

23 November 1907

“MOTHER” JONES.

BY EUGENE V. DEBS.

“The ‘Grand Old Woman’ of the revolutionary movement” is the appropriate title given to “Mother” Jones by Walter Hurt. All who know her—and they are legion—will at once recognize the fitness of the title.

The career of this unique old agitator reads like romance. There is no other that can be compared to it. For fifteen years she has been at the forefront, and never once has she been known to flinch.

From the time of the Pullman strike in 1894, when she first came into prominence, she has been steadily in the public eye. With no desire to wear “distinction’s worthless badge,” utterly forgetful of self and scorning all selfish ambitions, this brave woman has fought the battles of the oppressed with a heroism more exalted than ever sustained a soldier upon the field of carnage.

“Mother” Jones is not one of the “summer soldiers” or “sunshine patriots.” Her pulsés burn with true patriotic fervor, and wherever the battle waxes hottest there she surely will be found upon the firing line.

For many weary months at a time she has lived amid the most desolate regions of West Virginia, organizing the half-starved miners, making her home in their wretched cabins, sharing her meagre substance with their families, nursing the sick and cheering the disconsolate—a true minister of mercy.

During the great strike in the anthracite coal district, she marched at the head of the miners; was first to meet the sheriff and the soldiers, and last to leave the field of battle.

Again and again has this dauntless soul been driven out of some community by corporation hirelings, enjoined by courts, locked up in jail, prodded by the bayonets of soldiers, and threatened with assassination. But never once in all her self-surrendering life has she shown the white feather; never once given a single sign of weakness or discouragement. In the Colorado strikes “Mother” Jones was feared, as was no other, by the criminal corporations; feared by them as she was loved by the sturdy miners she led again and again in the face of overwhelming odds until, like Henry of Navarre, where her snow-white crown was seen the despairing slaves took fresh courage and fought again with all their waning strength against the embattled foe.

Deported at the point of bayonets, she bore herself so true a warrior that she won even the admiration of the soldiers whose order it was to escort her to the boundary lines and guard against her return.

No other soldier in the revolutionary cause has a better right to recognition in this edition than has “Mother” Jones.

Her very name expresses the Spirit of the Revolution.

Her striking personality embodies all its principles.

She has won her way into the hearts of the nation’s toilers, and her name is revered at the altars of their humble firesides and will be lovingly remembered by their children and their children’s children forever.

A Tribute to Mother Jones

Written by Eugene V. Debs, originally published in the *Appeal to Reason* November 23, 1907; later reprinted in *Debs: His Life, Writing and Speeches* Chicago: Charles Kerr, 1910. Eugene Debs was the key leader of the socialist movement in this period.

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Questions to consider: Debs uses a number of patriotic and military references to Mother Jones. How is this use different from the usual meaning? Who is the "enemy" in this war? Who are the "patriots?"