

# BATTLE TO THE DEATH AT VIRDEN.

## Ten Men Are Killed and Two Score Wounded in Fight Between Guards and Striking Miners.

### SOLDIERS ON THE SCENE.

#### Militia Responds and Ex-Police Lieutenant Preston of Chi- cago Is Shot to Death at Midnight.

### BITTER FEELING PREVAILS.

### COST OF THE VIRDEN BATTLE.

Dead.....10  
Fatally Wounded ..... 3  
Wounded (estimated) .....40  
Troops, Infantry and Cavalry, ordered to the scene.

[BY A STAFF CORRESPONDENT.]

Virden, Ill., Oct. 12.—[Special.]—Ten men killed and over forty wounded, many of whom will die, is the result of a bloody battle fought here this afternoon between striking miners on one side and guards and imported Alabama negro laborers of the Chicago-Virden Coal company on the other.

Seven of the dead were union miners, two were men inside the stockade, and the tenth a Chicago and Alton switchman. Of the wounded eight are miners working for the coal company, ten are strikers, another the Superintendent of the company's supply store, and another a Chicago and Alton engineer.

#### The Dead.

BRENNAN, A. H., Girard, striking miner.  
CARROLL, W. W., a guard, Chicago, shot through the head; died in Springfield.  
GREEN, EDWARD, Mount Olive.  
KETNER, ERNEST, Mount Olive, striking miner.  
KILEY, D. H., Chicago, switchman.  
KITTERLY, JOSEPH, Mount Olive, striking miner.  
PRESTON, TOM, Chicago, ex-Police Lieutenant; shot by militia at 11 p. m.  
MORGAN, AL, armed guard inside the stockade.  
SMITH, ALBERT, Mount Olive, striking miner.  
WELCH, ED, Springfield, striking miner.

#### The Fatally Hurt.

CLARKSON, W. A., a guard, Leavenworth, Kas.; shot in head by buckshot; fatally wounded.  
HYSTER, J. F., Superintendent Climax Lumber company; shot and beaten; will probably die.  
LONG, JOSEPH, Mount Olive; cannot recover.

#### The Known Wounded.

Ankel, Anse, Mount Olive.  
Boston, Joe, Mount Olive; shot in stomach.  
Gritgesell, H., wounded in shoulder.  
Haines, Joseph, Girard, shot in leg.  
Hanan, P. J., slightly injured.  
Harmon, William, Girard; shot in hand.  
Jennings, Thomas, Springfield.  
Kuston, George.  
Kygar, Herbert, engineer of the train, Bloomington, Ill.; shot in the arm.  
McMear, Patrick, Virden; shot in right thigh.  
Meisser, William, a deputy, St. Louis; shot in head.  
McEntee, Thomas, Chicago, a guard; shot in leg.  
Moonan, J. W., of St. Louis; slightly injured.  
Palmer, James, a deputy, St. Louis; shot in head and arm.  
Recker, Joseph, miner, shot in arm.  
Hinck, George.  
Hinck, Joseph.  
Russell, Warren, Centralia, a boy; shot through the hips from the train.  
Runk, George, Girard; shot in stomach.  
Ryan, Ervin, negro miner; shot in the head; condition serious.  
Sickles, James, of Chicago, a guard; shot in leg.  
Sinnegan, John, Mount Olive, shot in foot.  
Smith, J. H., Chicago, a guard; slightly injured.  
Snyder, C. J., shot in face and legs.  
Sprim, Joe, Mount Olive; shot in arm.  
Suprick, George.  
Swan, John, miner, shot in arm.  
Upton, Edward, Springfield.  
Warren, Russell, Centralia, shot in thigh.  
Wewelsiep, Gustave, Mount Olive.  
Wilder, Frank, of Chicago, a guard; shot in arm.

Many of the wounded have been secreted by their friends. Some of them came from surrounding towns, and an effort is being made to keep the news from their families. This makes it difficult to get a list of the wounded.

There are six wounded men behind the stockade and thirty homes in Virden have wounded survivors of the battle within their walls.

The striking miners declared that imported labor should never take up the work they have dropped, and when a train with 150 negroes from Alabama arrived, they tried to enforce their threat, but at a fearful cost of life and the shedding of blood.

If troops had been here the story might have been a different one.

