

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

MONDAY, 2ND MARCH, 1908.

(Before H. W. Bishop, Esq., Commissioner.)

Mr. T. G. Russell appeared for the Matron (Mrs. Branting); Mr. F. K. Hunt for the Submatron (Miss Hunt); Mr. C. E. Salter appeared for Mr. J. H. Fountain, as a member of the public interested in the welfare of the Home; and Mr. R. H. Pope appeared on behalf of the Education Department.

G—— J—— examined on oath.

Mr. Salter.] How old are you?—I will be eighteen years in four months' time from now.

2. How long have you been in the Home?—Three years on the 28th June.

3. What is the nature of your outside work?—Sawing and chopping, and in the winter time we dig.

4. You saw and chop what?—Fir-trees, with a cross-cut saw.

5. And you split them?—Yes, we chop them down. One of the girls goes up the tree and puts a rope on it, and we all help to pull the tree down. Then we cross-cut it and chop it up.

6. Are they large trees?—Yes.

7. How do you get up the roots?—We have to cut the roots out with a chopper or dig them out with a spade. We use a pick-axe, too.

8. Then do you fill in the hole so made?—Yes, with sand.

9. How many hours in the day do you work at that?—The girls who attend school in the forenoon go out to this work in the afternoon.

10. You go to this work from about 1 o'clock until when?—A quarter to 5.

11. Do you get any relaxation during that time? Do you rest?—When we work with Miss Hunt, she says, "Do not get tired, girls"; when we work with Miss Mills and Miss McPherson, they give us a little rest.

12. You do this work at the trees practically four hours at a time?—Yes.

13. Is that nearly every day?—Yes, except on Saturday. We have washing in the laundry, and go in at a quarter to 4 on Saturday and have recreation.

14. Sometimes I believe you go to work at grubbing up the lupins?—Yes.

15. With what tools?—Pick-axe and chopper.

16. A large-sized pick-axe?—Yes.

17. Do you find this work pretty hard?—Yes, it is pretty hard.

18. Now, about the punishment you have received: Have you ever been put in the cells?—Yes.

19. How often?—I have been in four times, counting my punishment for running away.

20. What happened on the first occasion?—Miss Mills put me in for not knowing my catechism.

21. Did she speak to the Matron before putting you in?—No, she took me straight to the cell, and put me in.

22. How long were you in on that occasion?—I do not think it was very long.

23. Tell us how long, as near as you can?—It was not much longer than an hour.

24. But it was Miss Mills who put you in, and without authority so far as you know?—She did not say anything to the Matron in my presence.

25. Can you tell us what occurred on the second occasion?—I was put in for giving impudence to Miss Mills in the laundry.

26. Do you remember whether on that occasion she spoke to the Matron?—No, she took me straight from the laundry and put me in. I do not know whether she spoke to the Matron afterwards.

27. On the third occasion, what happened?—I was over by the lupins, and I asked for water, and Miss Mills said the morning girls went over there without water, and she did not see why we should not do without water. Then I said I could not go without water because of the heat, and Miss Mills said if all the girls did as much work as I did the place would never get done. And I said that if they had done as much as me they would not hurt.

28. What did she do then?—She brought me to Miss Hunt, and told Miss Hunt to put me in the cell, and Miss Hunt put me in the cell.

29. How long were you in?—All the afternoon.

30. Do they not allow you water when working at the lupins?—Not now. They used to allow it.

31. And no matter how hot the day is you have to work in the lupins without anything to drink?—Yes. We used to have oatmeal water, but we are not allowed to have it now.

32. Have you ever objected to go to work at the lupins?—Yes.

33. What happened on one occasion?—I objected to Miss Hunt. I had a headache, and I asked Miss Hunt whether I could stay inside, and Miss Hunt said No, I was going out to work, and Miss Hunt got angry because I objected to go. She said every one has to work, whether they had a headache or not.

34. And she made you go?—Well, she tried to make me go, and I would not.