

Title:Dr H F Harris Sworn In For The State, 31st To Testify
Category:LEO FRANK TRIAL BRIEF OF EVIDENCE

DR. H. F. HARRIS, sworn for the State.

I am a practicing physician. I made an examination of the body of Mary Phagan on May 5th. On removing the skull I found there was no actual break of the skull, but a little hemorrhage under the skull, corresponding to point where blow had been delivered, which shows that the blow was hard enough to have made the person unconscious. This wound on the head was not sufficient to have caused death. I think beyond any question she came to her death from strangulation from this cord being wound around her neck. The bruise around the eye was caused by a soft instrument, because it didn't show the degree of contusion that would have been produced by a hard instrument. The outside cuticle of the skin wasn't broken. The injury to the eye and scalp were caused before death. I examined the contents of the stomach, finding 160 cubic centimeters of cabbage and biscuit, or wheat and bread. It had progressed very slightly towards digestion. It is impossible for one to say absolutely how long this cabbage had been in the stomach, but I feel confident that she was either killed or received the blow on the back of the head within a half hour after she finished her meal. I made an examination of the privates of Mary Phagan. I found no spermatozoa. On the walls of the vagina there was evidences of violence of some kind. The epithelium was pulled loose, completely detached in places, blood vessels were dilated immediately beneath the surface and a great deal of hemorrhage in the surrounding tissues. The dilation of the blood vessels indicated to me that the injury had been made in the vagina some little time before death. Perhaps ten to fifteen minutes. It had occurred before death by reason of the fact that these blood vessels were dilated. Inflammation had set in and it takes an appreciable length of time for the process of inflammatory change to begin. There was evidence of violence in the neighborhood of the hymen. Rigor mortis varies so much that it is not accurate to state how long after death it sets in. It may begin in a few minutes and may be delayed for hours. I could not state from the

examination how long Mary Phagan was dying. It is my opinion that she lived from a half to three-quarters of an hour after she ate her meal. The evidence of violence in the vagina had evidently been done just before death. The fact that the child was strangled to death was indicated by the lividity, the blueness of the parts, the congestion of the tongue and mouth and the blueness of the hands and fingernails. The lungs had the peculiar appearance which is always produced after embalming when formaldehyde is used. I am of the opinion that the wound on the back of the head could not have been produced by this stick (Exhibit 48 of Defendant). I made a microscopic examination of the vagina and uterus. Natural menses would cause an enlargement of the uterus, but not of the vagina. In my opinion the menses could not have caused any dilation of the blood vessels and discoloration of the walls. From my own experiments I find that the behavior of the stomach after taking a small meal of cabbage and bread is practically the same as taking some biscuit and water alone. I examined Mary Phagan's stomach. It was normal in size, normal in position, and normal in every particular. I made a microscopic examination of the contents in Mary Phagan's case. It showed plainly that it had not begun to dissolve, or only to a very slight degree, and indicated that the process of digestion had not gone on to any extent at the time that this girl was rendered unconscious. I found that the starch she had eaten had undergone practically no alteration. The contents taken from the little girl's stomach was examined chemically and the result showed that there were only slight traces of the first action of the digestive juices on the starch. It was plainly evident that none of the material had gone into the small intestines. As soon as food is put in the

stomach the beginning of the secretion of the hydrochloric acid is found.

It is from the quantity of this acid that the stomach secretes that doctors

judge the state and degree of digestion. In this case the acid had not been secreted in such an excess that any of it had become what we call free. In this case the amount of acid in this girl's stomach was combined and was 32 degrees. Ordinarily in a normal stomach at the end of an hour it runs from 50 to 70 or 80. I found none of the pancreatic juices in

the stomach which are usually found, about an hour after digestion starts.

CROSS EXAMINATION.

I don't remember when Mr. Dorsey first talked to me about making this autopsy. As long as the heart was beating you could have put a piece of rope around the neck of this little girl and produced the same results as I found. I took about five or six ounces altogether out of the stomach.

It was all used up in making my experiments. I know of no experiments made as to the effect of gastric juices where the patient is dead. The juices of the body after death gradually evaporate. The chemical analysis of each cabbage varies, not only in the plant but from the way it is cooked. It is a very vague matter as to what influences may retard digestion. Every individual is almost a law unto himself. To a certain extent different vegetables affect different stomachs different ways, but the average normal stomach digests anything that is eaten within reason. Some authorities claim that exercise will retard digestion. I don't know that

mental activity would have very much effect in retarding the digestion.

It is the generally accepted opinion that food begins to pass out of the stomach through the pylorus in about a half an hour. A great many things pass out of the stomach that are not digested. The juices of the stomach make no change in them. The stomach does not emulsify a solid. I never knew a normal man who could digest a solid. The science of digestion is rather a modern thing. I did not call in any chemist in making this examination. I said it was impossible for anyone to say absolutely how long the cabbage had been in the stomach of Mary Phagan before she met her death, not within a minute or five minutes, but I say it was somewhere between one-half an hour and three-quarters. I am certain of that. Of course, if digestion had been delayed this time element would change. The violence to the private parts might have been produced by the finger or by other means, but I found evidence of violence. It takes a

rather considerable knock to tear epithelium off to the extent that bleeding

would occur. I found the epithelium completely detached in places and in other places it was not detached. A digital examination means putting the finger in. The swelling and dilation of the blood vessels could be seen only with a microscope. It is impossible to say how much they were swollen. A scalp wound is very prone to bleed. I have some cabbage here from two normal persons. Here was the same meal, taken of cabbage and wheat and bread by two men of normal stomachs and contents taken out within an hour. We found there was very little cabbage left.