#### Troops Arrive, Kill a Guard.

Just as soon as the news of the battle reached Springfield Governor Tanner commenced ordering troops from nearby points to the scene, wired Colonel Young of the First Illinois Cavalry to get his regiment from Chicago, and asked permission of the government to utilize the Fifth Illinois now in camp at Springfield.

The train bearing Battery B from Galesburg, under Captain Craig, was the first to arrive at the stockade. It reached there at 10:50 o'clock. At Auburn, eight miles north of Virden, the train was stopped, and a detail of men was sent ahead on foot to inspect the track. The detail walked from Auburn to Virden.

As soon as the stockade was reached the track inspection detail ordered the guards at the stockade entrance to throw up their hands. There half a dozen guards congregated at the entrance, among them being ex-Lieutenant of Police Thomas Preston of Chicago. The others sprang through the entrance into the inclosure, but Preston hesitated, and then stepped backward slowly toward the entrance, his revolver in his hand.

"Throw up your hands," came the order the second time. Preston's hands remained down.

"Fire!" and one rifle cracked.

#### Search Miners, Take Weapons.

Preston dropped to the ground inside the gate with a bullet through his abdomen. Immediately the gate was slammed shut and Preston was carried to Manager Lukins' office. He was laid on a counter and expired a few moments later without having uttered a groan.

Preston's death spread consternation throughout the stockade. One miner threw down his Winchester and said:

"I'm disgusted with the whole thing."

I'm ready to quit."

Those standing near were silent, but the lines about their mouths grew firmer and a more determined look came into their faces.

The militia has made no effort to enter the stockade. The inspection detail continued on ahead of the train which slowly went down to the station. Two hundred miners stood in the street, and at the end of the platform, silently and anxiously wondering what the soldiers expected to do.

The train was quickly unloaded, and the men divided into squads. One squad immediately confronted the assembled miners with the order:

"Hands up."

Every hand was raised and every miner was searched. The squads were sent out over the city, and every man was stopped and searched. Even Mayor Nell was stopped.

**Trouble Long Threatened.**

The situation here has been critical for a number of days. Repeated rumors to the effect that the owners were determined to operate the mine of the Chicago-Virden Coal company with imported colored laborers caused many threats to be made by the miners, who seemed to feel that if once the colored men were installed their fight against the operators was lost.

For the last two weeks the miners have been coming to Virden in force and camping in the vicinity of the mine, sleeping in halls and in a measure laying siege to the mining property. They came from Mount Olive, Staunton, Pana, Springfield, Girard, Millwood, and other of the neighboring mining towns.

A complete system had been arranged and the men from these places relieved each other every few days. The miners have a number of leaders in the State officers of the union and in agitators who have been prominent in the Illinois coal strikes for a number of years.

**Lukins Heads the Guards.**

Fred W. Lukins, manager of the mine and in charge of the company's property here, was the head of the forces which guarded the company's property. He has asked repeatedly for the aid of State troops, which have not been forthcoming, and the matter has been in the hands of Sheriff Davenport of this county.

Lukins had the company's mine and property completely surrounded by a high stockade, which incloses no less than seven acres of ground and includes the buildings at the mouth of the shaft and thirty-four houses used by the miners.

The stockade about the property is too high for men within it to fire over it, but over the mouth of the shaft is the tippie, rising high above the other buildings, and making an excellent point of vantage for the guards who might be stationed there.

When Lukins determined to import negro miners to work the mine the miners learned of his determination and assembled in force to prevent it. Lukins had the rifles sent here by the State and plenty of ammunition was inside the stockade.

**Chicago Men in the Defense.**

He secured fifty guards. Among them are twenty-one men from Chicago, declared to be ex-policemen by the miners; eighteen men from St. Louis, said to have been furnished by a detective agency there; and a number of men from Shipman and Carlinville who are sworn in as deputies. At the head of these men are Fred Lukins, the manager, and his brother, Bert Lukins, who is the bookkeeper at the mine.

The houses of the company were prepared for the reception of the negro miners several days ago and all arrangements were made to bring them here from the South. The miners learned of these preparations last night and nearly 2,000 of them gathered here.

The strikers were aware that the negroes were coming an hour before the train bearing them arrived. The miners had a scout at Shipman, who wired a warning after the special train passed there. Besides this, the strikers had arranged a code of signals with the train men. The limited going north was an hour late, and passed through here at noon.

