

132. You deny that when you came back you used any words to the Matron about wondering how long she was going to allow you to carry on?—I did not say that.

133. When you came back you were punished?—Yes.

134. And from that time until now you have deliberately said you were going to abscond?—Not until just now. I said it up to February. Just a month ago I said I would.

135. When did you come back?—In October.

136. And from October until last month you have openly defied the authorities here?—I have said straight out, in front of several of the staff and all the girls, that I would abscond.

137. And have you not been trying your best to get other girls to go with you?—I have not.

138. No other girls?—I asked one girl since I had the runaway dress off—B— S—.

139. Were you not in the loft with other girls?—That was before I had the runaway dress off.

140. Did you not ask these girls to abscond?—Yes, A— B—, M— H—, and I spoke to F— B— one day and C— A—.

141. You have told them openly you will abscond?—Yes.

142. And I take it you will abscond if you get the chance?—No, I would not now.

143. Why?—Simply because I have had my hair cut off.

144. Otherwise you would?—Yes. If they gave me reason to go I would go.

145. Do you say that the Matron punished you unjustly when you came back?—Yes.

146. Because you had given no reason?—I had given reason. I had certainly said I would abscond. Several of the girls had said they would abscond, and I never asked them to, and they said I was unjustly punished because they did exactly the same as me. The Matron said she would punish me for an example.

147. You have been the ringleader in getting up absconding parties?—I have in some cases.

148. Then you did abscond?—No; I did not get off the premises.

149. You had been chopping wood a long time before you went to Mrs. M—'s?—Yes.

150. And when you got to Malcolm's you had then no complaints against the Home?—Yes, I told Mrs. M— the Matron was very unjust.

151. And you thought she was?—Yes.

152. Did you write to the Matron while you were there?—Yes, two or three letters.

153. Did you have any bad feeling in your mind on that account?—No, not when I went to service.

154. I will read a letter you wrote when there: "MY DEAREST MATRON,—I here begin my first letter at service. I must first of all thank you for this nice place you have given me. I can't realise that I am really in the possession of such a good mistress and a comfortable happy home. My word, Matron, you are mean. You might have given me a hint. I was not in the least prepared. And now I have at last got my chance I am going to prove myself grateful both for the Te Oranga training and for the kindness you have done me in getting me this comfortable home. Really, Matron, I feel now how ungrateful I was to you. But never mind, Matron, it all comes to him who waits. The girls, when you read this, may think I am a turncoat, for I own I was not one who always spoke well of the Home and I often said unkind things of you and your staff; but now I see how mean and ungrateful I was." This was written last year: how many years had you been here when you wrote this?—Three years.

155. At that time, when you got into a situation, and were enabled to regard things from an outside point of view, you were satisfied you had everything to be grateful for to this Home?—I had in some points. I did not have the treatment during the whole of the three years that I have since I have been back from service.

156. I may take it that all your complaints against the Home have arisen since you came back?—Yes, the majority have.

157. Up to this time you were quite satisfied, and grateful, for what had been done for you?—Yes.

158. Your complaints are now of matters which have been brought up since this letter was written?—I had several complaints about the work before I went to service, which I would have said just the same as now. I said these things in this letter, but I had often said in the Home that the work was not suitable for me. I had often growled about it, and been punished for it.

159. You were very comfortable at Mrs. M—'s?—Yes.

160. Do I understand you to say your complaint is that you ought not to have had any punishment at all?—No; I was quite willing to take my share of the punishment, but I reckon I had more punishment than was due to me.

161. How much do you reckon you should have got?—I was quite willing to take six strokes for attempting to run away. I was quite willing to take twelve strokes when I tried to abscond, but I reckon I should not have had three meals of dry bread and water and nearly a week in the cell and my hair cut off.

162. But you said it was only cutting your hair off that stopped you. Where were you going to after you got away?—I was going to get a place for myself.

163. Were you going to H—'s sister?—Yes.

164. Do you consider she is a proper woman for a respectable young girl to go to?—No; but I thought she was really the only one in the town who would give me a home. I thought my other friends would tell the Matron about me.

165. What sort of home was she going to give you?—I thought she might get me a situation.

166. You know her character?—I have heard one or two things about her.

167. And you were willing to go to her?—Yes, because I knew she would be willing to take me in.

168. You would have no clothes with you?—Only the clothes on me.

169. No certificate?—No.