not dared. But when a hand was held out to them, they took hold and marched along with their brothers.

The bosses telephoned to John Mitchell that he should take me and my army of women out of Lattimer. That was the first knowledge that Mitchell had of my being there.

When the manager saw there was no hope and that the battle was won by the miners, he came out and put up a notice that the mines were closed until the strike was settled.

I left Lattimer with my army of women and went up to Hazelton. President Mitchell and his organizers were there. Mr. Mitchell said, "Weren't you afraid to go in there!"

"No," I said,

"I am not afraid to face any thing if facing it may bring relief to the class that I belong to."

The victory of Lattimer gave new life to the whole anthracite district. It gave courage to the organization. Those brave women I shall never forget who caused those stone walls to fall by marching around with tin pans and cat calls.

Soon afterward, a convention was called and the strike was settled. The organizers got up a document asking every miner to subscribe so much to purchase a \$10,000 house for John Mitchell. The document happened to come into my hands at the convention which was called to call off the victorious strike. I arose and said:

"If John Mitchell can't buy a house to suit him for his wife and for his family out of his salary, then I would suggest that he get a job that will give him a salary to buy a \$10000 house. Most of you do not own a shingle on the roof that covers you. Every decent man buys a house for his own wife first before he buys a house for another man's wife."

I was holding the petition as I spoke and I tore it up and threw the bits on the floor. "'Tis you men and your women who won the strike," I said, "with your sacrifice and your patience and your forbearance through all these past weary months. 'Tis the sacrifice of your brothers in other trades who sent the strike benefits week in and week out that enabled you to make the fight to the end."

From then on Mitchell was not friendly to me. He took my attitude as one of personal enmity. And he saw that he could not control me. He had tasted power and this finally destroyed him. I believe that no man who holds a leader's position should ever accept favors from either side. He is then committed to show favors. A leader must stand alone.

## Chapter XII – How the Women Mopped Up Coaldale

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In Lonaconia, Maryland, there was a strike. I was there. In Hazelton, Pennsylvania, a Convention was called to discuss the anthracite strike. I was there when they issued the strike call. One hundred and fifty thousand men responded. The men of Scranton and Shamokin and Coaldale and Panther Creek and Valley Battle. And I was there.

In Shamokin I met Miles Daugherty, an organizer. When he quit work and drew his pay, he gave one-half of his pay envelope to his wife and the other half he kept to rent halls and pay for lights for the union. Organizers did not draw much salary in those days and they did heroic, unselfish work.

Not far from Shamokin, in a little mountain town the priest was holding a meeting when I went in. He was speaking in the church. I spoke in an open field. The priest told the men to go back and obey their masters and their reward would be in Heaven. He denounced the strikers as children of darkness. The miners left the church in a body and marched over to my meeting.

“Boys,” I said, “this strike is called in order that you and your wives and your little on may get a bit of Heaven before you die.”

We organized the entire camp.

The fight went on. In Coaldale, in the Hazelton district, the miners were not permitted to assemble in any hall. It was necessary to the strike in that district that the Coaldale miners be organized.

I went to a nearby mining town that was thoroughly organized and asked the women if they would help me get the Coaldale men out. This was in McAdoo. I told them to leave their men at home to take care of the family. I asked them to put on their kitchen clothes and bring mops and brooms with them and a couple of tin pans. We marched over the mountains fifteen miles, beating on the tin pans as if they were cymbals. At three o'clock in the morning we met the Crack Thirteen of the militia, patrolling the roads to Coaldale. The colonel of the regiment said “Halt! Move back!”

I said, “Colonel, the working men of America will not halt nor will they ever go back. The working man is going forward!”

“I'll charge bayonets,” said he.

“On whom?”

“On your people.”

“We are not enemies,” said I. “We are just a band of working women whose brothers and husbands are in a battle for bread. We want our brothers in Coaldale to join us in our fight. We are here on the mountain road for our children's sake, for the nation's sake. We are not going to hurt anyone and surely you would not hurt us.”

They kept us there till daybreak and when they saw the army of women in kitchen aprons, with dishpans and mops, they laughed and let us pass. An army of strong mining women makes a wonderfully spectacular picture.

Well, when the miners in the Coaldale camp started to go to work they were met by the McAdoo women who were beating on their pans and shouting, "Join the union! Join the union!" They joined, every last man of them, and we got so enthusiastic that we organized the street car men who promised to haul no scabs for the coal companies. As there were no other groups to organize we marched over the mountains home, beating on our pans and singing patriotic songs.

Meanwhile President Mitchell and all his organizers were sleeping in the Valley Hotel over in Hazelton. They knew nothing of our march into Coaldale until the newspaper men telephoned to him that "Mother Jones was raising hell up in the mountains with a bunch of wild women!"

He, of course, got nervous. He might have gotten more nervous if he had known how we made the mine bosses go home and how we told their wives to clean them up and make decent American citizens out of them. How we went around to the kitchen of the house where the militia were quartered and ate the breakfast that was on the table for the soldiers.

When I got back to Hazelton, Mitchell looked at me with surprise. I was worn out. Coaldale had been a strenuous night and morning and its thirty mile tramp. I assured Mitchell that no one had been hurt and no property injured. The military had acted like human beings. They took the matter as a joke. They enjoyed the morning's fun. I told him how scared the sheriff had been. He had been talking to me without knowing who I was.

"Oh Lord," he said, "that Mother Jones is sure a dangerous woman."

"Why don't you arrest her!" I asked him.

"Oh Lord, I couldn't. I'd have that mob of women with their mops and brooms after me and the jail ain't big enough to hold them all. They'd mop the life out of a fellow!"

Mr. Mitchell said, "My God, Mother, did you get home safe! What did you do!"

"I got five thousand men out and organized them. We had time left over so we organized the street car men and they will not haul any scabs into camp."

"Did you get hurt, Mother!"

"No, we did the hurting."

"Didn't the superintendents' bosses get after you?"

"No, we got after them. Their wives and our women were yelling around like cats. It was a great fight."

## Chapter XIII – The Cripple Creek Strike

(1903)

The state of Colorado belonged not to a republic but to the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, the Victor -Company and their dependencies. The governor was their agent. The militia under Bell did their bidding. Whenever the masters of the state told the governor to bark, he yelped for them like a mad hound. Whenever they told the military to bite, they bit.

The people of Colorado had voted overwhelmingly for an eight-hour day. The legislature passed an eight hour law but the courts had declared it unconstitutional. Then when the measure was submitted directly to the people, they voted for it with 40,000 votes majority. But the next legislature, which was controlled by the mining interests, failed to pass the bill.

The miners saw that they could not get their demands through peaceful legislation. That they must fight. That they must strike. All the metal miners struck first. The strike ex-tended into New Mexico and Utah. It became an ugly war. The metal miners were anxious to have the coal miners join them in their struggle.

The executive board of the United Mine Workers was in session in Indianapolis and to this board the governor of Colorado had sent a delegation to convince them that there ought not to be a strike in the coal fields. Among the delegates, was a labor commissioner.

I was going on my way to West Virginia from Mount Olive, Illinois, where the miners were commemorating their dead. I stopped off at headquarters in Indianapolis. The executive board asked me to go to Colorado, look into conditions there, see what the sentiments of the miners were, and make a report to the office.

I went immediately to Colorado, first to the office of The Western Federation of Miners where I heard the story of the industrial conflict. I then got myself an old calico dress, a sunbonnet, some pins and needles, elastic and tape and such sundries, and went down to the southern coal fields of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company.

As a peddler, I went through the various coal camps, eating in the homes of the miners, staying all night with their families. I found the conditions under which they lived deplorable. They were in practical slavery to the company, who owned their houses, owned all the land, so that if a miner did own a house he must vacate whenever it pleased the land owners. They were paid in scrip instead of money so that they could not go away if dissatisfied. They must buy at company stores and at company prices. The coal they mined was weighed by an agent of the company and the miners could not have a check weighman to see that full credit was given them. The schools, the churches, the roads belonged to the Company. I felt, after listening to their stories, after witnessing their long patience that the time was ripe for revolt against such brutal conditions.

I went to Trinidad and to the office of the Western Federation of Miners. I talked with the secretary, Gillmore, a loyal, hard-working man, and with the President, Howell, a good, honest soul. We sat up and talked the matter over far into the night. I showed them the conditions I had found down in the mining camps were heart-rending, and I felt it was our business to remedy

those conditions and bring some future, some sunlight at least into the lives of the children. They deputized me to go at once to headquarters in Indianapolis.

I took the train the next morning. When I arrived at the office in Indianapolis, I found the president, John Mitchell, the vice-president, T. L. Lewis, the secretary, W. B. Wilson of Arnot, Pennsylvania, and a board member, called "old man Ream," from Iowa. These officers told me to return at once to Colorado and they would call a strike of the coal miners.

The strike was called November 9th, 1903. The demand was for an eight hour day, a check by weighman representing the miners, payment in money instead of scrip. The whole state of Colorado was in revolt. No coal was dug. November is a cold month in Colorado and the citizens began to feel the pressure of the strike.

Late one evening in the latter part of November I came into the hotel. I had been working all day and into the night among the miners and their families, helping to distribute food and clothes, encouraging, holding meetings. As I was about to retire, the hotel clerk called me down to answer a long distance telephone call from Louisville. The voice said, "Oh for God's sake; Mother, come to us, come to us!"

I asked what the trouble was and the reply was more a cry than an answer, "Oh don't wait to ask. Don't miss the train."

I got Mr. Howell, the president, on the telephone and asked him what was the trouble in Louisville.

"They are having a convention there," he said.

"A convention, is it, and what for?"

"To call off the strike in the northern coal fields because the operators have yielded to the demands." He did not look at me as he spoke. I could see he was heart sick.

"But they cannot go back until the operators settle with the southern miners," I said, "They will not desert their brothers until the strike is won! Are you going to let them do it?"

"Oh Mother," he almost cried, "I can't help it. It is the National Headquarters who have ordered them back!"

"That's treachery," I said, "quick, get ready and come with me." We telephoned down to the station to have the conductor hold the train for Louisville a few minutes. This he did. We got into Louisville the next morning. I had not slept. The board member, Ream, and Grant Hamilton, representing the Federation of Labor, came to the hotel where I was stopping and asked where Mr. Howell, the president was.

"He has just stepped out," I said. "He will be back."

"Well, meantime, I want to notify you," Ream said, "that you must not block the settlement of the northern miners because the National President, John Mitchell, wants it, and he pays you."

"Are you through?" said I.

He nodded.

"Then I am going to tell you that if God Almighty wants this strike called off for his benefit and not for the miners, I am going to raise my voice against it. And as to President John paying me, ... he never paid me a penny in his life. It is the hard earned nickels and dimes of the miners that pay me, and it is their interests that I am going to serve."

I went to the convention and heard the matter of the northern miners returning to the mines discussed. I watched two shrewd diplomats deal with unsophisticated men; Struby, the president of the northern coal fields, and Blood, one of the keenest, trickiest lawyers in the West. And

behind them, John Mitchell, toasted and wined and dined, flattered and cajoled by the Denver Citizens' Alliance, and the Civic Federation was pulling the strings.

In the afternoon the miners called on me to address the convention.

"Brothers," I said, "You English speaking miners of the northern fields promised your southern brothers, seventy per cent of whom do not speak English, that you would support them to the end. Now you are asked to betray them, to make a separate settlement. You have a common enemy and it is your duty to fight to a finish. The enemy seeks to conquer by dividing your ranks, by making distinctions between North and South, between American and foreign. You are all miners, fighting a common cause, a common master. The iron heel feels the same to all flesh. Hunger and suffering and the cause of your children bind more closely than a common tongue. I am accused of helping the Western Federation of Miners, as if that were a crime, by one of the National board members. I plead guilty. I know no East or West, North nor South when it comes to my class fighting the battle for justice. If it is my fortune to live to see the industrial chain broken from every workingman's child in America, and if then there is one black child in Africa in bondage, there shall I go."

The delegates rose en masse to cheer. The vote was taken. The majority decided to stand by the southern miners, refusing to obey the national President.

The Denver Post reported my speech and a copy was sent to Mr. Mitchell in Indianapolis. He took the paper in to his secretary and said, pointing to the report, "See what Mother Jones has done. to me!"

Three times Mitchell tried to make the northern miners return to the mines but each time he was unsuccessful. "Mitchell has got to get Mother Jones out of the field," an organizer said. "He can never lick the Federation as long as she is still there."

I was informed that Mitchell went to the governor and asked him to put me out of the state.

Finally the ultimatum was given to the northern miners. All support for the strike was withdrawn. The northern miners accepted the operators' terms and returned to work. Their act created practical peonage in the south and the strike was eventually lost, although the struggle in the south went on for a year.

Much of the fighting took place around Cripple Creek. The miners were evicted from their company-owned houses. They went out on the bleak mountain sides, lived in tents through a terrible winter with the temperature below zero, with eighteen inches of snow on the ground. They tied their feet in gunny sacks and lived lean and lank and hungry as timber wolves. They received sixty-three cents a week strike benefit while John Mitchell went traveling through Europe, staying at fashionable hotels, studying the labor movement. When he returned the miners had been lashed back into the mines by hunger but John Mitchell was given a banquet in the Park Avenue Hotel and presented with a watch with diamonds.

From the day I opposed John Mitchell's authority, the guns were turned on me. Slander and persecution followed me like black shadows. But the fight went on.

One night when I came in from the field where I had been holding meetings, I was just dropping to sleep when a knock – a loud knock – came on my door. I always slept in my clothes for I never knew what might happen. I went to the door, opened it, and faced a military chap.

"The Colonel wants you up at head-quarters."

I went with him immediately. Three or four others were brought in: War John and Joe Pajammy, organizers. We were all taken down. to the Santa Fe station. While standing there, waiting for the

train that was to deport us some of the miners ran down to bid me good bye. "Mother, good-bye," they said, stretching out their hands to take mine.

The colonel struck their hands and yelled at them. "Get away from there. You can't shake hands with that woman!"

The militia took us to La Junta. They handed me a letter from the governor, notifying me that under no circumstances could I return to the State of Colorado. I sat all night in the station. In the morning the Denver train came along. I had no food, no money. I asked the conductor to take me to Denver. He said he would.

"Well," I said, "I don't want you to lose your job." I showed him the letter from the governor. He read it.

"Mother," he said, "do you want to go to Denver?"

"I do," said I.

"Then to Hell with the job;" said he, "it's to Denver you go."

In Denver I got a room and rested a while I sat down and wrote a letter to the governor the obedient little boy of the coal companies.

"Mr. Governor, you notified your dogs of war to put me out of the state. They complied with your instructions. I hold in my hand a letter that was handed to me by one of them, which says 'under no circumstances return to this state.' I wish to notify you, governor, that you don't own the state. When it was admitted to the sisterhood of states, my fathers gave me a share of stock in it; and that is all they gave to you. The civil courts are open. If I break a law of state or nation it is the duty of the civil courts to deal with me. That is why my fore-fathers established those courts to keep dictators and tyrants such as you from interfering with civilians. I am right here in the capital, after being out nine or ten hours, four or five blocks from your office. I want to ask you, governor, what in Hell are you going to do about it?"

I called a messenger and sent it up to the governor's office. He read it and a reporter, who was present in the office at the time told me his face grew red.

"What shall I do?" he said to the reporter. He was used to acting under orders. "Leave her alone," counseled the reporter. "There is no more patriotic citizen in America."

From Denver I went down the Western Slope, holding meetings, cheering and encouraging those toiling and disinherited miners who were fighting against such monstrous odds.

I went to Helper, Utah, and got a room with a very nice Italian family. I was to hold a meeting Sunday afternoon. From every quarter the men came, trudging miles over the mountains. The shop men were notified not to come but they came anyhow. Just as the meeting was about to open, the mayor of the little town came to me and said that I could not hold a meeting; that I was on company ground. I asked him how far his jurisdiction extended. He said as far as the Company's jurisdiction. He was a Company mayor.

So I turned to the audience and asked them to follow me. The audience to a man followed me to a little tent colony at Half Way that the miners had established when they had been evicted from their homes.

When the meeting closed I returned to Helper. The next day, although there was no smallpox in town, a frame shack was built to isolate smallpox sufferers in. I was notified that I had been exposed to smallpox and must be incarcerated in the shack. But somehow that night the shack burned down.

I went to stay in Half Way because the Italian family were afraid to keep me longer. Another Italian family gave me a bare room in their shack. There was only a big stone to fasten the door.



No sooner was I located than the militia notified me that I was in quarantine because I had been exposed to smallpox. But I used to go out and talk to the miners and they used to come to me.

One Saturday night I got tipped off by the postoffice master that the militia were going to raid the little tent colony in the early morning. I called the miners to me and asked them if they had guns. Sure, they had guns. They were western men, men of the mountains. I told them to go bury them between the boulders; deputies were coming to take them away from them. I did not tell them that there was to be a raid for I did not want any bloodshed. Better to submit to arrest.

Between 4:30 and 5 o'clock in the morning I heard the tramp of feet on the road. I looked out of my smallpox window and saw about forty-five deputies. They descended upon the sleeping tent colony, dragged the miners out of their beds. They did not allow them to put on their clothing. The miners begged to be allowed to put on their clothes, for at that early hour the mountain range is the coldest. Shaking with cold, followed by the shrieks and wails of their wives and children, beaten along the road by guns, they were driven like cattle to Helper. In the evening they were packed in a box car and run down to Price, the county seat and put in jail.

Not one law had these miners broken. The pitiful screams of the women and children would have penetrated Heaven. Their tears melted the heart of the Mother of Sorrows. Their crime was that they had struck against the power of gold.

The women huddled beneath the window of the house where I was incarcerated for small-pox.

"Oh Mother, what shall we do?" they wailed "What's to become of our little children!"

"See my little Johnny," said one woman holding up a tiny, red baby-new born.

"That's a nice baby," I said.

"He sick. Pretty soon he die. Company take house. Company take my man. Pretty soon company take my baby."

Two days after this raid was made, the stone that held my door was suddenly pushed in. A fellow jumped into the room, stuck a gun under my jaw and told me to tell him where he could get \$3,000 of the miners' money or he would blow out my brains.

"Don't waste your powder," I said. "You write the miners up in Indianapolis. Write Mitchell. He's got money now."

"I don't want any of your damn talk," he replied, then asked: "Hasn't the president got money?" "You got him in jail" "Haven't you got any money?"

"Sure." I put my hand in my pocket, took out fifty cents and turned the pocket inside out.