The looked-for signal was displayed. It was a white towel waved from one of the coaches. Moreover a message was thrown off at the platform, and this was secured by the strikers. It was from D Battery of Carlinville informing the men that the negroes were coming.

During all the morning a large crowd of strikers had been upon the depot platform. When the limited passed and it became known the hour of trouble had arrived messengers were sent in all directions.

**Armed as if by Magic.**

Before the passing of the limited not a firearm of any kind had been displayed. A few seconds later, as if by magic, every miner was armed. Some had shotguns, some rifles, and others carried horse pistols and revolvers. Still there was no demonstration. The wrath of the men who believed they were being grievously wronged was pent up for the time being.

The whole army of strikers stood upon guard duty in the street leading down the railroad to the north. Not a man made an attempt to come upon the depot platform. It was hoped on all sides that the imported laborers would be landed at the depot in the regular way and that the strikers would be given an opportunity to reason with them. Had this been done the miners would not have fired upon the train. Their instructions were to fire in the air as the train passed as a warning to the negroes.

It was just 11:35 a. m. when the train put in an appearance. At a point three-quarters of a mile from the town a brief stop was made. The guards on the south side of town started towards the train and the engineer pulled the throttle wide open.

**First Shots Are Fired.**

When within 100 yards of the depot firing began, some say from the train, others declare from the strikers. As the five coaches and caboose shot past the depot four men were seen upon the engine, the engineer and fireman being accompanied by two armed guards. Armed guards were also on every platform on the train, on the caboose platform, and in the cupola. The wooden shutter of every car in the train were drawn down tightly. Inside the cars not a man was to be seen.

There were a few more shots fired in the air as the cars approached the depot, the strikers being apparently unwilling to shed blood, but rather wishing to alarm their comrades nearer the stockade, where the negroes would be unloaded. This firing in the air continued until the depot was reached. Then the firing became general and confusion became apparent among the miners.

**Battle Begins in Earnest.**

The miners held their Winchester in readiness, but none of them was used at first. A moment after the train passed the depot rifle barrels were lowered and a fusillade of shots was directed against the train and against the stockade. Windows in the train were broken and the woodwork splintered. Hundreds of shots were then directed against the stockade. Smoke began to roll over the heads of the surging crowd of miners, and spiteful gusts of smoke broke from the tippie in the center of the stockade. First came flashes of light from the ends of the rifle barrels and then the bark of the guns were heard. Every face in the crowd of excited strikers was pale and drawn, eyes were bloodshot and hands trembled. Men shouted, cursed, and cried as their comrades fell about them.

Among the miners were several leaders who counseled them to stand firm. Men with bloody faces, broken limbs, and torn and

disheveled clothing pushed through the crowds. Some of them ran panic-stricken to places of safety. In spite of the excitement and wild alarm the crowd separated to allow groups of the strikers a passageway to carry away their wounded comrades.

**Deadly Fire from the Tippie.**

The fire from the tippie became hotter and was well directed, apparently, although the range at which the guards were firing was half a mile, the effort of the guards being to fire over the heads of the strikers, who were close to the stockade, and pick off those about the train. The strikers had nothing to fire at but the tower or tippie, and few of their guns would carry to it.

In desperation the strikers fired into the train, where the terrified negroes were hugging the floors. The train pulled up opposite the stockade. Kelly, the man guarding the south switch into the stockade, had been shot down beside the switch target and the miners surged over his body and made it too hazardous to attempt to pull over the switch. At the north switch scores of miners were massed on the tracks.

The train was finally brought to a standstill. One of the car doors was opened for an instant and ten of the negroes and two deputies attempted to alight. They had just reached the ground when a fusillade of bullets rained about them, blowing up the ground and striking the cars behind them.

**Costly Victory Is Won.**

One of the negroes dropped with blood pouring from his shoulder. The guards and other negroes hesitated, but in a moment picked up the wounded man and pulled him up onto the platform of the train. The bell clanged, the whistle shrieked, and the train rolled slowly northward. There were a few parting volleys, then some scattered firing, and the train disappeared in a cloud of dust and smoke carrying its dead and wounded to the State capital.

