

# Startling Statements Made During Testimony of Dr. Harris

Making the startling declaration that Mary Phagan had been killed within thirty or forty-five minutes after she had eaten dinner, Dr. Roy F. Harris, state chemist, took the stand during the afternoon session yesterday.

It was Dr. Harris who made the autopsy upon the body when it was disinterred in Marietta on May 5. He brought with him into court specimens of predigested cabbage which had been removed from the slain girl's stomach.

He also testified to the effect that the girl had suffered violence before death and recited the condition in which he had found blood vessels and tissues of the girl's organs.

He was questioned first by Solicitor Dorsey.

"What is your occupation?"

"I am a physician."

"How long have you been a physician?"

"Since 1889."

"Give the jury a brief history of your career."

"I was graduated in Atlanta in 1889 and in Philadelphia in 1890. I was professor of chemistry in the medical college at Philadelphia, and later became assistant professor of bacteriology in the Jefferson Medical college. I was professor in the Atlanta College of Medicine, and have been director of laboratory in the state board of health since the inauguration of the board."

"Did you examine the body of Mary Phagan?"

"Yes, On May 5."

"What did you discover, if anything?"

"Several discolorations. One was on the forehead, one on an arm and one on each of the left and right legs. A huge discoloration was on the right eye."

"What did the discoloration of the right eye seem to have been inflicted by?"

"By a fist."

"Was there another wound?"

"Yes. One on the head about an inch and a half in length. On removing the skull I found no break, but discovered signs of hemorrhage beneath—a hemorrhage which would have rendered the victim unconscious."

**Death Caused by Strangulation.**

"What was the cause of death?"

"There was a ridge in the throat apparently made by a stout cord. It was very deep. Strangulation, beyond a doubt, was the cause."

"Why do you say, doctor, that a fist

caused the discoloration of the eye?"

"Because the discoloration was swollen and didn't show any degree of contusion that an instrument or hard substance would have caused."

"Do you think that this and the other injuries were made before death?"

"Unquestionably."

"What did you find in her stomach upon its removal?"

"One hundred and sixty-six cubic centimeters of cabbage and biscuits."

"Was this substance digested?"

"No."

Here the witness took from his satchel a small vial containing fluid preservative, in which floated a small amount of cabbage.

"This," he said, "is some of what I removed from the stomach."

"How long was this substance in her stomach before death?"

"She was either killed or received the blow upon the head thirty or forty-five minutes after her last meal."

**Evidences of Violence.**

Dr. Harris then testified that in examining the organs of the girl's body, he had discovered evidences of violence.

"How long does it take a corpse to begin rigor-mortis?"

"It varies so much in different cases that it is impossible to determine."

"Are you able to say how long it was before Mary Phagan died?"

"No, I can't say."

"How long did she live after eating her last meal?"

"Thirty or forty-five minutes."

"How much blood did she lose?"

"That, I cannot say."

"It was upon this last answer that Dr. Harris suffered the collapse. He was assisted from the stand by Deputy Sheriff Plonnie Miner before the defense was able to begin its cross-examination.