"Is that all you got?" "Sure, and I'm not going to give it to you, for I want it to get a jag on to boil the Helen Gould smallpox out of my system so I will not inoculate the whole nation when I get out of here."

"How are you going to get out of here if you haven't money when they turn you loose?"

"The railway men will take me anywhere."

There were two other deputies outside. They kept hollering for him to come out. "She ain't got any money," they kept insisting. Finally he was convinced that I had nothing.

This man, I afterward found out, had been a bank robber, but had been sworn in as deputy to crush the miners' union. He was later killed while robbing the post office in Prince. Yet he was the sort of man who was hired by the moneyed interests to crush the hopes and aspirations of the fathers and mothers and even the children of the workers.

I was held twenty-six days and nights in that bare room, isolated for smallpox. Finally with no redress I was turned loose and went to Salt Lake. During all those days and nights I did not undress because of imminent danger.

All civil law had broken down in the Cripple Creek strike. The militia under Colonel Verdeckberg said, "We are under orders only from God and Governor Peabody." Judge Advocate McClelland when accused of violating the constitution said, "To hell with the constitution!" There was a complete breakdown of all civil law. Habeas corpus proceedings were suspended. Free speech and assembly were forbidden. People spoke in whispers as in the days of the inquisition. Soldiers committed outrages. Strikers were arrested for vagrancy and worked in chain gangs on the street under brutal soldiers. Men, women and tiny children were packed in the Bullpen at Cripple Creek. Miners were shot dead as they slept. They were ridden from the country, their families knowing not where they had gone, or whether they lived.

When the strike started in Cripple Creek, the civil law was operating, but the governor, a banker, and in complete sympathy with the Rockefeller interests, sent the militia. They threw the officers out of office. Sheriff Robinson had a rope thrown at his feet and told that if he did not resign, the rope would be about his neck.

Three men were brought into Judge Seeds' court – miners. There was no charge lodged against them. He ordered them released but the soldiers who with drawn bayonets had attended the hearing, immediately rearrested them and took them back to jail.

Four hundred men were taken from their homes. Seventy-six of these were placed on a train, escorted to Kansas, dumped out on a prairie and told never to come back, except to meet death.

In the heat of June, in Victor, 1600 men were arrested and put in the Armory Hall. Bull-pens were established and anyone be he miner, or a woman or a child that incurred the displeasure of the great coal interests, or the militia, were thrown into these horrible stockades.

Shop keepers were forbidden to sell to miners. Priests and ministers were intimidated, fearing to give them consolation. The miners opened their own stores to feed the women and children. The soldiers and hoodlums broke into the stores, looted them, broke open the safes, destroyed the scales, ripped open the sacks of flour and sugar, dumped them on the floor and poured kerosene oil over everything. The beef and meat was poisoned by the militia. Goods were stolen. The miners were without redress, for the militia was immune.

And why were these things done? Because a group of men had demanded an eight hour day, a check weighman and the abolition of the scrip system that kept them in serfdom to the mighty coal barons. That was all. Just that miners had refused to labor under these conditions. Just because miners wanted a better chance for their children, more of the sunlight, more freedom. And for this they suffered one whole year and for this they died.

Perhaps no one in the labor movement has seen more brutality perpetrated upon the workers than I have seen. I have seen them killed in industry, worn out and made old before their time, jailed and shot if they protested. Story after story I could tell of persecution and of bravery unequalled on any battlefield.

There was Mrs. M. F. Langdon of Cripple Creek. "The Victor Record," a newspaper giving the miners' side of the strike, had been arbitrarily suppressed by the militia, as were all journals that did not espouse the cause of the coal operators. Her husband had been arrested because he was the editor of The Record.

The military were surprised when the morning after the suppression of the paper and the jailing of the editor and his helpers, the paper came out as usual. Throughout the night Mrs. Langdon, working with a tiny candle, had set the type and run the sheets out on a hand press.

On November 19, 1903, two organizers, Demolli and Price, were going to Scofield when a short distance from town, a mob composed of members of the "citizens' alliance" boarded the train armed with high-powered rifles, and ordered the train crew to take the organizers back.

In December, Lucianno Desentos and Joseph Vilano were killed outright by deputy sheriff at Secundo. Soon after their killing, the home of William G. Isaac, an Organizer, was blown up. He was in Glenwood Springs when it occurred. Part of the house was wrecked by the explosion, the part in which his two little children usually slept. The night of the explosion, however, they slept in the back room with their mother. The family was saved from being burned to death in the fire that followed the explosion by crawling through a broken window. Isaac was arrested and charged with attempting the murder of his wife and children.

And so I could go on and on. Men beaten and left for dead in the road. The home of Sherman Parker searched without warrants, his wife in her nightclothes made to hold the light for the soldiers. And no arms found.

On Sunday in February of 1914, Joe Panonia and myself went to a camp out in Berwyn to hold a meeting, and William Farley and James Mooney, national organizers, went to Bohnn. Both settlements lay in the same direction, Berwyn being a little further on. As we drove through Bohnn after our meeting, three women ran out from a shack, waving their long, bony arms at us and shrieking and whirling around like witches. They jumped right in front of our automobile in the narrow road.

"Come in! Come in! Something bad!" They put their hands to their heads and rocked sidewise. They were foreigners and knew little English.

"Joe," I said, "we'd better drive on. They may have been drinking. It may be some sort of hoax to get us into the house."

"No! No!" shrieked the women. "No drink! Something bad!" They climbed on the running board and began pulling us.

"Come on, Mother," said Joe. "Let's go in - I think there has been trouble."

We followed the three lanky women into the shack. On a wretched bed covered with dirty rag-ends of blankets and old quilts lay Mooney, - bleeding profusely and unconscious. Farley sat beside him, badly beaten.

Joe raced into Trinidad and got a doctor but although Mooney survived he was never quite right in the head afterward. Farley, however, recovered from his terrible beating.

He said that as they were returning from Bohnn, seven gunmen jumped out from the bushes along the road, had beaten them up, kicked them and stamped their feet upon them. All seven were armed and resistance was useless.

Organizers were thrown into jail and held without trial for months. They were deported. In April fourteen miners were arrested at Broadhead and deported to New Mexico. They were landed in the desert, thirty miles from food or water. Hundreds of others were deported, taken away without being allowed to communicate with wives and children. The women suffered agonies not knowing that when their men went from home whether they would ever return. If the deported men returned they were immediately arrested by the militia and put in jail. All organizers and leaders were in danger of death, in the open streets or from ambush. John Lawson was shot at but by a miracle the bullet missed him.

The strike in the southern fields dragged on and on. But from the moment the southern miners had been deserted by their northern brothers, I felt their strike was doomed. Bravely did those miners fight before giving in to the old peonage. The military had no regard for human life. They

were sanctified cannibals. Is it any wonder that we have murders and holdups when the youth of the land is trained by the great industrialists to a belief in force; when they see that the possession of money puts one above law.

Men like President Howell and Secretary Simpson will live in history. I was in close touch with them throughout this terrible strike. Their descendants should feel proud that the blood of such great men flows in their veins.

No more loyal, courageous men could be found than those southern miners, scornfully referred to by "citizens' alliances" as "foreigners." Italians and Mexicans endured to the end. They were defeated on the industrial field but theirs was the victory of the spirit.

## Chapter XIV – Child Labor

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I have always advised men to read. All my life I have told them to study the works of those great authors who have been interested in making this world a happier place for those who do its drudgery. When there were no strikes, I held educational meetings and after the meetings I would sell the book, “Merrie England,” which told in simple fashion of the workers’ struggle for a more abundant life.

“Boys,” I would say, “listen to me. Instead of going to the pool and gambling rooms, go up to the mountain and read this book. Sit under the trees, listen to the birds and take a lesson from those little feathered creatures who do not exploit one another, nor betray one another, nor put their own little ones to work digging worms before their time. You will hear them sing while they work. The best you can do is swear and smoke.”

I was gone from the eastern coal fields for eight years. Meanwhile I was busy, waging the old struggle in various fields. I went West and took part in the strike of the machinists – the Southern Pacific Railroad, the corporation that swung California by its golden tail, that controlled its legislature, its farmers, its preachers, its workers.

Then I went to Alabama. In 1904 and ‘05 there were great strikes in and around Birmingham. The workers of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad were on strike. Jay Gould owned the railroad and thought he owned the workers along with the ties and locomotives and rolling stock. The miners struck in sympathy. These widespread strikes were part of the American Railway Union strike, led by Eugene Debs, a railway worker.

One day the governor called Douglas Wilson, chairman of the strike committee, to his office. He said, “You call this strike off immediately. If you don’t do it, I shall.”

“Governor,” said Douglas, “I can’t call off strike until the men get the concessions that they struck for.”

“Then I will call out the militia,” said he.

“Then what in hell do you think we will be doing while you are getting the militia ready?”

The governor knew then he had a fight on, for Douglas was a heroic fighter; a fine, open character whom the governor himself respected. The militia were called out. There was a long drawn out fight. I was forbidden to leave town without permit, forbidden to hold meetings. Nevertheless I slipped through the ranks of the soldiers without their knowing who I was—just an old woman going to a missionary meeting knit mittens for the heathen of Africa!

I went down to Rockton, a mining camp, with William Malley and held a meeting. Coming back on the train the conductor recognized me.

“Mother Jones,” he said, “did you hold a meeting in Rockton?”

“I certainly did,” said I.

He reported me to the general manager and there was hell to pay but I kept right on with my agitation. The strike dragged on. Debs was put in jail. The leaders were prosecuted. At last the strike was called off. I was in Birmingham.

Debs was on his way north after being released from jail and the local union arranged a public meeting for him. We rented the opera house and advertised the meeting widely. He was to speak Sunday evening. Sunday afternoon the committee were served with an injunction, prohibiting the meeting. The owner of the opera house was also notified that he would not be allowed to open the doors of his building.

The chairman of the committee on the meeting didn't have much fighting blood in him, but I told several of the boys to say nothing to him but go over to Bessemer and Pratt, nearby mining towns, and bring a bunch of miners back with them to meet Debs when he got off the train.

At the Union hall a large number of people had gathered to see what was going to happen.

When it was train time, I moved that everyone there go down to the depot to meet Debs.

"I think just the committee on reception should go," said the chairman, who was strong for form.

"I move that we all form a committee on reception," said I, and everybody hollered, "Yes! Yes!"

When we got down to the station there were several thousand miners there from Bessemer and Pratt.

The train pulled in and Debs got off. Those miners did not wait for the gates to open but jumped over the railing. They put him on their shoulders and marched out of the station with the crowd in line. They marched through the streets, past the railway offices, the mayor's office, the office of the chief of police. "Debs is here! Debs is here!" they shouted.

The chief of police had a change of heart. He sent word to me that the opera house was open and we could hold our meeting. The house was jammed, the aisles, the window sills, every nook and corner. The churches were empty that night, and that night the crowd heard a real sermon by a preacher whose message was one of human brotherhood.

When the railroad workers' strike ended I went down to Cottdale to get a job in the cotton mills. I wanted to see for myself if the grewsome stories of little children working the mills were true.

I applied for a job but the manager told me he had nothing for me unless I had a family that would work also. I told the manager I was going to move my family to Cottdale but I had come on ahead to see what chances there were of getting work.

"Have you children"

"Yes, there are six of us."

"Fine," he said. He was so enthusiastic that he went with me to find a house to rent.

"Here's a house that will do plenty," said he. The house he brought me to was a sort of two-story plank shanty. The windows were broken and the door sagged open. Its latch was broken. It had one room down stairs and a finished loft upstairs. Through the cracks in the roof the rain had come in and rotted the flooring. Downstairs there was a big old open fireplace in front of which were holes big enough to drop a brick through.

The manager was delighted with the house. "The wind and the cold will come through these holes," I said.

He laughed. "Oh, it will be summer soon and you will need all the air you can get."

"I don't know that this house is big enough for six of us."

"Not big enough?" he stared at me. "What you all want, a hotel?"

I took the house, promising to send for my family by the end of the month when they could get things wound up on the farm. I was given work in the factory, and there I saw the children, little children working, the most heart-rending spectacle in all my life. Sometimes it seemed to

me I could not look at those silent little figures; that I must go north, to the grim coal fields, to the Rocky Mountain camps, where the labor fight is at least fought by grown men.

Little girls and boys, barefooted, walked up and down between the endless rows of spindles, reaching thin little hands into the machinery to repair snapped threads. They crawled under machinery to oil it. They replaced spindles all day long, all day long; night through, night through. Tiny babies of six years old with faces of sixty did an eight-hour shift for ten cents a day. If they fell asleep, cold water was dashed in their faces; and the voice of the manager yelled above the ceaseless racket and whirl of the machines.

Toddling chaps of four years old were brought to the mills to "help" the older sister or brother' of ten years but their labor was not paid.

The machines, built in the north, were low for the hands of little children.

At five-thirty in the morning, long lines of little grey children came out of the early dawn into the factory, into the maddening noise, into the lint filled rooms. Outside the birds sang and the blue sky shone. At the lunch half-hour, children would fall to sleep over their lunch of cornbread and fat pork. They would lie on the bare floor and sleep. Sleep was their recreation, their release, as play is to the free children. The boss would come along and shake them awake. After the lunch period, the hour-in grind, the ceaseless running up and down between the whirring spindles. Babies, tiny children!

Often the little ones were afraid to go home alone in the night. Then they would sleep till sunrise on the floor. That was when the mills were running a bit slack and the all-night worked shorter hours. I often went home with the little ones after the day's work was done or the night shift went off duty. They were too tired to eat. With their clothes on, they dropped on the bed . . . to sleep, to sleep ... the one happiness these children know.

But they had Sundays, for the mill owners and the mill folks themselves were pious. To Sunday School went the babies of the there to hear how God had inspired the mill owner to come down and build the mill, so as to give His little ones work that they might develop into industrious, patriotic citizens and earn money to give to the missionaries to convert the poor unfortunate heathen Chinese.

"My six children" not arriving, the manager got suspicious of me so I left Cottdale and went to Tuscaloosa where I got work in a rope factory. This factory was run also by child labor. Here, too, were the children running up and down between spindles. The lint was heavy in the room. The machinery needed constant cleaning. The tiny, slender bodies of the little children crawled in and about under dangerous machinery, oiling and cleaning. Often their hands were crushed. A finger was snapped off.

A father of two little girls worked a loom next to the one assigned to me

"How old are the little girls?" I asked him.

"One is six years and ten days," he said, pointing to a little girl, stoop shouldered and thin chested who was threading warp, "and that one," he pointed to a pair of thin legs like twigs, sticking out from under a rack of spindles, "that one is seven and three months."

"How long do they work?"

"From six in the evening till six come morning."

"How much do they get?"

"Ten cents a night."

"And you?"

"I get forty."

In the morning I went off shift with the children. They stumbled out of the heated atmosphere of the mill, shaking with cold as they came outside. They passed on their way the long grey line of little children with dinner pails coming in for the day's shift.

They die of pneumonia, these little ones, – bronchitis and consumption. But the birth rate like the dividends is large and another hand is ready to tie the snapped threads who a child worker dies.

I went from Tuscaloosa to Selma, Alabama, and got a job in a mill. I boarded with a woman who had a dear little girl of eleven years working in the same mill with me.

On Sunday a group of mill children were going out to the woods. They came for Maggie. She was still sleeping and her mother went the tiny bedroom to call her.

“Get up, Maggie, the children are here for you to go to the woods.”

“Oh, mother,” she said, “just let me sleep that's lots more fun. I'm so tired. I just want to sleep forever.”

So her mother let her sleep.

The next day she went as usual to the mill. That evening at four o'clock they brought her home and laid her tiny body on the kitchen table. She was asleep – forever. Her hair had caught in the machinery and torn her scalp off.

At night after the day shift came off work, they came to look at their little companion. A solemn line of little folks with old, old faces, with thin round shoulders, passed before the corpse, crying. They were just little children but death to them was a familiar figure.

“Oh, Maggie,” they said, “We wish you'd come back. We're so sorry you got hurted!”

I did not join them in their wish. Maggie was so tired and she just wanted to sleep forever.

I did not stay long in one place. As soon as one showed interest in or sympathy for the children, she was suspected, and laid off. Then, too, the jobs went to grown-ups that could bring children. I left Alabama for South Carolina, working in many mills.

In one mill, I got a day-shift job. On my way to work I met a woman coming home from night work. She had a tiny bundle of a baby in her arms.

“How old is the baby?”

“Three days. I just went back this morning. The boss was good and saved my place.”

“When did you leave?”

“The boss was good; he let me off early the night the baby was born.”

“What do you do with the baby while you work?”

“Oh, the boss is good and he lets me have a little box with a pillow in it beside the loom. The baby sleeps there and when it cries, I nurse it.”

So this baby, like hundreds of others, listened to the whiz and whir of machinery before it came into the world. From its first weeks, it heard the incessant racket raining down upon its ears, like iron rain. It crawled upon the linty floor. It toddled between forests of spindles. In a few brief years it took its place in the line. It renounced childhood and childish things and became a man of six, a wage earner, a snuff sniffer, a personage upon whose young-old shoulders fortunes were built.

And who is responsible for this appalling child slavery? Everyone. Alabama passed a child labor law, endeavoring to some extent to protect its children. And northern capitalists from Massachusetts and Rhode Island defeated the law. Whenever a southern state 'attempts reform, the mill owners, who are for the most part northerners, threaten to close the mills. They reach leg-



islatures, they send lobbies to work against child labor reform, and money, northern money for the most part, secures the nullification of reform, laws through control of the courts.

The child labor reports of the period in which I made this study put the number of children under fourteen years of age working in mills as fully 25 per cent of the workers; working for a pittance, for eight, nine, ten hours a day, a night .

And mill owners declared dividends ranging from 50 per cent to 90.

“Child labor is docile,” they say. “It does not strike. There are no labor troubles.” Mill owners point to the lace curtains in the windows of the children’s homes. To the luxuries they enjoy. “So much better than they had when as poor whites they worked on the farms!”

Cheap lace curtains are to offset the labor of children! Behind those luxuries we cannot see the little souls deadened by early labor; we cannot see the lusterless eyes in the dark circle looking out upon us. The tawdry lace curtains hang between us and the future of the child, who grows up in ignorance, body and mind and soul dwarfed, diseased.

I declare that their little lives are woven into the cotton goods they weave; that in the thread with which we sew our babies’ clothes, the pure white confirmation dresses of our girls, our wedding gowns and dancing frocks, in that thread are twisted the tears and heart-ache of little children.