Then the strikers began picking up the dead and wounded and carrying them to an empty storeroom in the main street of the town, where they were laid on the bare floor and covered with blankets. Many of them were taken to the O'Neil House and given medical attention. Six of the physicians

upon the mercy of his pursuers. He started for the stairway and down the flight leading to the street where the miners were surging back and forth. He reached the sidewalk, and, throwing his gun down, threw his hands above his head and yelled:

"Mercy, mercy! I surrender!"

**Pleads in Vain for Mercy.**

There was a cry from the strikers as they surged forward. A dozen rifle barrels were leveled at his head. A score of shots rang out. Eyster doubled up, shrieked with pain, and rolled out into the street. A bullet had entered his groin.

Then began an awful maltreatment of the man. He struggled to his feet, only to be knocked down, and kicked, and beaten in a horrible manner. The frenzied miners buffeted the man about between them over into the public square. He shrieked with pain and cried piteously for mercy.

His face was bloody, his clothes were stripped from him, and blood poured from a score of wounds. At last he lay apparently lifeless on the ground, and the strikers went away and left him.

Eyster was picked up by friends and carried to his home a few blocks away. He cannot survive the night. Many of the strikers deplore the incident and say the assault upon Eyster was made by irresponsible men, who thought he was Lukins.

**Killey Not a Combatant.**

W. S. Cain, who was in charge of the seven special men guarding the property of the Chicago and Alton road, says he was but a short distance away from Killey when he was shot. He says Killey was simply guarding the switch to prevent any one from injuring the company's property or derailing the train. He was standing quietly beside the switch target during the melee and was struck by a bullet from the tower.

The five strikers who were killed were in a pasture on the east side of the railway tracks and on the opposite side from where the strikers were assembled.

Killey's body was taken to Clayton's livery stable, and at midnight was shipped to Chicago.

The scenes that attended the removal of the dead miners from the field east of the

struck. His son Ollie's head was grazed by a bullet, and a furrow was plowed through his hair.

Similar to the escape of young Harmon was the close call of Ben Allen. He was on the railroad track midway between the depot and the stockade when a ball whizzed through the crown of his felt hat and almost stunned him. Allen was lying down at the time.

"A shower of bullets poured over us," he declared.

**Holds Tanner Responsible.**

Manager Lukins said tonight: "The blood of every man shed here is on the Governor's head. He is absolutely outside of the law and has no justification whatever in refusing to send troops. If this train had come in before the interview with the Governor was printed there would have been no bloodshed."

"The men knew they were disobeying the law and had exhibited an entirely different spirit than what they did after the interview was published."

"Most of them were ignorant enough to believe that they had a right to do as the Governor said they had. His statement that the miner had the same right to fight for his property, which was his labor, as the mine-owner did to protect his property inspired these men to the action which they took today on firing upon this train as soon as it came into our town."

"At least 500 shots were fired into that train by the time it reached the shaft, and no shots were fired from the train until at least 150 shots were fired into it. No shots were fired from the stockade until after several of our men had been wounded."

The following message to Governor Tanner was sent this morning, just prior to the battle, by Sheriff Davenport:

