

50. Do you consider such tasks as tree-felling and gardening are beyond the strength of the girls, from what you have seen?—I have not seen anything that could be considered to be beyond their strength.

51. Have the girls ever complained to you that the work is beyond them?—No. They took great pride in one special tree they declared they had felled.

52. From what you have seen of the girls on returning from these tasks, have they shown signs of physical weakness from overwork?—When they are able to sing at the top of their voices for more than an hour I do not think they can be said to show signs of physical tiredness.

53. Does it come within your official capacity to look after the food?—Two or three times I have looked after it, but as Mrs. Branting has her official diet list I do not consider she can go far wrong.

54. Do you consider that she carries out the dietary scale?—So far as I know she does.

55. Have the girls ever complained to you about the food or about want of bed-clothing?—No.

56. Or about having been put in a cell and forgotten for the day?—I have never heard of such a thing.

57. You think the girls get enough time for play and recreation?—I think they get a great deal.

58. In your opinion, is this place a home?—Most decidedly.

59. Have you had any communication with the girls after they have left here?—Yes, I have spoken to the service girls frequently.

60. In what way do they refer to the Home?—They generally send messages of love and remembrance to the Matron.

61. There has been nothing to suggest they have bad feelings against the Matron?—Not the slightest.

62. *Mr. Salter.*] You say the girl A—— G—— required a further course before going to service. Were you aware she had been in the Samaritan Home for twelve months, and had given perfect satisfaction to the Matron there?—Yes.

63. Why did you consider it necessary to have her back here at all after she had given satisfaction there?—I considered, for one thing, that Mrs. Branting stood in the place of parent to the girl, and that she ought to have her here to see her mental condition. Another thing, I did not consider the situation quite suitable, for the special reason that we understood the lady who asked to have her would probably be away from home a good deal, and considering the girl's mental state I thought it very unwise she should go to a home where she might be left responsible.

64. Did you not think you were standing in the girl's way in preventing her going to a respectable place like Mrs. Bean's?—I know Mrs. Branting would not arrange for her to go to any but a respectable place. If I had been satisfied by a fortnight's residence in the Home that the girl was quite capable of being in a situation I would have made no objection.

65. What did you know about the girl except what Mrs. Branting herself told you?—I had some private conversations with the girl after she came back. I knew the girl's record too.

66. But you knew she had done splendidly at the Samaritan Home for quite twelve months?—I was quite aware of that.

67. You did not consider that a sufficient test?—I thought Mrs. Branting should have an opportunity of seeing her.

68. You were practically standing up for Mrs. Branting more than interesting yourself in the girl?—I was interesting myself in the girl, but the question was whether she was fit to go out.

69. With regard to the girls who gave evidence against Miss Howden, I suppose you know the reputation of the girls is that they do not speak the truth?—I am perfectly aware of it, and I know some of them say they do not.

70. Yet, knowing that, do you not think it rather remarkable to accept the evidence of these girls, and condemn Miss Howden upon it, before giving Miss Howden an opportunity to make an explanation?—I made no statement against Miss Howden whatever. For some time before this the Matron had told me there was a great deal of unrest in the Home for which she could not account, and she was very worried about it. About this time things came to a climax, and the girls told one of the staff that Miss Howden was practically inciting them to rebellion. I thought if they put the statements down in black and white Miss Howden would have an opportunity of putting the matter right.

71. Are you aware Miss Howden never had that opportunity?—I am aware Mrs. Branting gave Miss Howden the papers to read, and that she absolutely denied the statements.

72. The fact remains that the word of these girls, who have the reputation of being liars, was accepted as against Miss Howden?—Personally, I had nothing whatever to do with that.

73. Do you know Miss Mills had these girls with her in her own room for three hours before they made these statements at all?—I do not know anything about that.

74. With regard to the food, have you seen the bread and dripping and bread and jam spread for the girls?—I cannot say I have, but considering their physical condition and plumpness, and strength and health, it is absurd to suggest they do not get enough food.

75. *The Commissioner.*] You think, generally speaking, they have no cause for complaint in regard to their food?—No.

76. Have you given any thought to the question of improved classification?—Yes, I have thought a lot about it, and I have tried to urge on the Department the absolute necessity for a third class.

77. That would very materially strengthen the hands of the Matron?—Undoubtedly.

78. And possibly do away with the necessity for the corporal punishment now inflicted?—Yes.

79. And there would be the further incentive to the girls to get from class to class, and so help them to keep straight?—Yes.