From the south, burdened with the terrible things I had seen, I came to New York and held several meetings to make known conditions as I had found them. I met the opposition of the press and of capital. For a long time after my southern experience, I could scarcely eat. Not alone my clothes, but my food, too, at times seemed bought with the price of the toil of children.

The funds for foreign missions, for home missions, for welfare and charity workers for social settlement workers come in part, at least, from the dividends on the cotton mills. And the little mill child is crucified between the two thieves of its childhood; capital and ignorance.

“Of such is the kingdom of Heaven,” said the great teacher. Well, if Heaven is full of undersized, round shouldered, hollow-eyed, listless, sleepy little angel children, I want to go to the other place with the bad little boys and girls.

In one mill town where I worked, I became acquainted with a mother and her three little children, all of whom worked in the mill with me. The father had died of tuberculosis and the family had run up a debt of thirty dollars for his funeral. Year in and year out they toiled to pay back to the company store the indebtedness. Penny by penny they wore down the amount. After food and rent were deducted from the scanty wages, nothing remained. They were in thrall to the mill.

I determined to rescue them. I arranged with the station agent of the through train to have his train stop for a second on a certain night. I hired a wagon from a farmer and bought a can of grease to grease the axles to stop their creaking. In the darkness of night, the little family and I drove to the station. We felt like escaping negro slaves and expected any moment that bloodhounds would be on our trail. The children shivered and whimpered.

Down the dark tracks came the through train. Its bright eye terrified the children. It slowed down. I lifted the two littlest children onto the platform. The mother and the oldest climbed on. Away we sped, away from the everlasting debt, away to a new town where they could start anew without the millstone about their necks.

When Pat Dolan was president of the Pittsburgh miners’ union, and there never was a better president than Pat, he got permission from the general managers of the mines for me to go

through the district and solicit subscriptions for The Appeal to Reason. The managers must have thought the paper some kind of religious sheet and that I was a missionary of some sort.

Anyway, during those months, I came into intimate contact with the miners and their families. I went through every mine from Pittsburgh to Brownsville. Mining at its best is wretched work, and the life and surroundings of the miner are hard and ugly. His work is down in the black depths of the earth. He works alone in a drift. There can be little friendly companionship as there is in the factory; as there is among men who built bridges and houses, working together in group. The work is dirty. Coal dust grinds itself into the skin, never to be removed. The miner must stoop as he works in the drift. He becomes bent like a gnome.

His work is utterly fatiguing. Muscles and bones ache. His lungs breathe coal dust and the strange, damp air of places that are never filled with sunlight. His house is a poor make-shift and there is little to encourage him to make it attractive. The company owns ground it stands on, and the miner feels the precariousness of his hold. Around his house is mud and slush. Great mounds of culm, black and sullen, surround him. His children are perpetually grimy from play on the culm mounds. The wife struggles with dirt, with inadequate water supply, with small wages, with over-crowded shacks.

The miner's wife, who in the majority of cases, worked from childhood in the silk mills, is overburdened with child bearing. She ages young. She knows much illness. Many a time I have been in a home where the poor wife was sick in bed, the children crawling over her, quarreling and playing in the room, often the only warm room in the house.

I would tidy up the best I could, hush little ones, get them ready for school in morning, those that didn't go to the breakers or to the mills, pack the lunch in the dinner bucket, bathe the poor wife and brush her hair. I saw the daily heroism of those wives.

I got to know the life of the breaker boys. The coal was hoisted to a cupola where it was ground. It then came rattling down in chutes, beside which, ladder-wise, sat little breaker boys whose job it was to pick out the slate from the coal as the black rivers flowed by. Ladders and ladders of little boys sat in the gloom of the breakers, the dust from the coal swirling continuously up in their faces. To see the slate they must bend over their task. Their shoulders were round. Their chests narrow.

A breaker boss watched the boys. He had a long stick to strike the knuckles of any lad seen neglecting his work. The fingers of the little boys bled, bled on to the coal. Their nails were out to the quick.

A labor certificate was easy to get. All one had to do was to swear to a notary for twenty-five cents that the child was the required age.

The breakerboys were not Little Lord Fauntleroy's. Small chaps smoked and chewed and swore. They did men's work and they had men's ways, men's vices and men's pleasures. They fought and spit tobacco and told stories out on the culm piles of a Sunday. They joined the breaker boys' union and beat up scabs. They refused to let their little brothers and sisters go to school if the children of scabs went.

In many mines I met the trapper boys. Little chaps who open the door for the mule when it comes in for the coal and who close the door after the mule has gone out. Runners and helpers about the mine. Lads who will become miners; who will never know anything of this beautiful world, of the great wide sea, of the clean prairies, of the snow capped mountains of the vast West. Lads born in the coal, reared and buried in the coal. And his one hope, his one protection – the union.

I met a little trapper boy one day. He was so small that his dinner bucket dragged on the ground.

“How old are you, lad!” I asked him.

“Twelve,” he growled as he spat tobacco on the ground.

“Say son,” I said, “I’m Mother Jones. You know me, don’t you! I know you told the mine foreman you were twelve, but what did you tell the union!”

He looked at me with keen, sage eyes. Life had taught him suspicion and caution.

“Oh, the union’s different. I’m ten come Christmas.”

“Why don’t you go to school!”

“Gee,” he said – though it was really something stronger – “I ain’t lost no leg!” He looked proudly at his little legs.

I knew what he meant: that lads went to school when they were incapacitated by accidents.

And you scarcely blamed the children for preferring mills and mines. The schools were wretched, poorly taught, the lessons dull.

Through the ceaseless efforts of the unions, through continual agitation, we have done away with the most outstanding evils of child labor in the mines. Pennsylvania has passed better and better laws. More and more children are going to school. Better schools have come to the mining districts. We have yet a long way to go. Fourteen years of age is still too young to begin the life of the breaker boy. There is still too little joy and beauty in the miner’s life but one who like myself has watched the long, long struggle knows that the end is not yet.

## Chapter XV – Moyer, Haywood and Pettibone

The year 1906 I was active in the defense Moyer, Haywood and Pettibone. I addressed meetings in their behalf and raised money defray the expense of their trials.

Late on Saturday night, February 17th, 1906, after banks, business houses and courts had closed, the President of the Western Federation of Miners, Charles H. Moyer, was secretly arrested. William D. Haywood, the secretary of the union, and George A. Pettibone, a business agent, were arrested a short time later. All three men were kidnapped and carried into the state of Idaho where they were charged with the murder of Governor Steunenberg.

No legal steps to arrest these men, who were going about their business openly, were taken. The men designated by the governor of Idaho to take the requisitions to the Governor of Colorado had many days in which the labor men could have been legally arrested. But the police waited until Saturday night when the accused could not get in touch with banks for bail, when the courts were not open to hear habeas corpus proceedings, so that the prisoners could not have recourse to the usual legal defense and protection granted to the worst felon.

The men were taken secretly to the county jail and were not allowed to get in touch with relatives, friends or attorneys. Early Sunday morning, before five o'clock, the prisoners were driven to a siding near the Union Depot, placed in a special train, and whirled rapidly out of the state. No stops were made and the train had the right-of-way over every other train from Denver to Boise, Idaho.

The men were heavily guarded by armed men, commissioned by the Governor of Idaho, and by Adjutant General Wells, of the Colorado National Guard.

When the men arrived in Boise, they were taken to the penitentiary and placed incommunicado. Not for days did their families and friends know of their whereabouts.

Back of the arrest of the labor leaders was the labor struggle itself. Much of the labor war in Idaho had centered about the Coeur d'Alene district, a strip of country about twenty-five miles long and five wide in which were rich lead mines. The miners worked twelve hours a day in the mills and smelters and mines in the midst of sickening, deadly fumes of arsenic. Arsenic poisons. It paralyzes arms and legs. It causes the teeth to fall out, the hair to fall off. Weird looking men worked in the mines: gaunt, their faces sunken in, their eyelashes and eyebrows off, a green aspect to their skin.

Then came the union, the Western Federation of Miners. The mine owners opposed the formation of unions with all the might of money and privilege and state. The miners fought back as savagely as they were fought. The strike was truly war with murders and assassinations, with dynamite and prisons. The mine owners brought in gunmen. The president of the Union urged the miners to arm, defend themselves, their wives and daughters. It was Hell!

In 1899 Bunker Hill Co. mine was blown up. The Governor called the troops which only made matters worse. The first troops were negroes. Men were arrested and thrown in jail without trial. One thousand men were herded in a bullpen.

One night a bomb, attached to his gate, killed Governor Steunenberg. Rewards of thousands of dollars were offered for the arrest of the murderers. That attracted the detectives. The Pinkerton Agency got busy. Eight years after the death of the governor, the labor leaders. were arrested and charged with the crime of murder.

In those eight years the Western Federation of Miners had won the battle in the Coer d'Alene district. An eight-hour day had been won. The miners had established their own stores. They had built libraries and hospitals. They had established funds for widows and orphans. Libraries took the place of saloons and hope the place of despair.

The mine owners paid spies to join the union, poor wretches who sold themselves to the slave owners for a pittance.

A poor tool of the corporations, of the detectives, a thing in the shape of a man, named Orchard, told of belonging to an inner circle of the Western Federation of Miners whose object it was to dynamite and assassinate. It was this inner circle to which the officers of the union belonged, and it was this circle, said he, that was responsible for the death, eight years before, of Governor Steunenberg.

The trial was held in Boise, Idaho. President Roosevelt called the men "undesirable citizens" before they had been given a chance to defend themselves. In the end they were acquitted and those who sought to destroy them because of their labor in behalf of toiling humanity had to seek other methods of destroying the Western Federation of Miners.

## Chapter XVI – The Mexican Revolution

In 1910 I was summoned as a witness before Congress on the Mexican question. Mexico at that time was in revolution against the brutal oppression of the tyrant, Diaz.

Congressman Wilson asked me where I lived. "I live in the United States," said I, "but I do not know exactly where. My address is wherever there is a fight against oppression. Sometimes I am in Washington, then in Pennsylvania, Arizona, Texas, Minnesota, Colorado. My address is like my shoes: it travels with me."

"No abiding place?" said the chairman.

"I abide where there is a fight against wrong."

"Were you in Douglas, Arizona, at the time of the arrest and kidnapping of Manuel Sarabia?"

"There was a strike going on the Phelps Dodge copper mines, and so I was there."

"I suggest," said congressman Wilson, "that you sit down, Mother, you will be more comfortable."

"I am accustomed to stand when talking and am uncomfortable when sitting down. It is too easy."

That brought a laugh from the committee.

"I was holding a street meeting in Douglas one Sunday night for the smelter workers. A great crowd turned out, the whole town. After the meeting a worker came running up to me and said, 'Oh Mother, there has been something horrible going on at the jail. While you were speaking, a man was taken there in an auto. He kept screaming about his liberty being taken from him but the cops choked him off.'

"I guess it's just some fellow with a jag on," said I. I gave it no further thought.

"I went to my hotel and sat with a dozen or so of those poor, unfortunate wretches in the smelters, discussing the meeting, when the editor of 'El Industrio' burst into the room very excited. He said, 'Oh Mother, they have kidnapped Sarabia, our young revolutionist.'

"Kidnapping seemed to be in the air just about that time. The Idaho affair was on. He was flushed and almost incoherent. I said, 'Sit down a moment and get cool, then tell me your story.'

"He told me while I was addressing the crowd and the back streets were empty, an automobile had driven out of the jail, had driven to the office of the paper on which Sarabia worked and he had been kidnapped; that his cries for help had been smothered, and that he was held incommunicado in the jail.

"I said to him, 'Get all the facts you can get them as correct as you can and immediately telegraph to the governor. Telegraph to Washington. Don't stop a moment because if you do they will murder him.'

"We telegraphed the governor and Washington that night.

"The next day I met the editor of 'El Industrio' – the paper which has since been suppressed – and he told me the horrible details. Sarabia had incurred the hatred of Diaz and the forty thieves that exploited the Mexican peons because he had called Diaz a dictator. For this he had served a year in Mexican jails. He came to the United States and continued to wage the fight for Mexico's

liberation. Diaz's hate followed him across the border and finally he had been kidnapped and taken across the Mexican border at the request of the tyrant.

"I said, 'That's got to stop. The idea of any blood-thirsty pirate on a throne reaching across these lines and stamping under his feet the constitution of our United States, which our forefathers fought and bled for! If this is allowed to go on, Mexican pirates can come over the border and kidnap any one who opposes tyranny.'

"We got up a protest meeting that night. We had a hard time getting the meeting announced, for the papers all belonged to the Southern Pacific Railway or to the Copper Queen mine, and their sympathies were of course with the pirates. But we managed to circulate the news of the meeting through the town. I spoke.

"I am not very choise, you know, when the constitution of my country is violated and the liberties of the people are tramped on. I do not go into the classics. I am not praying. I told the audience that the kidnapping of Manuel Sarabia by Mexican police with the connivance of American authorities was an incident in the struggle for liberty. I put it strong.

"I went up to Phoenix to see the governor, whom I believe to belong to the type that Patrick Henry, Jefferson and Lincoln belong to. We have few of that type today. The general run of governors care more for the flesh-pots of Egypt than they do for the dinner pails of the workers. I paid my respects to the governor. The governor had ordered Captain Wheeler of the Rangers to go into Mexico and bring back young Sarabia. This was done.

Congressman Clark asked, "Was he a soldier?"

"Captain Wheeler is captain of the Rangers and a pretty fine fellow to be captain. Usually I think that men who head blood-thirsty armies dressed up in uniforms for the killing, are not very fine men but Captain Wheeler is an exception.

"I left Arizona for the steel range in Minnesota where the steel workers were fighting the steel robbers.

Congressman Wilson said, "Mother Jones do you know how long it was from the time Sarabia was kidnapped in Douglas, Arizona until he was returned!"

"Eight days."

Mr. Clark inquired, "Mother Jones, who sent Captain Wheeler there: the governor or the President of the United States?"

"That I did not inquire into, so long as they brought him back."

A congressman asked me if I had been interested in the Mexican Revolution before I became interested in Sarabia.

"I have that," said I. "In 1908 I learned that there were several men in the jail in Los Angeles – Mexicans who had exposed the rule of Diaz and the plunderers of their land. They had come to Los Angeles to carry on the fight against oppression and on some trumped-up charges had been arrested by American officers more interested in carrying out the will of the oil and land interests than in securing the rights of the people. They were patriots, like Kosciuszko, Carl Schurz, Kossuth and Garibaldi and George Washington – these Mexican in jail, fighting against a bloodier tyrant than King George against whom we revolted.

"I was not in very good health at that time but I went out and raised \$4,000 that these Mexican patriots might have attorneys and stenographers and witnesses in Tombstone, Arizona, where they were to be tried before Judge Doan. They would need every defense they could get, I knew, for Judge Doan was not a very human man, and was more friendly to the copper interests than to the interests of mankind. They were tried and sentenced to serve eighteen days in the jail at

Yuma but I am sure that our efforts in their behalf saved them from being turned over to the clutches of the tyrant who would have had them murdered.

"I heard that another Mexican patriot, Sylva, was apparently dying in the penitentiary in Leavenworth. I went to see him. I was angry that an American jail should imprison a man whose sole crime was his opposition to the exploitation of his people by foreign capital, that had taken over the oil and minerals and the land of Mexico. That had made the peon a slave to international finance.

"I went to see President Taft about the matter. 'Mother,' he said, 'if you will bring me the evidence in the case, I will read it over.'

"I did this, recommending to the President that he pardon the patriots that languished in our jails.

"'Mother Jones,' said the President, 'I am very much afraid if I put the pardoning power in your hands, there would not be anyone left in the penitentiaries.'

"'Mr. President,' said I, 'if this nation devoted half the money and energy it devotes to penitentiaries to giving men an opportunity in life, there would be fewer men to pardon out of jails.'

"As a patriotic American I never lost interest in the Mexican revolution. I believe that this country is the cradle of liberty. I believe that movements to suppress wrongs can be carried out under the protection of our flag. The Irish Fenians carried on their fight for Irish liberty here in America. Money was raised here to send to Parnell, the Irish patriot. We have given aid and comfort and a home to Russian patriots, protesting the acts of a bloody czar.

"Gentlemen, in the name of our own Revolutionary heroes, in the name of the heroes unborn, in the name of those whose statues stand silently there in Statuary Hall, I beg that this body of representatives will protect these Mexican men from the tyranny and oppression of that bloody tyrant, Diaz."

"Have you ever been in Mexico, Mother?" the chairman asked me.

"In 1901 I went with the Pan-American delegates to Mexico City, the Mexican government paying all my expenses. Then in 1911 I went again with Frank Hayes and Joseph Cannon. Madera had just been elected president after the overthrow of Diaz. I had a long audience with Francesco De la Barra, president ad interim, and with the chief justice; and also with Madera in his own home. I was most favorably impressed with Madera whose heart seemed filled with the desire to relieve the suffering in his country.

"'Mother,' he said, 'when I go into office, you will come down and organize the workers and help them get back their land.'

"Then Madera was assassinated and Mexico went on in turmoil. Obregon got in in 1921. Under Madera, Antonio Villareal, one of the men who had been in the Los Angeles jail, was made ambassador to Spain. When he returned, fortunes had changed and he was arrested and released on a \$30,000 bond. He came to New York to see me.

"'You take the Pennsylvania railroad at four o'clock tomorrow evening and go to Washington and I will be on the same train. I will take the matter up with the government and I have no doubt that it will give you a square deal. You will not be dealing with these local pie counter holders but with the national government, the greatest government in the world.'

"The next morning we went to the Department of Justice.

"'Won't we need a lawyer, Mother?' said Villareal.

"'I will be the lawyer,' said I.



“I discussed his case with the attorney of the department and a full pardon was handed him. He was astonished. Later a friend of his came to me and said, ‘Mother, I have a beautiful piece of land in Mexico. It produces the finest flowers and fruits. On it is the most beautiful lake. I will give it to you for what you have done for the Mexican revolutionists.’

“I thanked him and said, ‘I cannot accept compensation for doing a humane act for my fellow man. I want no strings tied to me. I want to be free to play my part in the fight for a happier civilization whether that fight is in America, Mexico, Africa or Russia.’”

## Chapter XVII – How the Women Sang themselves Out of Jail

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The miners in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, went on strike for more wages. Their pay was pitifully low. In answer to the cry for bread, the Irish – that is the Pennsylvania – constabulary were sent into the district.