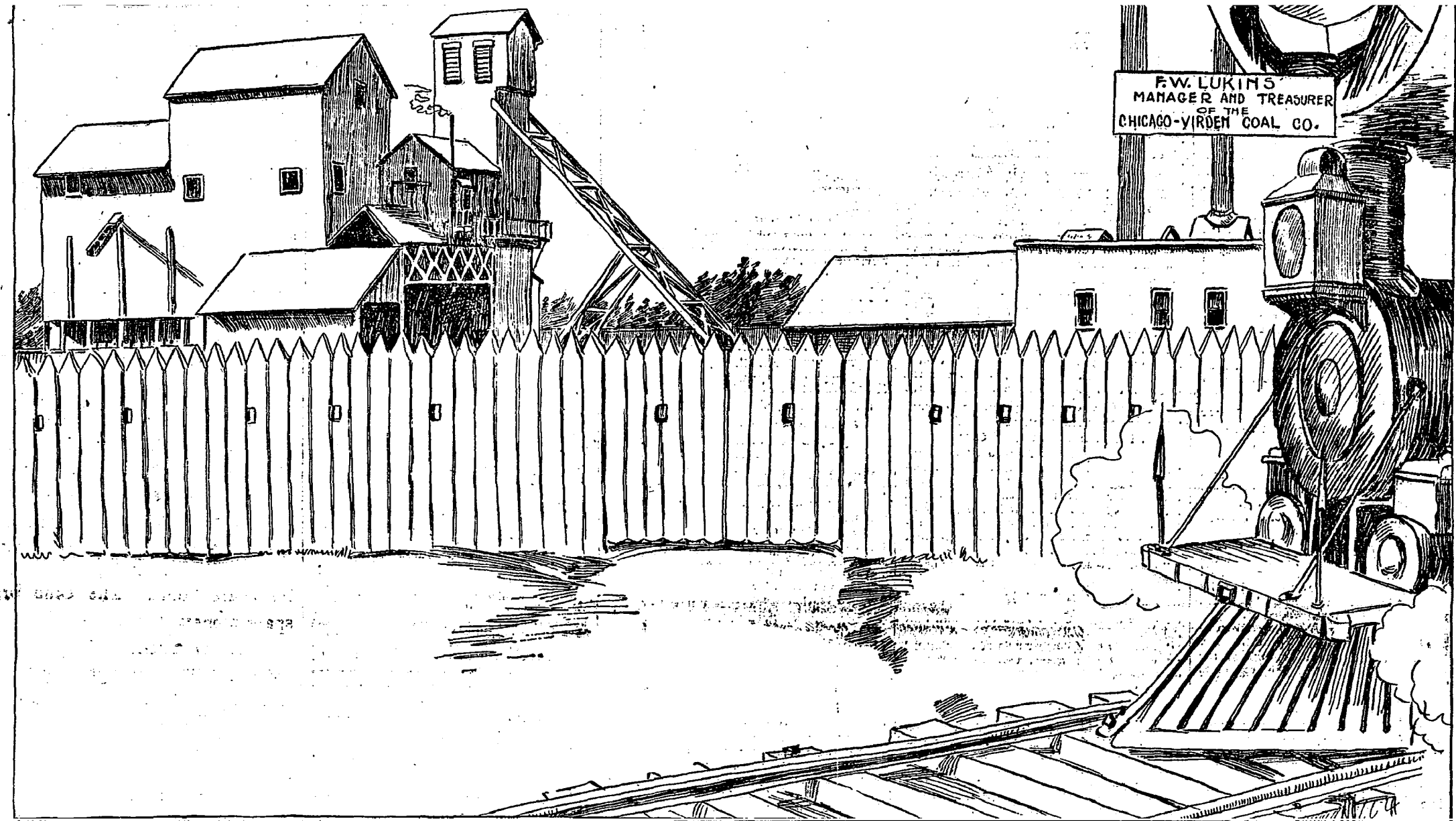
"The Hon. John R. Tanner, Springfield, Ill.: One thousand armed miners, mostly from points outside of Macoupin County, are unlawfully assembled in this city and bloodshed and loss of life of citizens are liable to occur at any hour. I do not consider that my own life is safe, as the situation is absolutely beyond my control. This is my last appeal to you for aid. If you cannot place troops here immediately I must be absolved from all responsibility for results."

PEYTON C. DAVENPORT, Sheriff.

In reply to this message the Governor wired:

Springfield, Ill., Oct. 12, 1898.—P. C. Davenport, Sheriff Macoupin County, Virden, Ill.: As long as the coal company persists in importing labor I will not furnish troops unless rioting occurs.

JOHN R. TANNER.



**VIRDEN MINE, SCENE OF YESTERDAY'S FIGHT BETWEEN MINERS, GUARDS, AND NEGROES.**  
(Drawn from a pencil sketch by a correspondent for "The Tribune" at Virden.)  
The picture shows the exact spot where the fight occurred as the train bearing the negro miners drew up before the stockade gate.

were admitted to the stockade and dressed the wounds of the six men who were wounded there. Then the hundreds of strikers surged through the streets of the town and gathered in force in the public square, which is but a block from the Alton depot.

**Cruel Attack on Eyster.**

It was half an hour after the battle about the stockade and around the train that the most deplorable incident of the day occurred. The Climax Trading company operates a store facing on the square, and it is admittedly the trading store for the miners. Jacob H. Eyster, who comes from Weir City, Kas., was in charge of it. Some say he spent the morning in the stockade, others that he mingled with the strikers during the battle.

