

SERVANT OF FRANK IS LIBERATED AFTER LONG EXAMINATION

Despite Gruelling Third Degree, Woman Maintains Denial of Having Told Conflicting Stories.

FACED BY HUSBAND, SHE CONTRADICTS HIM

Her Release Came After Her Attorney Had Threatened to Take Out Habeas Corpus Proceedings.

Minola McKnight, the servant girl held in the Mary Phagan case, was given her freedom early last night, and left police headquarters for her home on Pulliam street. She was not liberated, however, until the detectives had obtained her signature to an affidavit telling what she knew of Frank's actions the day of the murder.

Her husband, who was also carried to the police station at noon, was freed a short while before his wife left the prison. He was present during the third degree of four hours, under which she was placed in the afternoon. He is said to have declared, even in the presence of his wife, that she had told conflicting stories of Frank's conduct on the tragedy date.

She is reported as having denied the man's statement in whole, clinging to her first story, which corroborated Frank's story before the coroner's jury. The detectives are silent regarding her statement; in fact, more so than during any other stage of the investigation. It is believed that on her story hinges a development fully as important as any of the results previously obtained.

Charge Is Suspicion.

The charge on which she was put in prison was "suspicion." Her attorney, George Gordon, informed the authorities Tuesday afternoon that it was illegal to hold a person more than twenty-four hours on a suspicion charge, unless their charge was obviously well founded, and had threatened habeas corpus proceedings. No direct accusation could be made against the woman, and she therefore was entitled to the freedom given her at dusk.

The examination was thorough and exacting. It was conducted by Detectives Starnes and Campbell at the order of Solicitor Dorsey, to whose office the two headquarters men have been attached throughout the Mary Phagan investigation. No one else connected with headquarters was admitted. Two strange men, however,

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whose identity was kept secret, were present.

After she had been quizzed to a point of exhaustion, Secretary G. C. February, attached to Chief Lanford's office, was summoned to note her statement in full.

Statement Long One .

It was the longest statement made by the woman since her connection with the mystery. It will be used, probably, in the trial. The negress was calm and composed upon emerging from the examination.

It was learned Tuesday afternoon that both James Conley and the servant girl have obtained counsel. Attorney William M. Smith, a conspicuous figure in many of the city's famous criminal trials, announced that he had been retained by the negro sweeper, and would represent him throughout the case.

George Gordon, a well-known local attorney, has been selected to represent the negress. He was at police headquarters all Tuesday afternoon, and sat outside the doorway leading to the room in which his client was being cross-examined. The detectives would not admit him to the interrogation.

Just who is defraying the woman's expenses for counsel is not known. Attorney Smith admits, however, that Conley is employing him personally. He spent two hours Tuesday morning interviewing his client, and declared to reporters his belief that the negro was telling the truth. He was confident that he would maintain the story during trial.

There were little, if any, developments in the case Tuesday. Headquarters detectives who have been investigating the crime were all summoned before the grand jury and were forced to spend their time at the courthouse. The solicitor, too, was engaged with the jury. Only Starnes and Campbell were at work on the case. Their energies were devoted to the McKnight woman's examination.

Evidence Is Important.

That some important testimony has been developed by the cross-examination of the negress is evinced by the secrecy cloaking the nature of her statement and affidavit.

Chief Lanford has declared that he is "hands off" in her connection with the mystery. Solicitor General Dorsey, he says, has personally requested to be allowed full sway in investigating the woman, and the chief has granted the wish. Mr. Dorsey said to a reporter Tuesday night:

"I will not talk regarding the McKnight woman. Too much publicity at this stage will do inestimable injury."

He emphatically refused to answer any and all questions, as did the two headquarters detectives assisting him in the case.

More mystery is added to the negress' connection by the presence of Ernest H. Pickett, of 295 Rawson street, and Roy L. Craven, of 11 Campbell street, both of whom assisted the detectives in subjecting her to the third degree. Pickett and Craven, immediately the examination was over, eluded reporters at police headquarters, and when afterwards seen, refused to explain their connection with the case.

Employees of Beck & Gregg.

Both men are employees of the Beck & Gregg hardware concern, the head of which, L. H. Beck, is foreman of the grand jury which indicted Leo Frank. Significance is attached to this connection of the jury's foreman, but the veil of mystery is lifted slightly by the fact that Albert McKnight, husband of the imprisoned servant, is also a porter at the Beck & Gregg establishment.

Solicitor Dorsey will not explain the nature of a big picture now locked in his office, over which he and his detectives pored last night for an hour or more. When a reporter entered his place at nightfall, Starnes and Campbell, perspiring freely, their shirts open at the throat and their coats and collars removed, were examining the mysterious picture.

The reporter's view was obstructed by a sheet of paper, thrown hurriedly over the picture. Whether it is a diagram of some sort, or whether it is a clue found in the woman's home, is a matter of conjecture.

The affidavit sworn by the servant girl is rumored to contain the statement that Frank arrived at his East Georgia avenue home between 1 and 2 o'clock on the murder afternoon, and that he departed after remaining only five or ten minutes. Also, it is said to state that he came home about 5 o'clock in the afternoon. The rest is not known.