One day a group of angry women were standing in front of the mine, hooting at the scabs that were taking the bread from their children's mouths. The sheriff came and arrested all the women "for disturbing the peace." Of course, he should have arrested the scabs, for they were the ones who really disturbed it.

I told them to take their babies and tiny children along with them when their case came up in court. They did this and while the judge was sentencing them to pay thirty dollars or serve thirty days in jail, the babies set up a terrible wail so that you could hardly hear the old judge. He scowled and asked the women if they had some one to leave the children with.

I whispered to the women to tell the judge that miners' wives didn't keep nurse girls; that God gave the children to their mothers and He held them responsible for their care.

Two mounted police were called to take the women to the jail, some ten miles away. They were put on an interurban car with two police men to keep them from running away. The car stopped and took on some scabs. As soon the car started the women began cleaning up the scabs. The two policemen were too nervous to do anything. The scabs, who were pretty much scratched up, begged the motorman stop and let them off but the motorman said it was against the law to stop except at the station. That gave the women a little more time to trim the fellows. When they got to the station, those scabs looked as if they had been sleeping in the tiger cat's cage at the zoo.

When they got to Greensburg, the women sang as the car went through the town. A great crowd followed the car, singing with them. As the women, carrying their babies, got off the car before the jail the crowd cheered and cheered them. The police officers handed the prisoners over to the sheriff and both of them looked relieved.

The sheriff said to me, "Mother, I would rather you brought me a hundred men than those women. Women are fierce!"

"I didn't bring them to you, sheriff," said I, "'twas the mining company's judge sent them to you for a present."

The sheriff took them upstairs, put them all in a room and let me stay with them for a long while. I told the women:

"You sing the whole night long. You can spell one another if you get tired and hoarse. Sleep all day and sing all night and don't stop for anyone. Say you're singing to the babies. I will bring the little ones milk and fruit. Just you all sing and sing."

The sheriff's wife was an irritable little cat. She used to go up and try to stop them because she couldn't sleep. Then the sheriff sent for me and asked me to stop them.

“I can’t stop them,” said I. “They are singing to their little ones. You telephone to the judge to order them loose.”

Complaints came in by the dozens: from hotels and lodging houses and private homes.

“Those women howl like cats,” said a hotel keeper to me.

“That’s no way to speak of women who are singing patriotic songs and lullabies to their little ones,” said I.

Finally after five days in which everyone in town had been kept awake, the judge ordered their release. He was a narrow-minded, irritable, savage-looking old animal and hated to do it but no one could muzzle those women!

## Chapter XVIII – Victory in West Virginia

One morning when I was west, working for the Southern Pacific machinists, I read in the paper that the Paint Creek Coal Company, would not settle with their men and had driven them out into the mountains. I knew that Paint Creek country. I had helped the miners organize that district in 1904 and now the battle had to be fought all over again.

I cancelled all my speaking dates in California, tied up all my possessions in a black shawl-I like traveling light-and went immediately to West Virginia. I arrived in Charleston in the morning, went to a hotel, washed up and got my breakfast early in order to catch the one local train a day that goes into Paint Creek.

The train wound in and out among the mountains, dotted here and there with the desolate little cabins of miners. From the brakemen and the conductor of the train I picked up the story of the strike. It had started on the other side of the Kanawha hills in a frightful district called "Russia," – Cabin Creek. Here the miners had been peons for years, kept in slavery by the guns of the coal company, and by the system of paying in scrip so that a miner never had any money should he wish to leave the district. He was cheated of his wages when his coal was weighed, cheated in the company store where he was forced to purchase his food, charged an exorbitant rent for his kennel in which he lived and bred, docked for school tax and burial tax and physician and for "protection," which meant the gunmen who shot him back into the mines if he rebelled or so much as murmured against his outrageous exploitation. No one was allowed in the Cabin Creek district without explaining his reason for being there to the gunmen who patrolled the roads, all of which belonged to the coal company. The miners finally struck – it was a strike of desperation.

The strike of Cabin Creek spread to Paint Creek, where the operators decided to throw their fate in with the operators of Cabin Creek. Immediately all civil and constitutional rights were suspended. The miners were told to quit their houses, and told at the point of a gun. They established a tent colony in Holly Grove and Mossey. But they were not safe here from the assaults of the gunmen, recruited in the big cities from the bums and criminals.

To protect their women and children, who were being shot with poisoned bullets, whose houses were entered and rough-housed, the miners armed themselves as did the early settlers against the attacks of wild Indians.

"Mother, it will be sure death for you to go into the Creeks," the brakeman told me. "Not an organizer dares go in there now. They have machine guns on the highway, and those gunmen don't care whom they kill."

The train stopped at Paint Creek Junction and I got off. There were a lot of gunmen, armed to the teeth, lolling about. Everything was still and no one would know of the bloody war that was raging in those silent hills, except for the sight of those guns and the strange, terrified look on everyone's face.

I stood for a moment looking up at the ever-lasting hills when suddenly a little boy ran screaming up to me, crying, "Oh Mother Jones! Mother Jones! Did you come to stay with us!" He was crying and rubbing his eyes with his dirty little fist.

"Yes, my lad, I've come to stay," said I.

A guard was listening.

"You have!" says he.

"I have!" says I.

The little fellow threw his arms around my knees and held me tight.

"Oh Mother, Mother," said he, "they drove my papa away and we don't know where he is, and they threw my mama and all the kids out of the house and they beat my mama and they beat me."

He started to cry again and I led him away up the creek. All the way he sobbed out his sorrows, sorrows no little child should ever know; told of brutalities no child should ever witness.

"See, Mother, I'm all sore where the gunmen hit me," and he pulled down his cotton shirt and showed me his shoulders which were black and blue.

"The gunmen did that?"

"Yes, and my mama's worse'n that!" Suddenly he began screaming, "The gunmen! The gunmen! Mother, when I'm a man I'm going to kill twenty gunmen for hurting my mama! I'm going to kill them dead – all dead!"

I went up to the miners' camp in Holly Grove where all through the winter, through snow and ice and blizzard, men and women and little children had shuddered in canvas tents that America might be a better country to live in. I listened to their stories. I talked to Mrs. Sevilla whose unborn child had been kicked dead by gunmen while her husband was out looking for work. I talked with widows, whose husbands had been shot by the gunmen; with children whose frightened faces talked more effectively than their baby tongues. I learned how the scabs had been recruited in the cities, locked in boxcars, and delivered to the mines like so much pork.

"I think the strike is lost, Mother," said an old miner whose son had been killed.

"Lost! Not until your souls are lost!" said I.

I traveled up and down the Creek, holding meetings, rousing the tired spirits of the miners. I got three thousand armed miners to march over the hills secretly to Charleston, where we read a declaration of war to Governor Glasscock who, scared as a rabbit, met us on the steps of the state house. We gave him just twenty-four hours to get rid of the gunmen, promising him that hell would break loose if he didn't. He did. He sent the state militia in, who at least were responsible to society and not to the operators alone.

One night in July, a young man, Frank Keeney, came to me. "Mother," he said, "I have been up to Charleston trying to get some one to go up to Cabin Creek, and I can't get anyone to go. The national officers say they don't want to get killed. Boswell told me you were over here in the Paint Creek and that perhaps you might come over into the Cabin Creek district."

"I'll come up," said I. "I've been thinking of invading that place for some time."

I knew all about Cabin Creek – old Russia. Labor organizer after organizer had been beaten into insensibility, thrown into the creek, tossed into some desolate ravine. The creek ran with the blood of brave men, of workers who had tried to escape their bondage.

"Where can we hold our meetings!" I asked. "I don't know, Mother. The company owns every bit of dust for twenty square miles about. And the guards arrest you for trespassing."

"Is there an incorporated village anywhere near!"

"Eksdale," said he, "is free."

"Bill a meeting for me there Tuesday night. Get the railway men to circulate the bills."

Monday night, a fellow by the name of Ben Morris, a national board member came to me and said, "Mother, I understand you are going up to Cabin Creek tomorrow. Do you think that is wise?"

"It's not wise," said I, "but necessary."

"Well, if you go, I'll go," said he.

"No, I think it is better for me to go alone. You represent the National office. I don't. I'm not responsible to anyone. If anything happens and you are there, the operators might sue the Union for damages. I go as a private citizen. All they can do to me is to put me in jail. I'm used to that."

He left me and went directly to the governor and told him to send a company of the militia up to Cabin Creek as I was going up there. Then he got the sheriff to give him a body guard and he sneaked up behind me. At any rate I did not see him or the militia on the train nor did I see them when I got off.

In Eksdale a sympathetic merchant let me stay in his house until the meeting began.

When I got off the train, two or three miners met me.

"Mother," they said, "did you know there is a detective along with you. He's behind you now . . . the fellow with the red necktie."

I looked around. I went up to him.

"Isn't your name Corcoran?" said I.

"Why, yes," said he, surprised.

"Aren't you the Corcoran who followed me up New River in the strike of 1902? You were working for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad and the coal company then."

"Why, yes," said he, "but you know people change!"

"Not sewer rats," said I. "A sewer rat never changes!"

That night we held a meeting. When I got up to speak I saw the militia that the national organizer had had the governor send. The board member was there. He had made arrangements with the local chairman to introduce him. He began speaking to the men about being good and patient and trusting to the justice of their cause.

I rose. "Stop that silly trash," said I. I motioned him to a chair. The men hollered, "sit down! sit down!"

He sat. Then I spoke.

"You men have come over the mountains," said I, "twelve, sixteen miles. Your clothes are thin. Your shoes are out at the toes. Your wives and little ones are cold and hungry! You have been robbed and enslaved for years! And now Billy Sunday comes to you and tells you to be good and patient and trust to justice! What silly trash to tell to men whose goodness and patience has cried out to a deaf world."

I could see the tears in the eyes of those poor fellows. They looked up into my face as much as to say, "My God, Mother, have you brought us a ray of hope?"

Some one screamed, "Organize us, Mother!"

Then they all began shouting ... "Organize us! Organize us!"

"March over to that dark church on the corner and I will give you the obligation," said I.

The men started marching. In the dark the spies could not identify them.

"You can't organize those men," said the board member, "because you haven't the ritual."

"The ritual, hell," said I. "I'll make one up!"

“They have to pay fifteen dollars for a charter,” said he.

“I will get them their charter,” said I. “Why these poor wretches haven’t fifteen cents for a sandwich. All you care about is your salary regardless of the destiny of these men.”

On the steps of the darkened church, I organized those men. They raised their hand and took the obligation to the Union.

“Go home from this meeting,” said I. “Say nothing about being a union man. Put on your overalls in the morning, take your dinner buckets and go to work in the mines, and get the other men out”

They went to work. Every man who had attended the meeting was discharged. That caused the strike, a long, bitter, cruel strike. Bullpens came. Flags came. The militia came. More hungry, more cold, more starving, more ragged than Washington’s army that fought against tyranny were the miners of the Kanawha Mountains. And just as grim. Just as heroic. Men died in those hills that others might be free.

One day a group of men came down to Elksdale from Red Warrior Camp to ask me to come up there and speak to them. Thirty-six men came down in their shirt sleeves. They brought a mule and a buggy for me to drive in with a little miner’s lad for a driver. I was to drive in the creek bed as that was the only public road and I could be arrested for trespass if I took any other. The men took the shorter and easier way along the C. and O. tracks which paralleled the creek a little way above it.

Suddenly as we were bumping along I heard a wild scream. I looked up at the tracks along which the miners were walking. I saw the men running, screaming as they went. I heard the whistle of bullets. I jumped out of the buggy and started to run up to the track. One of the boys screamed, “God! God! Mother, don’t come. They’ll kill ...”

“Stand still,” I called. “Stand where you are. I’m coming!”

When I climbed up onto the tracks I saw the boys huddled together, and around a little bend of the tracks, a machine gun and a group of gunmen.

“Oh Mother, don’t come,” they cried. “let them kill us; not you!”

“I’m coming and no one is going to get killed,” said I.

I walked up to the gunmen and put my hand over the muzzle of the gun. Then I just looked at those gunmen, very quiet, and said nothing. I nodded my head for the miners to pass.

“Take your hands off that gun, you hellcat!” yelled a fellow called Mayfield, crouching like a tiger to spring at me.

I kept my hand on the muzzle of the gun. “Sir,” said I, “my class goes into the mines. They bring out the metal that makes this gun. This is my gun! My class melts the minerals in furnaces and roll the steel. They dig the coal that feeds furnaces. My class is not fighting you, not you. They are fighting with bare fists and empty stomachs the men who rob them and deprive their children of childhood. It is the hard-earned pay of the working class that your pay comes from. They aren’t fighting you.”

Several of the gunmen dropped their eyes but one fellow, this Mayfield, said, “I don’t care a damn! I’m going to kill every one of them and you, too!”

I looked him full in the face. “Young man,” said I, “I want to tell you that if you shoot one bullet out of this gun at those men, if you touch one of my white hairs, that creek will run with blood, and yours will be the first to crimson it. I do not want to hear the screams of these men nor to see the tears, nor feel the heartache of wives and little children. These boys have no guns! Let them pass!”

“So our blood is going to crimson the creek is it!” snarled this Mayfield.

I pointed to the high hills. “Up there in the mountain I have five hundred miners. They are marching armed to the meeting I am going to address. If you start the shooting, they will finish the game.”

Mayfield’s lips quivered like a tiger’s deprived of its flesh.

“Advance!” he said to the miners. They came forward. I kept my hand on the gun. The miners were searched. There were no guns on them. They were allowed to pass.

I went down the side of the hill to my buggy.

The mule was chewing grass and the little lad was making a willow whistle. I drove on. That night I held my meeting.

But there weren’t any five hundred armed men in the mountains. Just a few jack rabbits, perhaps, but I had scared that gang of cold blooded, hired murderers and Red Warrior camp was organized.

The miners asked me to come up to Wineberg, a camp in the Creek district. Every road belonged to the coal company. Only the bed of the creek was a public road. At that time of the year—early spring—the water in the creek was high.

I started for Wineberg accompanied by a newspaperman, named West, of the Baltimore Sun. We walked along the railroad track.

Again I met the gunmen with their revolvers and machine guns. Mayfield was there, too.

“You can’t walk here!” he growled “Private property!”

“You don’t mean to say you are going to make that old lady walk that creek in that ice cold water, do you?” said the reporter.

“It’s too damn good for her! She won’t walk it!” he laughed.

“Won’t I?” said I. I took off my shoes, rolled up my skirt and walked the creek.

At Wineberg the miners, standing in the creek and on its edges, met me. With our feet in water we held a meeting. Holding their shoes in their hands, their trousers rolled up, the men took the obligation to the union.

I was very tired. A miner stepped up to me and asked me to come to his cabin and have a dish of tea.

“Your house is on private property,” yelled a gunman. “She cannot go.”

“I pay rent,” he protested.

“Private property, just the same. I’ll arrest her for trespassing if she steps out of the creek.”

The struggle went on with increasing bitterness. The militia disarmed both gunmen and miners but they were of course, on the side of the grand dukes of the region. They forbade all meetings. They suspended every civil right. They became despotic. They arrested scores of miners, tried them in military court, without jury, sentenced them to ten, fifteen years in the Moundsville prison.

I decided to call the attention of the national government to conditions in West Virginia. I borrowed one hundred dollars and went out and billed meetings in Cincinnati, Columbus, Cleveland, and from these cities I came to Washington, D. C. I had already written to Congressman W. B. Wilson, to get up a protest meeting.

The meeting was held in the armory and it was packed: senators, congressmen, secretaries, citizens. It is usual to have star orators at such meetings, who use parlor phrases. Congressman Wilson told the audience that he hoped they would not get out of patience with me, for I might use some language which Washington was not accustomed to hear.



I told the audience what things were happening in West Virginia, proceedings that were un-American. I told them about the suspension of civil liberty by the military. Of the wholesale arrests and military sentences.

“This is the seat of a great republican form of government. If such crimes against the citizens of the state of West Virginia go unrebuked by the government, I suggest that we take down the flag that stands for constitutional government, and run up a banner, saying, ‘This is the flag of the money oligarchy of America!’”

The next day by twelve O’clock all the military prisoners but two were called down to the prison office and signed their own release.

From Washington I went to West Virginia to carry on my work. The day before I arrived, an operator named Quinn Morton, the sheriff of Kanawha County, Bonner Hill, deputies and guards drove an armored train with gatling guns through Holly Grove, the tent colony of the miners, while they were sleeping. Into the quiet tents of the workers the guns were fired, killing and wounding the sleepers. A man by the name of Epstaw rose and picked up a couple of children and told them to run for their lives. His feet were shot off. Women were wounded. Children screamed with terror. No one was arrested.

Three days later, a mine guard, Fred Bobbett, was killed in an altercation. Fifty strikers and their organizers were immediately arrested, and without warrant.

I went to Boomer where the organization is composed of foreigners, and I went to Long Acre, getting each local union to elect a delegate who should appeal to the governor to put a stop to the military despotism.

I met all these delegates in a church and told them how they were to address a governor. We took the train for Charleston. I thought it better for the delegates to interview the governor without me, so after cautioning them to keep cool, I went over to the hotel where they were to meet me after their interview.

As I was going along the street, a big elephant, called Dan Cunningham, grabbed me by the arm and said, “I want you!” He took me to the Roughner Hotel, and sent for a warrant for my arrest. Later I was put on the C. and O. train and taken down to Pratt and handed over to the military. They were not looking for me so they had no bullpen ready. So a Dr. Hansford and his wife took care of me and some organizers who were arrested with me. The next day I was put in solitary in a room, guarded by soldiers who paced day and night in front of my door. I could see no one. I will give the military of West Virginia credit for one thing: they are far less brutal and cold blooded than the military of Colorado.

After many weeks we were taken before the judge advocate. The court had sent two lawyers to my bullpen to defend me but I had refused to let them defend me in that military court. I refused to recognize the jurisdiction of the court, to recognize the suspension of the civil courts. My arrest and trial were unconstitutional. I told the judge advocate that this was my position. I refused to enter a plea.

I was tried for murder. Along with the others I was sentenced to serve twenty years in the state penitentiary. I was not sent to prison immediately but held for five weeks in the military camp. I did not know what they were going to do with me. My guards were nice young men, respectful and courteous with the exception of a fellow called Lafferty, and another sewer rat whose name I have not taxed my mind with.

