

The Autobiography of Mother Jones **CHAPTER XII**
HOW THE WOMEN MOPPED UP COALDALE (1900)

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 ones 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 win 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?"

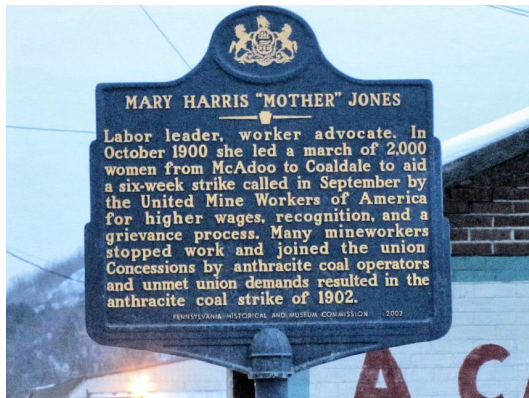
"I got five thousand men out and organized them. We had time left over so we organized the street car men and they will not haul any scabs into camp."

"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."



To Observe Lattimer Day
Special to The Inquirer.
HAZLETON, Pa., Aug. 25.—The miners of the Lehigh region will observe Labor Day and the sixth anniversary of the shooting of nineteen men at Lattimer on the same day, September 7, with a monster parade. Mother Jones will address the miners.

1. Who was Mary Harris "Mother" Jones? What did she advocate for?
2. What did Miles Daugherty do with the half of his pay he didn't give to his wife? What kind of organizer was he?
3. Outside of Shamokin, who did the priest tell the miners to obey? What did the priest call strikers?
4. Why did Mother Jones call the strike?
5. What weren't the miners allowed to do in Coaldale? Why?
6. What did Mother Jones ask the women of McAdoo to do? Why? What were their men to do?
7. How far was the march from McAdoo to Coaldale? What were the women doing along the way?
8. What did Mother Jones say to the colonel when she tried to march into Coaldale? What was he the colonel of?
9. What is a bayonet? What did Jones tell the colonel that she and workers were in a battle for? Why were they in Coaldale?
10. Why did the soldiers laugh and let Jones and the women pass? What were the women wearing and carrying?
11. What were the women and Jones trying to get the Coaldale miners to do? Did they succeed?
12. Who else did Jones organize? What did the newly organized workers promise not to transport? What is a scab?
13. What was Mitchell the President of? Where was he sleeping? What did the newspaper men tell him Jones was doing?
14. What did Jones and the women get the mine bosses to do? What did they tell their wives to do?
15. Where did Jones eat breakfast? Why was that ironic?
16. How many miles did Jones and the women march and in how long a period of time?
17. Was anyone hurt or property damaged? How did the military act? How did the event make the sheriff feel?
18. What did the sheriff say about Mother Jones? Why didn't he arrest her?
19. How many men joined the UMWA because of the march? Did the superintendent's bosses chase Mother Jones? Why?