At any rate, half an hour after the battle Eyster drove down to the company's store in the main street of the town in the company's wagon. Some of the strikers saw him and started in pursuit. He turned his team into the alley between the store and the Palace Hotel, with a hundred strikers in hot pursuit.

Reaching the rear end of the store, Eyster jumped from the wagon, threw the lines over the dashboard, and ran into the rear door, then down in the cellar. The strikers in front of the store fired into the building, breaking the glass and riding the place with bullets. Enraged at their failure to catch Eyster, and many of them under the impression he was Lukins, they began firing at the wagon and horses. One of the horses fell in the harness. The wagon was splintered. The other horse was wounded, and, crazed with pain, jumped upon a log shed, and then, in an instant, riddled with bullets, fell off dead.

**Makes for the Roof.**

Eyster feared that the miners were breaking into the building, as he heard the crash of glass and the rattle of the bullets above him. Holding his Winchester in his arms, he entered the elevator and pulled himself up to the second story. The man's predicament was an awful one in that empty and barricaded building, surrounded by hundreds of maddened strikers.

Eyster reached the second story, and running up a narrow stairway pushed open a trapdoor and stepped out on the tarred roof. As he started toward the roof of the store, next to that of the Climax company he was seen by several miners on the railway tracks to the east, and they commenced firing at him. He sought refuge behind a chimney for a moment, and then made a dash for the next roof.

**In the Miners' Hall.**

He crossed it, and, reaching the third roof, found another trap door. He raised it and half fell and half slid down the ladder into the garret. He groped about looking for a door, and, finding it, started down-stairs, still holding the Winchester in his arms. He emerged in the hall where the miners had held all of their meetings. He had been too excited to note what building he was in. He looked about him. Not a miner was in the hall, but he did not know at what moment they would come up the stairway. Here Eyster decided to throw himself

stockade were heartrending. As soon as the firing had ceased shrieking women ran from the houses in the vicinity and rushed for the places where the miners had fallen. As they ran they shouted curses at the men in the stockade and shook defiant fists at the tower from which had come the shower of lead.

The train with the negroes on board has hardly passed out of view before the dead and wounded in the field, surrounded by their friends, and in a remarkably short time, wagons, with their horses on the run, dashed on to the battlefield.

Tenderly the wounded miners were lifted into the big wagons and then slowly and sorrowfully, by the return to the town was made. Two of the men who fell were not dead when their companions reached them. These were Joseph Kitterly of Mount Olive and Edward Welch of Springfield.

**Priest Comforts Dying Men.**

A messenger was immediately sent to call Father John Clancey, and the priest arrived in time to administer the last rites of the Catholic Church to the dying men. Under the shade of a clump of trees the minister performed his sad office. Both of the men died with their side. Through the tears of many of their comrades glistened the fire of revenge, and the hands that held firearms grasped them tighter.

While the men were still looking upon the ghastly faces of their dead the alarm was given that Manager Lukins was on his way from the stockade to Virden with a force of deputies, and a rush was made for the direction of town, where the second tragedy of the day occurred.

Many of the miners, however, remained on the field to aid in removing the dead bodies and care for the wounded men. Some of the latter were carried to houses in the vicinity and were taken in charge by the neighboring women, who, in the absence of physicians, dressed the injuries as best they could.

**Physicians Fail to Respond.**

A messenger after messenger was sent for physicians, but they all came back with the intelligence that the doctors had taken to the stockade or were busy elsewhere, and it was late in the afternoon before the men who remained in the houses near the battlefield could be cared for.

The home of John Parriah, directly in range of the guns of the coal shaft tower, became an improvised hospital.

Warren Russell, a thin-faced boy from Centralia, whose drawn lips told of his suffering, was carried into the yard. He had been shot through the hips, but he never murmured.

"I was shot from the train," he said, "for the train was between me and the stockade. The man who shot me was on the end of one of the coaches."

William Harmon, a Girard man who was shot in the back, was taken to the home of Mrs. Carrie Teeters. Harmon's wound was an agonizing one. He begged pitously for a doctor, but it was a long time before one could be found. Harmon was with his three sons, Ollie, Oliver, and Willie, when he was



F.W. LUKINS, MANAGER AND TREASURER, CHICAGO-VIRDEN COAL CO.