Then from California came aid. The great, lion-hearted editor of the San Francisco Bulletin, Fremont Older, sent his wife across the continent to Washington. She had a talk with Senator

Kearns. From Washington she came to see me. She got all the facts in regard to the situation from the beginning of the strike to my unconstitutional arrest and imprisonment. She wrote the story for Collier's Magazine,

She reported conditions to Senator Kearns, immediately demanded a thorough congressional inquiry.

Someone dropped a Cincinnati Post through my prison window. It contained a story of Wall Street's efforts to hush up the inquiry. "If Wall Street gets away with this," I thought "and the strike is broken, it means industrial bondage for long years to come in the West Virginia mines."

I decided to send a telegram, via my underground railway, to Senator Kearns. There was a hole in the floor of my prison-cabin. A rug covered the hole. I lifted the rug and rang two beer bottles against one another. A soldier who was my friend came crawling under the house to see "what was up." He had slipped me things before, and I had given him what little I had to give – an apple, a magazine. So I gave him the telegram and told him to take it three miles up the road to another office. He said he would. "It's fine stuff, Mother," he said.

That night when he was off duty he trudged three miles up the road with the telegram. He sent it.

The next day in Washington, the matter of congressional inquiry in the West Virginia mines came up for discussion in the Senate.

Senator Goff from Clarksburg, who had stock in the coal mines of West Virginia, got up on the floor and said that West Virginia was a place of peace until the agitators came in. "And the grandmother of agitators in this country," he went on, "is that old Mother Jones! I learn from the governor that she is not in prison at all but is only detained in a very pleasant boarding house!"

Senator Kearns rose. "I have a telegram from this old woman of eighty-four in this very pleasant boarding house," said he. "I will read it."

To the astonishment of the senators and the press he then read my telegram. They had supposed the old woman's voice was in prison with her body.

"From out the military prison walls of Pratt, West Virginia, where I have walked over my eighty-fourth milestone in history, I send you the groans and tears and heartaches of men, women and children as I have heard them in this state. From out these prison walls, I plead with you for the honor of the nation, to push that investigation, and the children yet unborn will rise and call you blessed."

Then the senate took action. A senatorial commission was appointed to investigate conditions.

One hour after this decision, Captain Sherwood of the militia, a real man in every sense of the word aside from the uniform, said to me, "Mother, the governor telephoned me to bring you to Charleston at once, You have only twenty-five minutes before the train comes."

"What does the governor want?" said I.

"He didn't say."

When I got to the governor's office, I had to wait some time because the governor and the mine owners were locked behind doors holding a secret conference as to how they should meet the senatorial investigation.

Governor Hatfield had succeeded Governor Glasscock, and he told me, when he finally admitted me, that he had been trying to settle the strike ever since he had been elected.

"I could have settled it in twenty-four hours," said I.

He shook his head mournfully.

"I would make the operators listen to the grievances of their workers. I would take the \$650,000 spent for the militia during this strike and spend it on schools and playgrounds and libraries that West Virginia might have a more highly developed citizenry, physically and intellectually. You would then have fewer little children in the mines and factories; fewer later in jails and penitentiaries; fewer men and women submitting to conditions that are brutalizing and unAmerican."

The next day he attended the convention of the miners that was in session in Charleston. I saw him there and I said to him, "Governor, I am going out of town tomorrow."

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to consult a brain specialist. My brain got out of balance while I was in the bull-pen."

"Didn't you know I was a doctor?" said he.

"Your pills won't do me any good" I said. Shortly after the miner's convention, Governor Hatfield set aside all the military sentences, freeing all of the prisoners but eight. The operators recognized the union and many abuses were corrected.

The working men had much to thank Senator Kearns for. He was a great man, standing for justice and the square deal. Yet, to the shame of the workers of Indiana, when he came up for re-election they elected a man named Watson, a deadly foe of progress. I felt his defeat keenly, felt the ingratitude of the workers. It was through his influence that prison doors had opened, that unspeakable conditions were brought to light. I have felt that the disappointment of his defeat brought on his illness and ended the brave, heroic life of one of labor's few friends.

One day when I was in Washington, a man came to see me who said General Elliott had sent him to me. General Elliott was the military man who had charge of the prisoners sentenced to the penitentiary in the court martial during the strike. Never would I forget that scene on the station platform of Pratt when the men were being taken to Moundsville; the wives screaming frantically; the little children not allowed to kiss or caress their fathers. Neither the screams nor the sobs touched the stone heart of General Elliott.

And now General Elliott had sent a friend to me to ask me to give him a letter endorsing him for Congress.

"And did General Elliott send you?"

"Yes."

"Then tell the general that nothing would give me more pleasure than to give you a letter, but it would be a letter to go to hell and not to Congress!"

## Chapter XIX – Guards and Gunmen

In the fall of 1912 I went to Eksdale, West Virginia. A strike had been going on in that section of the coal country for some time. A weary lull had come in the strike and I decided to do something to rouse the strikers and the public.

I called six trusty American men to me, told them to go up along the creeks on either side of which mining camps are located, and to notify all the miners that I wanted them in Charleston at one o'clock Tuesday afternoon; they must not bring any clubs or guns with them.

Tuesday afternoon, at a prearranged place, I met the boys in Charleston. The camps had turned out in full. I told the lads to follow me, and they did, through the streets of Charleston with a banner that said, "Nero fiddled while Rome burned." "Nero" was the governor who fiddled with the moneyed interests while the state was going to ruin. Another banner was addressed to a certain gunman whom the workers particularly hated because of his excessive brutality. It said, "If G – is not out of town by six o'clock he will be hanging to a telegraph pole!"

The reason that he did not hang was because he was out of town before *six*.

We gathered on the state house grounds. I went into the governor's office and requested him politely to come out, as there were a lot Virginia's first families giving a lawn party outside, and they wanted him to talk to them. I could see that he wanted to come out but he was timid.

"Mother," he said, "I can't come with you but I am not as bad as you may think."

"Come," I said, pulling him by his coattail. He shook his head. He looked like a scared child and I felt sorry for him; a man without the courage of his emotions; a good, weak man who could not measure up to a position that took great strength of mind, a character of granite.

From a platform on the statehouse steps I read a document that we had drawn up, requesting the governor to do away with the murderous Baldwin Felts guards and gunmen. We asked him to reestablish America and American traditions in West Virginia. I called a committee to take the document into the statehouse and place it reverently on the governor's table. I then spoke to the crowd and in conclusion said, "Go home now. Keep away from the saloons. Save your money. You're going to need it."

"What will we need it for, Mother?" some one shouted.

"For guns," said I. "Go home and read the immortal Washington's words to the colonists. He told those who were struggling for liberty against those who would not heed or hear "to buy guns."

They left the meeting peacefully and bought every gun in the hardware stores of Charleston. They took down the old hammerlocks from their cabin walls. Like the Minute Men of New England, they marched up the creeks to their homes with the grimness of the soldiers of the revolution.

The next morning alarms were ringing. The United States senate called attention to the civil war that was taking place but 350 miles from the capital. The sleepy eye of the national government looked upon West Virginia. A senatorial investigation was immediately ordered to inquire

into the blight that was eating out the heart of the coal industry. Once again the public was given a chance to hear the stifled cry of the miners in their eternal struggle.

## Chapter XX – Governor Hunt

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I went into Arizona in 1913 for the Western Federation of Miners. The miners throughout the copper region were on strike. Great fortunes were being made in the war and the miners demanded their share of it. Ed Grough, a very able organizer, was with me in the field.

The strike of the miners in Arizona was one of the most remarkable strikes in the history of the American labor movement. Its peaceful character, its successful outcome, were due to that most remarkable character, Governor Hunt.

The answer of the copper kings, who for thirty years had held the copper country as despots hold their thrones, their answer to the miners' demands was to close the mines completely. The operators then left town. They built a tent colony for the faithful scabs who cared for their masters more than for their class.

Then the governor acted, acted in favor of peace. He authorized the sheriff of the copper region to deputize forty striking miners to watch the mine owners' property, to see that no violence was done to any man. He said that bullpens if built would be for gunmen as well as for any striker who advised violence. He refused to let scabs be brought in under the protection of state troops and hired thugs, as was done in Colorado.

One night during the strike I was addressing a large audience composed of citizens as well as miners.

"I am glad," said I, "to see so many union men and women tonight. In fact I know that every man and woman here is a loyal member of the union. I refer to the United States, the union of all the states. I ask then, if in union there is strength for our nation, would there not be for labor! What one state could not get alone, what one miner against a powerful corporation could not achieve, can be achieved by the union. What is a good enough principle for an American citizen ought to be good enough for the working man to follow."

The strike lasted four months, in which time there was complete lack of disorder. Though the striking miners had to go miles up the hills for their firewood, they did not touch a stick of the lumber that lay in piles about the mines, and was the property of the mine owners.

Although the bosses had gone away, leaving their houses practically open, taking nothing, when they returned they found things just as they were left.

A fire broke out in one of the mills due to defective wiring. The strikers formed a bucket brigade and put out the fire. Two were injured. The copper-controlled newspapers accused the miners of setting the mill on fire and in the course of their story omitted the fact that strikers saved it. As no violence could be attributed to the strikers, the financial interests went out to "get" Governor Hunt. In spite of their vigorous campaign of lies and fraud, Governor Hunt was chosen in the primaries and in the subsequent election.

But the election was challenged. He was counted out and a present of the governorship handed to the tool of the copper interests, Campbell.

Meanwhile the miners won their strike. They received large increases in wages and a standing grievance committee was recognized which was to act as intermediary between the operators and the miners.

This strike demonstrated the fact that where the great vested interests do not control the state government, the voice of labor makes itself heard. But it is hard for labor to speak above the roar of guns.

I came to know Governor Hunt, a most human and just man. One day I saw the governor stop his machine and ask a poor man with his bundle of blankets over his back, where he was going. The man was a "blanket-stiff," a wandering worker. His clothes were dusty. His shoes in slithers. He told the governor where he was going.

"Jump in," said the governor, opening the door of his machine.

The man shook his head, looking at his dusty clothes and shoes.

The governor understood. "Oh, jump in," he laughed. "I don't mind outside dirt. It's the dirt in people's hearts that counts!"

Governor Hunt never forgot that although he was governor, he was just like other folks.

With Governor Campbell in office, the bosses took heart. The miners in settling their strike with the copper kings had agreed to give up their charter in the Western Federation of Labor in return for a standing grievance committee. Thus they sold their birthright for a mess of pottage. They were without the backing of a powerful national organization. Grievances were disregarded and the men were without the machinery for forcing their consideration. Many of the promises made by the bosses were not executed.

The cost of living during the war went rocket high. Copper stock made men rich over night. But the miner, paying high prices for his food, for his living, was unpatriotic if he called attention to his grievances. He became an "emissary of the Kaiser" if he whispered his injuries. While boys died at the front and the copper miners groaned at the rear, the copper kings grew richer than the kings against whom the nation fought.

Finally the burning injustice in the hearts of the copper miners leaped into flame. On June 27, 1917, a strike was called in the Copper Queen, one of the richest mines in the world.

"The I. W. W.!" yelled the copper kings whose pockets were bulging. They themselves had driven out the A. F. of L., the conservative organization.

Mining stopped. Stocks suffered a drop. Wall Street yelled "German money!" No one would listen to the story of the theft of the miners' time without pay under the pressure of war; of his claim that he could not live on his wages-no one.

Guns, revolvers, machine guns came to Bisbee as they did to the front in France. Shoot them back into the mines, said the bosses.

Then on July 12th, 1,086 strikers and their sympathizers were herded at the point of guns into cattle cars in which cattle had recently been and which had not yet been cleaned out; they were herded into these box cars, especially made ready, and taken into the desert. Here they were left without food or water – men, women, children. Heads of families were there. Men who had bought Liberty Bonds that the reign of democracy might be ushered in. Lawyers who had taken a striker's case in court. Store keepers who sold groceries to strikers' wives out on the desert, without food or water left to die.

"I. W. W. " shrieked the press on the front page. On the back page it gave the rise in copper stocks.

Wrapped in the folds of the flag, these kidnapers of the workers were immune. Besides, they were Bisbee's prominent citizens.

The President sent a commission. Copper was needed for the war. Faithful workers were needed. The commission investigated conditions, investigated the frightful deportations of American citizens. It made a report wholly in favor of labor and the contentions of the workers. It called the deportations from Bisbee outrageous.

But the papers of Arizona would not print the commission's report although accepted by President Wilson.

The workers had become educated. Elections came. Again Governor Hunt was elected. The legislature had passed the infamous slave bill, "The Work or Fight Law." By this law a man who struck was automatically sent into the front line trenches. One of the first things Governor Hunt did was to veto this bill which he characterized as a "very obnoxious form of tyranny."

Out of labor's struggle in Arizona came better conditions for the workers, who must everywhere, at all times, under advantage and disadvantage work out their own salvation.



## Chapter XXI – In Rockefeller’s Prisons

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I was in Washington, *D. C.*, at the time of the great coal strike against the Rockefeller holdings in southern Colorado. Ten years previous a strike against long endured exploitation and tyranny had been brutally suppressed with guns and by starvation. But the bitterness and despair of the workers smouldered and smouldered long after the fires of open rebellion had been extinguished. Finally after a decade of endurance the live coals in the hearts of miners leaped into a roaring fire of revolt.

One day I read in the newspaper that Governor Ammons of Colorado said that Mother Jones was not to be allowed to go into the southern field where the strike was raging.

That night I took a train and went directly to Denver. I got a room in the hotel where I usually stayed. I then went up to Union headquarters of the miners, after which I went to the station and bought my ticket and sleeper to Trinidad in the southern field.

When I returned to the hotel, a man who had registered when I did, came up to me and said, “Are you going to Trinidad, Mother Jones!”

“Of course,” said I.

“Mother, I want to tell you that the governor has detectives at the hotel and railway station watching you.”

“Detectives don’t bother me,” I told him.

“There are two detectives in the lobby, one up in the gallery, and two or three at the station watching the gates to see who boards the trains south.”

I thanked him for his information. That night I went an hour or so before the coaches were brought into the station way down into the railway yards where the coaches stood ready to be coupled to the train. I went to the section house. There was an old section hand there.

He held up his lantern to see me. “Oh, Mother Jones,” he said, “and is it you that’s walking the ties?”

“It’s myself,” said I, “but I’m not walking. I have a sleeper ticket for the south and I want to know if the trains are made up yet. I want to go aboard.”

“Sit here,” he said, “I’ll go see. I don’t know.” I knew he understood without any explaining why I was there.

“I wish you would tell the porter to come back with you,” said I.

He went out his light bobbing at his side. Pretty soon he returned with the porter.

“What you want, Mother?” says he.

“I want to know if the berths are made up yet?” “Do you want to get on now, Mother?” “Yes.”

“Then yours is made up.” I showed him my tickets and he led me across the tracks.

“Mother,” he said, “I know you now but later I might find it convenient not to have the acquaintance.”

“I understand,” said I. “Now here’s two dollars to give to the conductor. Tell him to let Mother Jones off before we get to the Santa Fe crossing. That will be early in the morning.”

"I sure will," said he.

I got on board the sleeper in the yards and was asleep when the coaches pulled into the Denver station for passengers south. I was still asleep when the train pulled out of the depot.

Early in the morning the porter awakened me. "Mother," he said, the conductor is going to stop the train for you. Be ready to hop."

When the train slowed down before we got to the crossing, the conductor came to help me off.

"Are you doing business, Mother!" said he. "I am indeed," said I. "And did you stop the train just for me!"

"I certainly did!"

He waved to me as the train pulled away. "Goodbye, Mother." It was very early and I walked into the little town of Trinidad and got breakfast. Down at the station a company of military were watching to see if I came into town. But no Mother Jones got off at the depot, and the company marched back to headquarters, which was just across the street from the hotel where I was staying.

I was in Trinidad three hours before they knew I was there. They telephoned the governor. They telephoned General Chase in charge of the militia. "Mother Jones is in Trinidad!" they said.

"Impossible!" said the governor. "Impossible!" said the general.

"Nevertheless, she is here!"

"We have had her well watched, the hotels and the depots," they said.

"Nevertheless, she is here!"

My arrest was ordered.

A delegation of miners came to me. "Boys," I said, "they are going to arrest me but don't make any trouble. Just let them do it."

"Mother," said they, "we aren't going to let them arrest you!"

"Yes, you will. Let them carry on their game."

While we were sitting there talking, I heard footsteps tramping up the stairs.

"Here they come," said I and we sat quietly waiting.

The door opened. It was a company of militia.

"Did you come after me, boys!" said I. They looked embarrassed.

"Pack your valise and come," said the captain.

They marched me down stairs and put me in an automobile that was waiting at the door.

The miners had followed. One of them had tears rolling down his cheeks.

"Mother," he cried, "I wish I could go for you!"

We drove to the prison first, passing cavalry and infantry and gunmen, sent by the state to subdue the miners. Orders were given to drive me to the Sisters' Hospital, a portion of which had been turned into a military prison. They put me in a small room with white plastered walls, with a cot, a chair and a table, and for nine weeks I stayed in that one room, seeing no human beings but the silent military. One stood on either side of the cell door, two stood across the hall, one at the entrance to the hall, two at the elevator entrance on my floor, two on the ground floor elevator entrance.

Outside my window a guard walked up and down, up and down day and night, day and night, his bayonet flashing in the sun.

"Lads," said I to the two silent chaps at the door, "the great Standard Oil is certainly afraid of an old woman!"

They grinned.

My meals were sent to me by the sisters.

They were not, of course, luxurious. In all those nine weeks I saw no one, received not a letter, a paper, a postal card. I saw only landscape and the bayonet flashing in the sun.

Finally, Mr. Hawkins, the attorney for the miners, was allowed to visit me. Then on Sunday, Colonel Davis came to me and said the governor wanted to see me in Denver.

The colonel and a subordinate came for me that night at nine o'clock. As we went down the hall, I noticed there was not a soldier in sight. There was none in the elevator. There was none in the entrance way. Everything was strangely silent. No one was about. A closed automobile waited us. We three got in.

"Drive the back way," said the colonel to the chauffeur.

We drove through dark, lonely streets. The curtains of the machine were down. It was black outside and inside. It was the one time in my life that I thought my end had come; that I was to say farewell to the earth, but I made up my mind that I would put up a good fight before passing out of life!

