

William Gheesling, Embalmer, Tells of Wounds on Girl's Body

William Gheesling, the undertaker who embalmed Mary Phagan's body, was next called in.

"What is your business?" queried solicitor Dorsey.

"I am an embalmer."

"How long have you been in that service?"

"Fifteen years, or more."

"Did you see the body of Mary Phagan?"

"Yes. I first saw it at 15 minutes to 4 on the morning of April 27."

"Where was it?"

"In the basement of the National Penell factory."

"Describe it."

How Body Was Lying.

"It was lying on the face, arms crossed, and with a piece of wrapping twine and part of her underclothing looped around the throat. I put it in a basket and brought it to the P. J. Bloomfield undertaking establishment."

"Was there any impress on the throat?"

"Yes. An eighth-of-an-inch impression of the cord."

"What did you observe about the tongue?"

"It protruded about a quarter of an inch from the mouth."

"How many hours had she been dead?"

"From 10 to 15 hours—possibly longer."

"Had rigor-mortis set in?"

"Yes. It had been in effect for some time."

"What was the condition of the blood?"

"Very congested."

"How long does it require blood to settle?"

"It settles quickly sometimes, while at others it is slow."

"Did you examine the finger nails?"

"Yes, and found nothing but dirt."

"Anything on her underclothing?"

"Yes; blood."

"Did you observe anything else?"

Black Spot on Eye.

"A black spot on the eye that had been inflicted before death because of its swollen condition."

"Did you examine a wound in the skull?"

"Yes. There was no fracture, although the scalp had been broken."

"Was there any indication of the wound having been sustained before death?"

"Yes. Blood that had run from the gash was matted in the hair."

"Were you present when Frank came into your place that morning? Did you observe him?"

"No."

"What was the cause of her death?" Attorney Rosser interposed an objection to this question, which was sustained. He took the witness.

No Blood in Hair.

"When you first saw the corpse, there wasn't any blood in the hair, was there?" he asked.

"No."

"What did you go by in determining the time of her death?"

"Rigor-mortis."

"It sets in sometimes fast, doesn't it?"

"Sometimes even before death."

"How do you know?"

"It's necessary to know the cause of death to determine."

"What are these particular kind of cases with which you have had experience?"

"Bob Clay, who was recently hanged, and another executed man's corpse."

"It would take an expert medical man to—"

The question was interrupted by the witness, who said:

"No. A medical man don't necessarily know anything about embalming."

Embalming the Body.

"In case of death you embalm the body before the end of rigor-mortis, don't you, so that the rigor can be retained?"

"Yes."

"When the heart stops the blood stops wherever it is, doesn't it?"

"No. It goes back to the heart."

"Who helped you examine the body?"

"Dr. Hurt."

"What kind of fluid did you use?"

"My private kind."

"What ingredients is it composed of?"

"I would rather not reveal them. It is a formula of my own, and I would rather not tell it."

His request was granted.

"Tell of the visit of 'Boots' Rogers, John Black and Frank to your place?"

"They came in and I went back and pulled the sheet from the body, then I returned to the front of the shop."

"How much blood was extracted from her body?"

"One-half gallon."

"How much does it generally require?"

Embalming Fluid Injected.

"Enough to clear the corpse's features and face."

"How much fluid was injected?"

"One-half gallon."

"Did Dr. Hurt examine the body's finger nails?"

"Yes. He removed the substance."

"What happened Monday?"

"Dr. Hurt held a post-mortem examination."

The solicitor began questioning at this point.

"Did the girl's body lose much blood?"

"No."

"Was anything torn about her corpse?"

"Yes. A hose supporter was ripped loose."

He was removed from the stand.