

# "Maw" Guynn Leads the Mine Women of Lansing

By VERA BUCH.

LANSING, Ohio, June 18.—They call her "Mother" Guynn in these parts, but the name that suits her best is the one she had years ago back in the Cumberland mountains—just "Maw" Guynn. She is big and rugged like those mountains—rugged and strong and clean. Tall, raw-boned, white-haired, sixty-three years old with a deep voice like a man's—a real soldier of a woman. But a soldier of the proletariat, every drop of blood in her, every thought of her mind, for the fight of the working class.

It's Maw Guynn that put the pep into the fighting women of Lansing. She led them, 51 strong—and a hundred more wanted to come but could not find trucks to go in—in the march to St. Clairsville that put them in jail that famous 24th of April. "They told us to take the children off the picket line," Maw Guynn will tell you. "And we did take them off the picket line. Then they arrested us. I was all bruised up that morning from fighting with scabs. My fingers were chewed, and my knees were all cut up, and my arms were all black and blue. Them state troopers just lined us up and marched the whole bunch of us women—51 of us—up to the jail. And we hadn't done a thing, I tell you, not a thing. A mile and a quarter in the pouring rain, and them troopers pushin' us on all the time and hollerin' 'Step on, step on!'

"They herded us in three cells, 21 of us, and the rest on the other side. We just wrang the water out of our clothes by the bucketfull. We had to sleep in turns on the iron floor, with nothing but a thin cotton blanket under us and one over us. Them cells was the filthiest thing I ever laid my eyes on. And the food! We couldn't eat a bite. A lot of garbage with roaches swimmin' in it. We sent for a big slop pail and we scraped all the food into it. Then we handed it out to the keeper. 'Here, Douglas', I says. 'If you know anybody that keeps pigs, here's something you can give him for them. It aint fit for us to eat and we aint goin' to eat it.'"

She comes of fighting stock, does Mother Guynn, Scotch-Irish, from the Maryland mountains. Her father was a miner and a Molly MacGuire. He died early and her mother took in washings to keep her log cabin home and bring up her family. Maw Guynn's brothers and uncles and sons are all miners and union men. "I was always a fighter," says Maw Guynn. "But somehow or other, I never got

right out into the thing as I did in this strike. What changed me? Well, maybe it was when they put my two boys in jail that did it, I don't know. I used to always stick in the house and sew patch-work quilts. Never went out nowheres,—you just couldn't get me away from them patches. And my lands, I was sick all the time! But now that I've got out fightin' and organizin' like this, I don't know a sick day. And I don't spend time cleanin' my house, either, the way I used to. I used to think, if I didn't mop up that kitchen floor every day, something terrible would happen. But now—now I just leave everything and go out and fight. Pappy, he cleans up the place and washes the dishes. My boys don't have a clean shirt to their backs half the time, but they don't care. I just want to go out and FIGHT all the time!"

"I'm the only American woman in this town that ain't stickin' with Lewis," Mother Guynn will tell you to her sorrow. "They talk about Hunkies, but believe me, it's the Hunkies that's doin' the fightin' in this strike, and I stick with them. And if it comes to that, I think the Hunkies will have to go out and teach the Americans what's good for them."

It is when she talks to the Lewis men that Maw Guynn's best fighting spirit reveals itself. A steely gleam comes into her light brown eyes and a threatening ring to her deep voice. "You poor miserable, low-lived things," she says to them. "Do you mean to tell me you've signed over to John L. Lewis after he's robbed you and sucked the life blood out of you all these years! Just because he promised you a dollar a week more for relief. And you won't even get the dollar. I've seen the time in this strike when we didn't have a crumb of food in our house for four days together. And did John L. Lewis help us? Don't you ever come near me with any of your dirty yellow-dog Lewis papers," she shouts, shaking a powerful fist in their faces. "If you do I'll smash your face in so you'll never see again."

No yellow dog paper will ever come near Mother Guynn. She is feared by the Lewis gang in town as much as she is respected by the Save-the-Union people. We take off our hats to her, to "Maw" Guynn, the fighting leader of the mine women. Sisters of the working class everywhere, let us follow her! Let us leave our kitchens and in them our fears and sorrows of the past. Let us organize and join the fight of all the workers for the freedom of our class!