When we reached the Santa Fe crossing I was put aboard the train. I felt great relief, for the strike had only begun and I had much to do. I went to bed and slept till we arrived in Denver. Here I was met by a monster, called General Chase, whose veins run with ice water. He started to take me to Brown Palace Hotel. I asked him if he would permit me to go to a less aristocratic hotel, to the one I usually stopped at. He consented, telling me he would escort me to the governor at nine o'clock.

I was taken before the governor that morning. The governor said to me, "I am going to turn you free but you must not go back to the strike zone."

"Governor," I said, "I am going back."

"I think you ought to take my advice," he said, "and do what I think you ought to do."

"Governor," said I, "if Washington took instructions from such as you, we would be under King George's descendants yet! If Lincoln took instructions from you, Grant would never have gone to Gettysburg. I think I had better not take your orders."

I stayed on a week in Denver. Then I got a ticket and sleeper for Trinidad. Across the aisle from me was Reno, Rockefeller's detective. Very early in the morning, soldiers awakened me.

"Get up," they said, "and get off at the next stop."

I got up, of course, and with the soldiers I got off at Walsenburg, fifty miles from Trinidad. The engineer and the fireman left their train when they saw the soldiers putting me off.

"What are you going to do with that old woman?" they said. "We won't run the train till we know!"

The soldiers did not reply.

"Boys," I said, "go back on your engine. Some day it will be all right."

Tears came trickling down their cheeks, and when they wiped them away, there were long, black streaks on their faces.

I was put in the cellar under the courthouse. It was a cold, terrible place, without heat, damp and dark. I slept in my clothes by day, and at night I fought great sewer rats with a beer bottle. "If I were out of this dungeon," thought I, "I would be fighting the human sewer rats anyway!"

For twenty-six days I was held a military prisoner in that black hole. I would not give in. I would not leave the state. At any time, if I would do so, I could have my freedom. General Chase and his bandits thought that by keeping me in that cold cellar, I would catch the flue or pneumonia, and that would settle for them what to do with "old Mother Jones."

Colonel Berdiker, in charge of me, said, "Mother, I have never been placed in a position as painful as this. Won't you go to Denver and leave the strike field?"

"No, Colonel, I will not," said I.

The hours dragged underground. Day was perpetual twilight and night was deep night. I watched people's feet from my cellar window; miners' feet in old shoes; soldiers' feet, well shod in government leather; the shoes of women with the heels run down; the dilapidated shoes of children; barefooted boys. The children would scrooch down and wave to me but the soldiers shooed them off.

One morning when my hard bread and sloppy coffee were brought to me, Colonel Berdiker said to me, "Mother, don't eat that stuff!" After that he sent my breakfast to me – good, plain food. He was a man with a heart, who perhaps imagined his own mother imprisoned in a cellar with the sewer rats' union.

The colonel came to me one day and told me that my lawyers had obtained a habeas corpus for me and that I was to be released; that the military would give me a ticket to any place I desired.

"Colonel," said I, "I can accept nothing from men whose business it is to shoot down my class whenever they strike for decent wages. I prefer to walk."

"All right, Mother," said he, "Goodbye!"

The operators were bringing in Mexicans to work as scabs in the mines. In this operation they were protected by the military all the way from the Mexican borders. They were brought into the strike territory without knowing the conditions, promised enormous wages and easy work. They were packed in cattle cars, in charge of company gunmen, and if when arriving, they attempted to leave, they were shot. Hundreds of these poor fellows had been lured into the mines with promises of free land. When they got off the trains, they were driven like cattle into the mines by gunmen.

This was the method that broke the strike ten years previously. And now it was the scabs of a decade before who were striking – the docile, contract labor of Europe.

I was sent down to El Paso to give the facts of the Colorado strike to the Mexicans who were herded together for the mines in that city. I held meetings, I addressed Mexican gatherings, I got the story over the border. I did everything in my power to prevent strike breakers going into the Rockefeller mines.

In January, 1914. I returned to Colorado.

When I got off the train at Trinidad, the militia met me and ordered me back on the train. Nevertheless, I got off. They marched me to the telegrapher's office, then they changed their minds, and took me to the hotel where they had their headquarters. I told them I wanted to get my breakfast. They escorted me to the dining room.

"Who is paying for my breakfast?" said I.

"The state," said they.

"Then as the guest of the state of Colorado I'll order a good breakfast." And I did—all the way from bacon to pie.

The train for Denver pulled in. The military put me aboard it. When we reached Walsenburg; a delegation of miners met the train, singing a miner's song. They sang at the top their lungs till the silent, old mountains seem to prick up their ears. They swarmed into the train.

"God bless you, Mother!"

"God bless you, my boys!"

"Mother, is your coat warm enough? It's; freezing cold in the hills!"

"I'm all right, my lad." The chap had no overcoat – a cheap cotton suit, and a bit of woolen rag around his neck.

Outside in the station stood the militia. One of them was a fiend. He went about swinging his gun, hitting the miners, and trying to prod them into a fight, hurling vile oaths at them. But the boys kept cool and I could hear them singing above the shriek of the whistle as the train pulled out of the depot and wound away through the hills.

From January on until the final brutal out-rage, – the burning of the tent colony in Ludlow – my ears wearied with the stories of brutality and suffering. My eyes ached with the misery I witnessed. My brain sickened with the knowledge of man's inhumanity to man.

It was, "Oh, Mother, my daughter has been assaulted by the soldiers-such a little girl!"

"Oh, Mother, did you hear how the soldiers entered Mrs. Hall's house, how they terrified the little children, wrecked the home, and did worse – terrible things – and just because Mr. Hall, the undertaker, had buried two miners whom the militia had killed!" "And, Oh Mother, did you hear how they are arresting miners for vagrancy, for loafing, and making them work in company ditches without pay, making them haul coal and clear snow up to the mines for nothing!" "Mother, Mother, listen! A Polish fellow arrived as a strike breaker. He didn't know there was a strike. He was a big, strapping fellow. They gave him a star and a gun and told him to shoot strikers!"

"Oh, Mother, they've brought in a shipment of guns and machine guns-what's to happen to us!"

A frantic mother clutched me. "Mother Jones," she screamed, "Mother Jones, my little boy's all swollen up with the kicking and beating he got from a soldier because he said, 'Howdy, John D. feller!' 'Twas just a kid teasing, and now he's lying like dead!"

"Mother, 'tis an outrage for an adjutant general of the state to shake his fist and holler in the face of a grey-haired widow for singing a union song in her own kitchen while she washes the dishes!"

"It is all an outrage," said I. 'Tis an outrage indeed that Rockefeller should own the coal that God put in the earth for all the people. 'Tis an outrage that gunmen and soldiers are here protecting mines against workmen who ask bit more than a crust, a bit more than bondage! 'Tis an ocean of outrage!"

"Mother, did you hear of poor, old collier? He was going to the postoffice and was arrested by the militia. They marched him down hill, making him carry a shovel and a pick his back. They told him he was to die and must dig his own grave. He stumbled and fell on the road. They kicked him and he staggered up. He begged to be allowed to go home kiss his wife and children goodbye.

"We'll do the kissing," laughed the soldiers At the place they picked out for his grave, they measured him, and then they ordered to dig-two feet deeper, they told him. Old Colner began digging while the soldiers stood around laughing and cursing and playing craps for his tin watch. Then Colner fell fainting into the grave. The soldiers left him there till he recovered by himself. There he was alone and he staggered back to camp, Mother, and he isn't quite right in the head!"

I sat through long nights with sobbing widows, watching the candles about the corpse of the husband burn down to their sockets.

"Get out and fight," I told those women. "Fight like hell till you go to Heaven!" That was the only way I knew to comfort them.

I nursed men back to sanity who were driven to despair. I solicited clothes for the ragged children, for the desperate mothers. I laid out the dead, the martyrs of the strike. I kept the

men away from the saloons, whose licenses as well as those of the brothels, were held by the Rockefeller interests.

The miners armed, armed as it is permitted every American citizen to do in defense of his home, his family; as he is permitted to do against invasion. The smoke of armed battle rose from the arroyos and ravines of the Rocky Mountains.

No one listened. No one cared. The tickers in the offices of 26 Broadway sounded louder than the sobs of women and children. Men in the steam heated luxury of Broadway offices could not feel the stinging cold of Colorado hill-sides where families lived in tents.

Then came Ludlow and the nation heard. Little children roasted alive make a front page story. Dying by inches of starvation and exposure does not.

On the 19th of April, 1914, machine guns, used on the strikers in the Paint Creek strike, were placed in position above the tent colony of Ludlow. Major Pat Hamrock and Lieutenant K. E. Linderfelt were in charge of the militia, the majority of whom were, company gun-men sworn in as soldiers.

Early in the morning soldiers approached the colony with a demand from headquarters that Louis Tikas, leader of the Greeks, surrender two Italians. Tikas demanded a warrant for their arrest. They had none. Tikas refused to surrender them. The soldiers returned to quarters. A signal bomb was fired. Then another. Immediately the machine guns began spraying the flimsy tent colony, the only home the wretched families of the miners had, riddling it with bullets. Like iron rain, bullets' upon men, women and children.

The women and children fled to the hills. Others tarried. The men defended their home with their guns. All day long the firing continued. Men fell dead, their faces to the ground. Women dropped. The little Snyder boy was shot through the head, trying to save his kitten. A child carrying water to his dying mother was killed.

By five o'clock in the afternoon, the miners had no more food, nor water, nor ammunition. They had to retreat with their wives and little ones into the hills. Louis Tikas was riddled with shots while he tried to lead women and children to safety. They perished with him.

Night came. A raw wind blew down the canyons where men, women and children shivered and wept. Then a blaze lighted the sky. The soldiers, drunk with blood and with the liquor they had looted from the saloon, set fire to the tents of Ludlow with oil-soaked torches. The tents, all the poor furnishings, the clothes and bedding of the miners' families burned. Coils of barbed wire were stuffed into the well, the miners' only water supply.

After it was over, the wretched people crept back to bury their dead. In a dugout under a burned tent, the charred bodies of eleven little children and two women were found-unrecognizable. Everything lay in ruins. The wires of bed springs writhed on the ground as if they, too, had tried to flee the horror. Oil and fire and guns had robbed men and women and children of their homes and slaughtered tiny babies and defenseless women. Done by order of Lieutenant Linderfelt, a savage, brutal executor of the will of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. The strikers issued a general call to arms: Every able bodied man must shoulder a gun to protect himself and his family from assassins, from arson and plunder. From jungle days to our own so-named civilization, this is a man's inherent right. To a man they armed, throughout the whole strike district. Ludlow went on burning in their hearts.

Everybody got busy. A delegation from Ludlow went to see President Wilson. Among them was Mrs. Petrucci whose three tiny babies were crisped to death in the black hole of Ludlow. She had something to say to her President.

Immediately he sent the United States cavalry to quell the gunmen. He studied the situation, and drew up proposals for a three-year truce, binding miner and operator. The operators scornfully refused.

A mass meeting was called in Denver. Lindsey spoke. He demanded that the operators be made to respect the laws of Colorado. That something be done immediately. The Denver Real Estate Exchange appointed a committee to spit on Judge Lindsey for his espousal of the cause of the miners.

Rockefeller got busy. Writers were hired to write pamphlets which were sent broadcast to every editor in the country, bulletins. In these leaflets, it was shown how perfectly happy was the life of the miner until the agitators came; how joyous he was with the company's saloon, the company's pig-stys for homes, the company's teachers and preachers and coroners. How the miners hated the state law of an eight-hour working day, begging to be allowed to work ten, twelve. How they hated the state law that they should have their own check weigh-man to see that they were not cheated at the tipple.

And all the while the mothers of the children who died in Ludlow were mourning their dead.

## Chapter XXII – “You Don’t Need a Vote to Raise Hell”

After the operators had refused to accept the President’s terms for peace, the strike went on with its continued bitterness, suffering, patience. Strikers were killed. Gunmen were killed. John R. Lawson, an official of the Union, active in behalf of the rank and file, was arrested and charged with murder. It was an easy matter in the operator-owned state to secure a conviction. I took a train and went to Iowa to see President White.

“President Wilson said that this strike must be eventually settled by public opinion,” said I. “It’s about time we aroused a little. We’ve got to give this crime of convicting an innocent man of murder a little publicity.”

“You’re right, Mother,” said he. “What do you think we ought to do?”

“I want to hold a series of meetings all over the country and get the facts before the American people.”

Our first meeting was in Kansas City. I told the great audience that packed the hall that when their coal glowed red in their fires, it was the blood of the workers, of men who went down into black holes to dig it, of women who suffered and endured, of little children who had but a brief childhood. “You are being warmed and made comfortable with human blood” I said.

In Chicago, Frank P. Walsh, Chairman of the Industrial Commission, addressed the meeting. Garrick Theater was crowded. He told them of the desperate efforts of the operators to break the spirit of the miners by jailing their leaders.

We held meetings in Columbus and Cleveland and finally held a mass meeting in Washington. By this time the public opinion that President Wilson referred to was expressing itself so that the long-eared politicians heard.

Through the efforts of men like Ed Nockels, labor leader of Chicago, and others, John Lawson was released on bonds. Ed Nockels is one of the great men who give their life and talents to the cause of the workers. Not all labor’s leaders are honest. There are men as cruel and brutal as the capitalists in their ranks. There is jealousy. There is ambition. The weak envy the strong.

There was Bolton, secretary of the miners in Trinidad, a cold-blooded man, a jealous, ambitious soul. When Lawson was arrested he said, “lie is just where I want him!”

I was at headquarters in Trinidad one morning when two poor wretches came in and asked him for some coal. Their children were freezing, they said.

Bolton loved power. He loved the power of giving or refusing. This time he refused. A fellow named Ulick, an organizer, was present. I said to him, “Go with these men and see what their condition is. Buy them coal and food if they need it,” and I gave him money.

One of the men had walked over the hills with his shoes in tatters. The other had no overcoat and the weather was below zero. Ulick returned and told me the condition of these miners and their families was terrible.



I am not blind to the short comings of our own people, I am not unaware that leaders betray, and sell out, and play false. But this knowledge does not outweigh the fact that my class, the working class, is exploited, driven, fought back with the weapon of starvation, with guns and with venal courts whenever they strike for conditions more human, more civilized for their children, and for their children's children.

In this matter of arousing public opinion, I traveled as far as Seattle. The Central Trades Union of Seattle arranged a monster mass meeting for me. I told those fine western people the story of the struggle in their sister state. I raised a lot of hell about it and a lot of money, too, and a yell of public opinion that reached across the Rockies.

The miners of British Columbia were on strike. They sent for me to come and address them. I went with J. G. Brown. As I was about to go on the boat, the Canadian Immigration officers asked me where I was going.

"To Victoria," I told them.

"No you're not," said an officer, "you're going to the strike zone."

"I might travel a bit," said I.

"You can't go," said he, like he was Cornwallis.

"Why?"

"I don't have to give reasons," said he proudly as if the American Revolution had never been fought.

"You'll have to state your reasons to my uncle," said I, "and I'll be crossing before morning."

"Who is your uncle?"

"Uncle Sam's my uncle," said I. "He cleaned hell out of you once and he'll do it again. You let down those bars. I'm going to Canada."

"You'll not put a boot in Canada," said he. "You'll find out before night who's boss on this side the water," said I.

I returned to Labor Headquarters with Brown and we telegraphed the Emigration Department, the Labor Department and the Secretary of State at Washington. They got in touch with the Canadian Government at Ottawa. That very afternoon I got a telegram from the emigration Department that I might go anywhere I wanted in Canada.

The next morning when I went to get on the boat, the Canadian official with whom I had spoken the day before ran and hid. He had found out who my uncle was!

I addressed meetings in Victoria. Then I went up to the strike zone. A regiment of Canadian Kilties met the train, squeaking on their bagpipes. Down the street came a delegation of miners but they did not wear crocheted petticoats. They wore the badge of the working class—the overalls. I held a tremendous meeting that night and the poor boys who had come up from the subterranean holes of the earth to fight for a few hours of sunlight, took courage. I brought them the sympathy of the Colorado strikers, a sympathy and understanding that reaches across borders and frontiers.

Men's hearts are cold. They are indifferent. Not all the coal that is dug warms the world. It remains indifferent to the lives of those who risk their life and health down in the blackness of the earth; who crawl through dark, choking crevices with only a bit of lamp on their caps to light their silent way; whose backs are bent with toil, whose very bones ache, whose happiness is sleep, and whose peace is death.

I know the life of the miner. I have sat with him on culm piles as he ate his lunch from his bucket with grimy hands. I have talked with his wife as she bent over the washtub. I was talking

with a miner's wife one day when we heard a distant thud. She ran to the door of the shack. Men were running and screaming. Other doors flung open. Women rushed out, drying their hands on their aprons.

An explosion!

Whose husband was killed! Whose children were fatherless!

"My God, how many mules have been killed!" was the first exclamation of the superintendent.

Dead men were brought to the surface and laid on the ground. But more men came to take their places. But mules – new mules – had to be bought. They cost the company money. But human life is cheap, far cheaper than are mules.

One hundred and nineteen men were brought out and laid on the ground. The lights in their lamps were out. The light in their eyes was gone. But their death brought about the two-shaft system whereby a man had a chance to escape in case one of the exits filled with gas or burned.

Life comes to the miners out of their deaths, and death out of their lives.

In January of 1915, I was invited to John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s office with several other labor officers. I was glad to go for I wanted to tell him what his hirelings were doing in Colorado. The publicity that had been given the terrible conditions under which his wealth was made had forced him to take some action. The union he would not recognize – never. That was his religion. But he had put forth a plan whereby the workers might elect one representative at each mine to meet with the officials in Denver and present any grievance that might arise.

So with Frank J. Hayes, Vice President of the United Mine Workers, James Lord, and Edward Doyle we went to the Rockefeller offices. He listened to our recital of conditions in Colorado and said nothing.

I told him that his plan for settling industrial disputes would not work. That it was a sham and fraud. That behind the representative of the miner was no organization so that the workers were powerless to enforce any just demand; that their demands were granted and grievances redressed still at the will of the company. That the Rockefeller plan did not give the miners a treasury, so that should they have to strike for justice, they could be starved out in a week. That it gave the workers no voice in the management of the job to which they gave their very lives.

John Rockefeller is a nice young man but when we went away from the office where resides the silent government of thousands upon thousands of people, we went away feeling that he could not possibly understand the aspirations of the working class. He was as alien as is one species from another; as alien as is stone from wheat. I came to New York to raise funds for the miners' families. Although they had gone back beaten to work, their condition was pitiful. The women and children were in rags and they were hungry. I spoke to a great mass meeting in Cooper Union. I told the people after they had cheered me for ten minutes, that cheering was easy. That the side lines where it was safe, always cheered.

"The miners lost," I told them, "because they had only the constitution. The other side had bayonets. In the end, bayonets always win."

I told them how Lieutenant Howert of Walsenberg had offered me his arm when he escorted me to jail. "Madam," said he, "will you take my arm?"

"I am not a Madam," said I. "I am Mother Jones. The Government can't take my life and you can't take my arm, but you can take my suitcase."

I told the audience how I had sent a letter to John Rockefeller, Junior, telling him of conditions in the mines. I had heard he was a good young man and read the Bible, and I thought I'd take a chance. The letter came back with "Refused" written across the envelope.

“Well,” I said, “how could I expect him to listen to an old woman when he would not listen to the President of the United States through his representative, Senator Foster.”

Five hundred women got up a dinner and asked me to speak. Most of the women were crazy about women suffrage. They thought that Kingdom-come would follow the enfranchisement of women.

“You must stand for free speech in the streets,” I told them.

“How can we,” piped a woman, “when we haven’t a vote?”

“I have never had a vote,” said I, “and I have raised hell all over this country! You don’t need a vote to raise hell! You need convictions and a voice!”

Some one meowed, “You’re an anti!”

“I am not an anti to anything which will bring freedom to my class,” said I. “But I am going to be honest with you sincere women who are working for votes for women. The women of Colorado have had the vote for two generations and the working men and women are in slavery. The state is in slavery, vassal to the Colorado Iron and Fuel Company and its subsidiary interests. A man who was present at a meeting of mine owners told me that when the trouble started in the mines, one operator proposed that women be disfranchised because here and there some woman had raised her voice in behalf of the miners. Another operator jumped to his feet and shouted, ‘For God’s sake! What are you talking about! If it had not been for the women’s vote the miners would have beaten us long ago!’”

Some of the women gasped with horror. One or two left the room. I told the women I did not believe in women’s rights nor in men’s rights but in human rights. “No matter what your fight,” I said, “don’t be ladylike! God Almighty made women and the Rockefeller gang of thieves made the ladies. I have just fought through sixteen months of bitter warfare in Colorado. I have been up against armed mercenaries but this old woman, without a vote, and with nothing but a hatpin has scared them.

“Organized labor should organize its women along industrial lines. Politics is only the servant of industry. The plutocrats have organized their women. They keep them busy with suffrage and prohibition and charity.”

## Chapter XXIII – In a West Virginia Prison Camp

In July of 1919 my attention was called to the brutal conditions of the Sissonville prison Camp in Kanawha County, West Virginia. The practices of the dark ages were not unknown to that county. Feudalism and slave ownership existed in her coal camps. I found the most brutal slave ownership in the prison camp.

Officials of state and nation squawk about the dangers of bolshevism and they tolerate and promote a system that turns out bolshevists by the thousands. A bunch of hypocrites create a constabulary supposedly to stamp out dangerous “reds” but in truth the constabulary is to safeguard the interests of the exploiters of labor. The moneyed interests and their servants, the officials of county and state, howl and yammer about law and order and American ideals in order to drown out the still, small voice of the worker asking for bread.

With Mr. Mooney and Mr. Snyder, organizers, I went to the prison camp of Kanawha County where prisoners were building a county road. It was a broiling hot day.

About forty men were swinging picks and shovels; some old grey haired men were among them, some extremely young, some diseased, all broken in spirit and body. Some of them, the younger ones, were in chains. They had to drag a heavy iron ball and chain as they walked and worked. A road officer goaded them on if they lagged. He was as pitiless as the Bull on their bent backs.

These were men who had received light sentences in the courts for minor offenses, but the road officer could extend the sentence for the infraction of the tiniest rule. Some men had been in the camp for a year whose sentence had been thirty days for having in their possession a pint of liquor. Another fellow told me he was bringing some whiskey to a sick man. He was arrested, given sixty days and fined \$100. Unable to pay he was sentenced to five months in the prison camp, and after suffering hell’s tortures he had attempted to run away. He was caught and given four additional months.

At night the miserable colony were driven to their horrible sleeping quarters. For some, there were iron cages. Iron bunks with only a thin cloth mattress over them. Six prisoners were crowded into these cages. The place was odorous with filth. Vermin crawled about.

A very young lad slept in a cell, sixteen by twenty feet practically without ventilation, with sixteen negroes, some of whom suffered from venereal disease. There was no sewage system, and the only toilet for this group was a hole in the floor of the cell with a tub beneath. It was not emptied until full. Great greedy flies buzzed about the cells and cages. They lighted on the stripped bodies of the men.

The sick had no care, no medicine. The well had no protection against the sick. None of the wretched army of derelicts had any protection against the brutality of the road overseers. A prisoner had been beaten with the pick handle by the overseer. His wounds were not dressed. Another was refused an interview with his attorney.

I knew it was useless to tell the governor about conditions as I found them. I knew he would be neither interested nor would he care. It wasn't election time.

That night I took the train from Charleston and went straight to Washington. In the morning I went to the Department of Justice. I told the Attorney General about conditions in the prison camp of Sissonville, ... the fetid, disease-breeding cells, ... the swill given the men for food, . . . the brutal treatment. I asked him to make inquiry if there were not federal prisoners there. He promised me he would make immediate inquiry. This he did. To be sure there were no federal prisoners in the gang, but the investigation scared hell out of them, and the day after the federal agents had been there, fifteen prisoners, illegally held, were released.

The worst abuses were corrected for a while, at least.

Whenever things go wrong, I generally head for the National government with my grievances. I do not find it hard to get redress.

I do not believe that iron bars and brutal treatment have ever been cures for crime. And certainly I feel that in our great enlightened country, there is no reason for going back to the middle ages and their forms of torture for the criminal.

## Chapter XXIV – The Steel Strike of 1919

During the war the working people were made to believe they amounted to something. Gompers, the President of the American Federation of Labor, conferred with copper kings and lumber kings and coal kings, speaking for the organized workers. Up and down the land the workers heard the word, “democracy.” They were asked to work for it. To give their wages to it. To give their lives for it. They were told that their labor, their money, their flesh were the bulwarks against tyranny and autocracy.

So believing, the steel workers, 300,000 of them, rose en masse against Kaiser Gary, the President of the American Steel Corporation. The slaves asked their czar for the abolition of the twelve-hour day, for a crumb from the huge loaf of profits made in the great war, and for the right to organize.

Czar Gary met his workers as is the customary way with tyrants. He could not shoot them down as did Czar Nicholas when petitioned by his peasants. But he ordered the constabulary out. He ordered forth his two faithful generals: fear and starvation, one to clutch at the worker’s throat and the other at his stomach and the stomachs of his little children. When the steel strike was being organized, I was in Seattle with Jay G. Brown, President of the Shingle Workers of America.

“We ought to go East and help organize those slaves,” I said to Brown.

“They’ll throw us in jail, Mother!” he said.

“Well, they’re our own jails, aren’t they! Our class builds them.”

I came East. So did Jay G. Brown – a devoted worker for the cause of the steel slaves.

The strike in the steel industry was called in September, 1919. Gary as spokesman for the industry refused to consider any sort of appointment with his workers. What did it matter to him that thousands upon thousands of workers in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, worked in front of scorching furnaces twelve long hours, through the day, through the night, while he visited the Holy Land where Our Lord was born in a manger!

I traveled up and down the Monongahela River. Most of the places where the steel workers were on strike meetings were forbidden. If I were to stop to talk to a woman on the street about her child, a cossack would come charging down upon us and we would have to run for our lives. If I were to talk to a man in the streets of Braddock, we would be arrested for unlawful assembly.

In the towns of Sharon and Farrell, Pennsylvania, the lick-spittle authorities forbade all assembly. The workers by the thousands marched into Ohio where the Constitution of the United States instead of the Steel Corporation’s constitution was law.

I asked a Pole where he was going. I was visiting his sick wife; taking a bit of milk to her new baby. Her husband was washing his best shirt in the sink.

“Where I go? Tomorrow I go America,” he said, meaning he was going on the march to Ohio.

I spoke often to the strikers. Many of them were foreigners but they knew what I said. I told them, “We are to see whether Pennsylvania belongs to Kaiser Gary or Uncle Sam. If Gary’s got it, we are going to take it away from him and give it back to Uncle Sam. When we are ready we

can scare and starve and lick the whole gang. Your boys went over to Europe. They were told to clean up the Kaiser. Well, they did it. And now you and your boys are going to clean up the Kaisers at home. Even if they have to do it with a leg off and an arm gone, and eyes out.

“Our Kaisers sit up and smoke seventy-five cent cigars and have lackeys with knee pants bring them champagne while you starve, while you grow old at forty, stoking their furnaces. You pull in your belts while they banquet. They have stomachs two miles long and two miles wide and you fill them. Our Kaisers have stomachs of steel and hearts of steel and tears of steel for the ‘poor Belgians.’

“If Gary wants to work twelve hours a day let him go in the blooming mills and work. What we want is a little leisure, time for music, playgrounds, a decent home, books, and the things that make life worth while.”

I was speaking in Homestead. A group of organizers were with me in an automobile. As soon as a word was said, the speaker was immediately arrested by the steel bosses’ sheriff. I rose to speak. An officer grabbed me.

“Under arrest!” he said.

We were taken to jail. A great mob of people collected outside the prison. There was angry talk. The jailer got scared. He thought there might be lynching and he guessed who would be lynched. The mayor was in the jail, too, conferring with the jailer. He was scared. He looked out of the office windows and he saw hundreds of workers milling around and heard them muttering.

The jailer came to Mr. Brown and asked him what he had better do.

“Why don’t you let Mother Jones go out and speak to them,” he said. “They’ll do anything she says.”

So the jailer came to me and asked me to speak to the boys outside and ask them to go home.

I went outside the jail and told the boys I was going to be released shortly on bond, and that they should go home now and not give any trouble. I got them in a good humor and pretty soon they went away. Meanwhile while I was speaking, the mayor had sneaked out the back way.

We were ordered to appear in the Pittsburgh court the next morning. A cranky old judge asked me if I had had a permit to speak on the streets.

“Yes, sir,” said I. “I had a permit.”

“Who issued it?” he growled.

“Patrick Henry; Thomas Jefferson; John Adams!” said I.

The mention of those patriots who gave us our charter of liberties made the old steel judge sore. He fined us all heavily.

During the strike I was frequently arrested. So were all the leaders. We expected that. I never knew whether I would find John Fitzpatrick and William Foster at headquarters when I went up to Pittsburgh. Hundreds of threatening letters came to them. Gunmen followed them. Their lives were in constant danger. Citizens Alliance – the little shop-keepers dependent upon the smile of the steel companies-threatened to drive them out. Never had a strike been led by more devoted, able, unselfish men. Never a thought for themselves. Only for the men on strike, men striking to bring back America to America.

In Foster’s office no chairs were permitted by the authorities. That would have been construed as “a meeting.” Here men gathered in silent groups, in whispering groups, to get what word they could of the strike.

How was it going in Ohio?

How was it going in Pennsylvania?

How in the Mesaba country?

The workers were divided from one another. Spies working among the Ohio workers told of the break in the strike in Pennsylvania. In Pennsylvania, they told of the break in Ohio. With meetings forbidden, with mails censored, with no means of communication allowed, the strikers could not know of the progress of their strike. Then fear would clutch their throats.

One day two men came into Headquarters. One of them showed his wrists. They told in broken English of being seized by officers, taken to a hotel room. One of them was handcuffed for a day to a bed. His wrists swelled. He begged the officers to release him. He writhed in pain. They laughed and asked him if he would go to work. Though mad with pain he said no. At night they let him go without a word, without redress.

Organizers would come in with bandages on their heads. They had been beaten. They would stop a second before the picture of Fanny Sellins, the young girl whom the constabulary had shot as she bent protectingly over some children. She had died. They had only been beaten.

Foreigners were forever rushing in with tales of violence. They did not understand. Wasn't this America? Hadn't they come to America to be free?

We could not get the story of the struggle of these slaves over to the public. The press groveled at the feet of the steel Gods. The local pulpits dared not speak. Intimidation stalked the churches, the schools, the theaters. The rule of steel was absolute.

Although the strike was sponsored by the American Federation of Labor, under instructions from the Steel Trust, the public were fed daily stories of revolution and Bolshevism and Russian gold supporting the strike.

I saw the parade in Gary. Parades were forbidden in the Steel King's own town. Some two hundred soldiers who had come back from Europe where they had fought to make America safe from tyrants, marched. They were steel workers. They had on their faded uniforms and the steel hats which protected them from German bombs. In the line of march I saw young fellows with arms gone, with crutches, with deep scars across the face – heroes they were! Workers in the cheap cotton clothes of the working class fell in behind them. Silently the thousands walked through the streets and alleys of Gary. Saying no word. With no martial music such as sent the boys into the fight with the Kaiser across the water. Marching in silence. Disbanding in silence.

The next day the newspapers carried across the country a story of "mob violence" in Gary. Then I saw another parade. Into Gary marched United States soldiers under General Wood. They brought their bayonets, their long range guns, trucks with mounted machine guns, field artillery. Then came violence. The soldiers broke up the picket line. Worse than that, they broke the ideal in the hearts of thousands of foreigners, their ideal of America. Into the blast furnace along with steel went their dream that America was a government for the people-the poor, the oppressed.

I sat in the kitchen with the wife of a steel worker. It was a tiny kitchen. Three men sat at the table playing cards on the oil cloth table cover. They sat in their under shirts and trousers. Babies crawled on the floor. Above our heads hung wet clothes.

"The worse thing about this strike, Mother, is having the men folks all home all the time. There's no place for them to go. If they walk out they get chased by the mounted police. If they visit another house, the house gets raided and the men get arrested for 'holding a meeting.' They daren't even sit on the steps. Officers chase them in. It's fierce, Mother, with the boarders all home. When the men are working, half of them are sleeping, and the other half are in the mills. And I can hang my clothes out in the yard. Now I daren't. The guards make us stay in. They chase us out of our own yards. It's hell, Mother, with the men home all day and the clothes hanging



around too. And the kids are frightened. The guards chase them in the house. That makes it worse. The kids, and the men all home and the clothes hanging around.”

That was another way the steel tyrants fought their slaves. They crowded them into their wretched kennels, piling them on top of one another until their nerves were on edge. Men and women and babies and children and cooking and washing and dressing and undressing. This condition wore terribly on the women.

“Mother, seems like I’m going crazy!” women would say to me. “I’m scared to go out and I go crazy if I stay in with everything lumped on top of me!”

“The men are not going back?”

When I asked the women that question they would stop their complaints. “My man go back, I kill him!” You should see their eyes!

I went to Duquesne. Mayor Crawford, the brother of the President of the McKeesport Tin Plate Company, naturally saw the strike through steel-rimmed glasses. Jay Brown and I asked him for a permit to address the strikers.

“So you want a permit to speak in Duquesne, do you?” he grinned.

“We do that,” said I, “as American citizens demanding our constitutional rights.”

He laughed aloud. “Jesus Christ himself could not hold a meeting in Duquesne!” said he.

“I have no doubt of that,” said I, “not while you are mayor. “You may remember, however, that He drove such men as you out of the temple!”

He laughed again. Steel makes one feel secure.

We spoke. We were arrested and taken to jail. While in my cell, a group of worthy citizens, including town officials and some preachers came to see me.

“Mother Jones,” they said, “why don’t you use your great gifts and your knowledge of men for something better and higher than agitating?”

“There was a man once,” said I, “who had great gifts and a knowledge of men and he agitated against a powerful government that sought to make men serfs, to grind them down. He founded this nation that men might be free. He was a gentleman agitator!”

“Are you referring to George Washington?” said one of the group.

“I am so,” said I. “And there was a man once who had the gift of a tender heart and he agitated against powerful men, against invested wealth, for the freedom of black men. He agitated against slavery!”

Are you speaking of Abraham Lincoln?” said a little man who was peeking at me over another fellow’s shoulder.

“I am that,” said I.

“And there was a man once who walked among men, among the poor and the despised and the lowly, and he agitated against the powers of Rome, against the lickspittle Jews of the local pie counter; he agitated for the Kingdom of God!”

“Are you speaking of Jesus Christ?” said a preacher.

“I am,” said I. “The agitator you nailed to a cross some centuries ago. I did not know that his name was known in the region of steel!”

They all said nothing and left.

I went in a house in Monessen where I heard a woman sobbing. “They have taken my man away and I do not know where they have taken him!” Two little sobbing children clung to her gingham apron. Her tears fell on their little heads.

“I will find out for you. Tell me what happened.”

"Yesterday two men come. They open door; not knock. They come bust in. They say 'Your husband go back to Russia. He big Bolshevik!' I say, 'Who you?' They say, 'We big government United States. Big detect!'"

"They open everything. They open trunks. They throw everything on floor. They take everything from old country. They say my husband never came back. They say my husband go Russia. Perhaps first they hang him up, they say."

"They will not hang him. Is your husband Bolshevik?"

"No. He what you call Hunkie in America. He got friend. Friend very good. Friend come see him many times. Play cards. Talk 'bout damn boss. Talk 'bout damn job. Talk just 'bout all damn things. This friend say, 'You like better Russia – Working people now got country.'

"My husband say, 'Sure I like Russia. Bussia all right. Maybe workmans got chance there.'

"This friend say, 'You like tea?'"

"My man say, 'Sure I like!'"

"Pretty soon they go walk together. My man not come home. All night gone. Next day come high detect. They say my man Bolshevik. His friend say so."

"Have you been to the jail?"

"Yes, they say he not there. They say he been gone Russia."

"Here's five dollars," I said. "Now you take care of those little ones and I'll get your man for you."

He was in prison. I found him. Arrested by the United States Secret Service men who worked in connection with the Steel Company's private spies. Scores of workers were in jail, arrested on charges of holding radical thoughts. Holding radical thoughts and even the conservative demand for a shorter day, a better wage, the right to organize was punished with guns and prisons and torture!

He with dozens of others were later freed. With nothing against them. Five hundred "under cover" men worked in Monessen, sneaking into men's houses, into their unions, into their hearts, into their casual thoughts, sneaking and betraying. Five hundred Judas Iscariots betraying the workers for a handful of silver dollars.

With vermin like these must the worker struggle. Rather would the Steel Kings pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to these parasites than give the workers a living wage, a wage which would enable them to live as free men.

I was speaking in Mingo. There was a big crowd there. Most of them were foreigners but they would stand for hours listening to the speakers, trying to fit the English words to the feelings in their hearts. Their patient faces looked up into mine. Slag, the finely powdered dust of the steel mills, was ground into the furrows of their foreheads, into the lines about their mouths. The mark of steel was indelibly stamped upon them. They belonged to steel – branded as are cattle on the plains by their owners.

I said to them, "Steel stock has gone up. Steel profits are enormous. Steel dividends are making men rich over night. The war – your war-has made the steel lords richer than the emperors of old Borne. And their profits are not from steel alone but from your bodies with their innumerable burns; their profits are your early old age, your swollen feet, your wearied muscles. You go without warm winter clothes that Gary and his gang may go to Florida to warm their blood. You puddle steel twelve hours a day! Your children play in the muck of mud puddles while the children of the Forty Thieves take their French and dancing lessons, and have their fingernails manicured!"

As I was about to step down from the little platform I saw the crowd in one part of the hall milling around. Some one was trying to pass out leaflets and an organizer was trying to stop him. I heard the organizer say, "No sir, that's all right but you can't do it here! What do you want to get us in for!"

The fellow who had the leaflets insisted on distributing them. I pushed my way over to where the disturbance was.

"Lad," said I, "let me see one of those leaflets."

"It's about Russia, Mother," said the organizer, "and you know we can't have that!"

I took a leaflet. It asked the assistance of everyone in getting the government to lift the blockade against Russia, as hundreds of thousands of women and little children were starving for food, and thousands were dying for want of medicine and hospital necessities.

"What is the matter with these leaflets!" I asked the organizer.

"Nothing, Mother, only if we allow them to be distributed the story will go out that the strike is engineered from Moscow. We can't mix issues. I'm afraid to let these dodgers circulate."

"Women and children blockaded and starving! Men, women and children dying for lack of hospital necessities! This strike will not be won by turning a deaf ear to suffering wherever it occurs. There's only one thing to be afraid of ... of not being a man

The struggle for freedom went on. Went on against colossal odds. Steel was against them. And the government was against them, from the remote government at Washington down to the tiny official of the steel village. There was dissension in the ranks of labor. Ambition and prejudice played their part.

Human flesh, warm and soft and capable of being wounded, went naked up against steel; steel that is cold as old stars, and harder than death and incapable of pain. Bayonets and guns and steel rails and battle ships, bombs and bullets are made of steel. And only babies are made of flesh. More babies to grow up and work in steel, to hurl themselves against the bayonets, to know the tempered resistance of steel.

The strike was broken. Broken by the scabs brought in under the protection of the troops. Broken by breaking men's belief in the outcome of their struggle. Broken by breaking men's hearts. Broken by the press, by the government. In a little over a hundred days, the strike shivered to pieces.

The slaves went back to the furnaces, to the mills; to the heat and the roar, to the long hours – to slavery.

At headquarters men wept. I wept with them. A young man put his hands on my shoulders.

"Mother," he sobbed. "It's over."

A red glare from the mills lighted the sky. It made me think of Hell.

"Lad," said I, "it is not over. There's a fiercer light than those hell fires over yonder! It is the white light of freedom burning in men's hearts!"

Back to the mills trudged the men, accepting the terms of the despot, Gary; accepting hours that made them old, old men at forty; that threw them on the scrap heap, along with the slag from the mills, at early middle age; that made of them nothing but brutes that slept and worked, that worked and slept. The sound of their feet marching back into the mills was the sound of a funeral procession, and the corpse they followed was part of their selves. It was their hope.

Gary and his gang celebrated the victory with banquets and rejoicing. Three hundred thousand workers, living below the living wage, ate the bread of bitterness.

I say, as I said in the town of Gary, it is the damn gang of robbers and their band of political thieves who will start the next American Revolution; just as it was they who started this strike. Fifty thousand American lads died on the battle fields of Europe that the world might be more democratic. Their buddies came home and fought the American workingman when he protested an autocracy beyond the dream of the Kaiser. Had these same soldiers helped the steel workers, we could have given Gary, Morgan and his gang a free pass to hell. All the world's history has produced no more brutal and savage times than these, and this nation will perish if we do not change these conditions.

Christ himself would agitate against them. He would agitate against the plutocrats and hypocrites who tell the workers to go down on their knees and get right with God. Christ, the carpenter's son, would tell them to stand up on their feet and fight for righteousness and justice on the earth.

## Chapter XXV – Struggle and Lose: Struggle and Win

The steel strike was over. That is, the men were forced back to work. Only in bible stories can David conquer the giant Goliath. But the strike in the steel workers' hearts is not over.

Back to the forges, to the great caldrons, to the ovens, to the flame and the smoke go the "hands." But their hearts and their minds are outside the high fences-fences that shut in the worker and shut out justice.

The strike is not over. Injustice boils in men's hearts as does steel in its caldron, ready to pour, white hot, in the fullness of time.

Meanwhile in Kansas, legislators, subservient to the money powers, were busy making laws. They wanted the workers to be life serfs of the old days, attached to their job, and penalized when they left or struck. Governor Allen signed the bill of slavery. The law was called by a fancy name and given a fair face. It forbade the workers striking. It made striking a punishable offense.

A coal strike was coming on. Governor Allen said Kansas should have coal even if the workers did not have justice. Coal was more important than those who dug it. The coal operators said so too.

Throughout Kansas, striking for better conditions, more adequate wages to meet the high cost of living that the war had brought about, for anything in fact, was forbidden, and he who called a strike must go to jail.

President Howat of one of the districts of the United Mine Workers sent for me to come arouse the workers to a sense of their slavery. I went about speaking on the Industrial Slave Law, explaining to the workers just what it meant to them to have the right to strike taken from them by law.

President Howat was indicted and sentenced to jail for calling a strike, a strike voted for by the rank and file. Because he resisted the law he was called a rebel.

In the early part of 1922, the United Mine Workers held their convention. I attended. Questions of wages and agreements were discussed. The operators in the central bituminous coal fields and the union officials had been enjoined from making an agreement with one another by Judge Anderson. Miners dig up coal for the money kings and judges dig up decisions and injunctions. But the judges get better wages.

The question of whether the strike for April 1st, unless the operators signed agreements, should be called by the Convention or left to a vote of the rank and file, was before the assembly.

Howat and his friends wanted the Convention to set a strike date immediately-April first. The conservatives, led by president Lewis, wanted the body of miners themselves to vote on the issue.

Everyone was howling and bellowing and jumping on his feet and yelling to speak. They sounded like a lot of lunatics instead of sane men with the destiny of thousands of workers in their hands.

Although I sympathized with Howat, I felt that the National President should be obeyed. I rose and pushed my way to the platform. I stood there waiting for the men to become quiet. They did so. It was very still. I said:

“Boys stop howling like a lot of fiends and get down like men and do business. You are wasting time here; wasting time that ought to go to your families and babies. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves! Quit this noise!”

Some one called “Speech!”

“This is not the time for me to speak,” I said. “It is time for you to act. Trust your president. If he fails we can go out and I will be with you and raise Hell all over the nation!”

After that the Convention got down to business and voted to leave the matter of striking to those who had to do the sacrificing: the rank and file.

The operators refused to meet the miners, broke their sworn agreement that they would do so. There was nothing to do but strike. The rank and file voted it.

In Kansas, against the law, the miners nevertheless went out. Governor Allen ordered them back, just as the slaves of old used to be ordered back into the cotton fields. Again they refused. Refused to desert their brothers and produce scab coal. The Governor called upon the soft collar fellows, the rah-rah boys from the colleges, the drug clerks and undertakers, the ex-soldiers and sailors who were out of work, waiting for their bonuses, – and these mined the coal. A lark it was for them. A day’s picnic. They could afford to take the job with light heart and no conscience for it was but a brief job . . . not a lifetime to be spent under the ground. They would not pass on their shovel and lamp to their sons, so it was no matter to them that they left the job a little better for those who were to follow.

The government, under Hoover, opened up scores of scab mines. Non-union coal was dumped on the market. The miners believed that the Federal Government was against them. They set about organizing the non-union fields. I went here and there. I went to West Virginia. Thousands of dollars had been spent in that field. I went among the women in the tent colonies on the hills.

The story of coal is always the same. It is a dark story. For a second’s more sunlight, men must fight like tigers. For the privilege of seeing the color of their children’s eyes by the light of the sun, fathers must fight as beasts in the jungle. That life may have something of decency, something of beauty—a picture, a new dress, a bit of cheap lace fluttering in the window—for this, men who work down in the mines must struggle and lose, struggle and win.

## Chapter XXVI – Medieval West Virginia

I have been in West Virginia more or less for the past twenty-three years, taking part in the interminable conflicts that arose between the industrial slaves and their masters. The conflicts were always bitter. Mining is cruel work. Men are down in utter darkness hours on end. They have no life in the sun. They come up from the silence of the earth utterly wearied. Sleep and work, work and sleep. No time or strength for education, no money for books. No leisure for thought.

With the primitive tools of pick and shovel they gut out the insides of the old earth. Their shoulders are stooped from bending. Their eyes are narrowed to the tiny crevices through which they crawl. Evolution, development, is turned backward. Miners become less erect, less wide-eyed.

Like all things that live under ground, away from the sun, they become waxen. Their light is the tiny lamp in their caps. It lights up only work. It lights but a few steps ahead. Their children will follow them down into these strange chambers after they have gone down into the earth forever. Cruel is the life of the miners with the weight of the world upon their backs. And cruel are their strikes. Miners are accustomed to cruelty. They know no other law. They are like primitive men struggling in his ferocious jungle-for himself, for his children, for the race of men.

The miners of Logan County were again on strike in 1923. I was with them. The jails were full of strikers, with innocent men who protested the conditions of their lives. Many of them had been months in jails. Their wives and little children were in dire want.

“Can’t you do something for us, Mother,” they pleaded.

A delegation of their wretched wives and half-starved children came to me. “For God’s sake, Mother, can’t you do something for us?”

I took the train for Charleston and went to see Governor Morgan. He received me courteously.

“Governor,” I said, “listen-do you hear anything?”

He listened a moment. “No, Mother Jones, I do not.”

“I do,” said I. “I hear women and little boys and girls sobbing at night. Their fathers are in jail. The wives and children are crying for food.”

“I will investigate,” said he. He looked me straight in the eye and I knew he would keep his promise.

Shortly afterward I received a letter from the Governor, telling me that all the prisoners were released but three.

For myself I always found Governor Morgan most approachable. The human appeal always reached him. I remember a poor woman coming to see me one day. Her husband had been black-listed in the mines and he dared not return to his home. The woman was weak from lack of food, too weak to work. I took her to the Governor. He gave her twenty dollars. He arranged for her husband to return, promising him executive protection.

I was with the Governor’s secretary one day when a committee called to see the Governor. The committee was composed of lick-spittles of the mine owners. They requested that the Gov-

ernor put "The Federationist," a labor weekly, out of business. The Governor said, "Gentlemen, the constitution guarantees the right of free speech and free press. I shall not go on record as interfering with either as long as the constitution lives."

The committee slunk out of the office.

I think that Governor Morgan is the only governor in the twenty-three years I was in West Virginia who refused to comply with the requests of the dominant money interests. To a man of that type I wish to pay my respects.

There is never peace in West Virginia because there is never justice. Injunctions and guns, like morphia, produce a temporary quiet. Then the pain, agonizing and more severe, comes again. So it is with West Virginia. The strike was broken. But the next year, the miners gathered their breath for another struggle. Sometimes they lost their battle through their own crooked leaders. And once it was my duty to go before the rank and file and expose their leaders who would betray them. And when my boys understood, West Virginia's climate wasn't healthy for them.

Medieval West Virginia! With its tent colonies on the bleak hills! With its grim men and women! When I get to the other side, I shall tell God Almighty about West Virginia!



## Chapter XXVII – Progress in Spite of Leaders

Other strikes come to my mind, strikes of less fire and flame and hence attracting less national notice. The papers proclaimed to stockholders and investors that there was peace, and there was no peace. The garment workers struck and won. In Roosevelt, New Jersey, the workingmen in the fertilizing plant of Williams and Clark struck.

Two strikers were shot dead – shot in the back by the hired gunmen. The guards were arraigned, let out on bail, and reported back on the job. The strikers were assembled in a vacant lot. Guards shot into their midst, firing low and filling the legs of the workers with bullets.

“Mother,” the strikers wrote to me, “come help us with our women.”

I went. “Women,” said I, “see that your husbands use no fire arms or violence no matter what the provocation. Don’t let your husbands scab. Help them stand firm and above all keep them from the saloons. No strike was ever won that did not have the support of the womenfolk.”

The street car men struck along in 1916 in New York City.

I spoke to a mass meeting of carmen’s wives and we certainly had those women fighting like wildcats. They threatened me with jail and I told the police I could raise as much hell in jail as out. The police said if anyone was killed I should be held responsible and hanged.

“If they want to hang me, let them,” I said. “And on the scaffold I will shout ‘Freedom for the working class!’ And when I meet God Almighty I will tell him to damn my accusers and the accusers of the working class, the people who tend and develop and beautify His world.” The last years of my life have seen fewer and fewer strikes. Both employer and employee have become wiser. Both have learned the value of compromise. Both sides have learned that they gain’ when they get together and talk things out in reason rather than standing apart, slinging bricks, angry words and bullets. The railway brotherhoods have learned that lesson. Strikes are costly. Fighting them is costly.

All the average human being asks is something he can call home; a family that is fed and warm; and now and then a little happiness; once in a long while an extravagance.

I am not a suffragist nor do I believe in “careers” for women, especially a “career” in factory and mill where most working women have their “careers.” A great responsibility rests upon woman—the training of the children This is her most beautiful task. If men earned money enough, it would not be necessary for women to neglect their homes and their little ones to add to the family’s income.

The last years of my life have seen long stretches of industrial peace. Occasionally has come war. I regretted that illness kept me from helping the railway shopmen in their brave fight for recognition a few years ago. And I rejoiced to see the formation of a third political party—a Farmer-Labor Party. Too long has labor been subservient to the old betrayers, politicians and crooked labor leaders.

I had passed my ninety-third milestone when I attended the convention of the Farmer-Labor Party and addressed the assembly. “The producer, not the meek, shall inherit the earth,” I told

them. "Not today perhaps, nor tomorrow, but over the rim of the years my old eyes can see the coming of another day."

I was ninety-one years old when I attended the Pan-American Federation of Labor held in Mexico City in 1921. This convention was called to promote a better understanding between the workers of America, Mexico and Central America. Gompers attended as did a number of the American leaders.

I spoke to the convention. I told them that a convention such as this Pan-American Convention of labor was the beginning of a new day, a day when the workers of the world would know no other boundaries other than those between the exploiter and the exploited. Soviet Russia, I said, had dared to challenge the old order, had handed the earth over to those who toiled upon it, and the capitalists of the world were quaking in their scab-made shoes. I told them of the national farce of prohibition in America.

"Prohibition came," said I, "through a combination of business men who wanted to get more out of their workers, together with a lot of preachers and a group of damn cats who threw fits when they saw a workingman buy a bottle of beer but saw no reason to bristle when they and their women and little children suffered under the curse of low wages and crushing hours of toil."

"Prohibition," said I, "has taken away the workingman's beer, has closed the saloon which was his only club. The rich guzzle as they ever did. Prohibition is not for them. They have their clubs which are sacred and immune from interference. The only club the workingman has is the policeman's. He has that when he strikes."

I visited the coal mines of Coalhulia and saw that the life of the miner is the same wherever coal is dug and capital flies its black flag. As I look back over the long, long years, I see that in all movements for the bettering of men's lives, it is the pioneers who bear most of the suffering. When these movements become established, when they become popular, others reap the benefits. Thus it has been with the labor movement.

The early days of the labor movement produced great men. They differed greatly from the modern labor leader. These early leaders sought no publicity, they were single minded, not interested in their own glory nor their own financial advancement. They did not serve Labor for pay. They made great sacrifices that the future might be a bit brighter for their fellow workers.

I remember John Siney, a miner. Holloran, a miner. James, a miner. Robert Watchorn, the first and most able secretary that the miners of this country ever had. These men gave their lives that others might live. They died in want.

Dick Williams, McLaughlan, Travlick, Roy, Stevens, Wright, Powderly, Martin Irons, Davis, Richards, Griffith, Thomas and Morgan were pioneers worthy of our memory.

Powderly had to get up a subscription to defray the expenses of Griffith's funeral. Many of these pioneers died without even the gratitude of those whom they served. Their monuments are the good they did.

Many of our modern leaders of labor have wandered far from the thorny path of these early crusaders. Never in the early days of the labor struggle would you find leaders willing and dining with the aristocracy; nor did their wives strut about like diamond-bedecked peacocks; nor were they attended by humiliated, cringing colored servants.

The wives of these early leaders took in washing to make ends meet. Their children picked and sold berries. The women shared the heroism, the privation of their husbands.

In those days labor's representatives did not sit on velvet chairs in conference with labor's oppressors; they did not dine in fashionable hotels with the representatives of the top capitalists, such as the Civic Federation. They did not ride in Pullmans nor make trips to Europe.

The rank and file have let their servants become their masters and dictators. The workers have now to fight not alone their exploiters but likewise their own leaders, who often betray them, who sell them out, who put their own advancement ahead of that of the working masses, who make of the rank and file political pawns.

Provision should be made in all union constitutions for the recall of leaders. Big salaries should not be paid. Career hunters should be driven out, as well as leaders who use labor for political ends. These types are menaces to the advancement of labor.

In big strikes I have known, the men lay in prison while the leaders got out on bail and drew high salaries all the time. The leaders did not suffer. They never missed a meal. Some men make a profession out of labor and get rich thereby. John Mitchell left to his heirs a fortune, and his political friends are using the labor movement to gather funds to erect a monument to his memory, to a name that should be forgotten.

In spite of oppressors, in spite of false leaders, in spite of labor's own lack of understanding of its needs, the cause of the worker continues onward. Slowly his hours are shortened, giving him leisure to read and to think. Slowly his standard of living rises to include some of the good and beautiful things of the world. Slowly the cause of his children becomes the cause of all. His boy is taken from the breaker, his girl from the mill. Slowly those who create the wealth of the world are permitted to share it. The future is in labor's strong, rough hands.

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Mother Jones  
The Autobiography of Mother Jones  
1925

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