

WISN 1

MISS MAHEL ISOMA WHEELER, sworn, testified:

EXAMINATION BY MR. DALY.

Q You are a trained nurse?

A Yes Sir, a registered nurse.

Q Where did you receive your training?

A Vanderbilt University Hospital.

Q Where is that?

A Nashville, Tenn.

Q How long were you there?

A For training, three years.

Q You are a graduate of that institution?

A Yes Sir, and I was connected with the institution after graduation..

Q What are you doing now?

A District nurse connected with Wesley House.

Q Are you in the employ of the Southern Methodist Church?

A Yes Sir.

Q Are you paid by that body?

A Yes Sir.

Q Do the Fulton Bag & Cotton Mills pay you any part of your salary?

A No Sir.

Q Where else have you worked in your profession?

A Well, as Deaconess - I am also Deaconess - as

Deaconess I worked in the Warnote Cotton Mills,
Nashville, Tenn.

Q Have you been connected with any other mills?

A No Sir.

Q Are you in close touch with the people that live
in the Fulton Mills Village?

A Yes Sir.

Q And those that work in the mill?

A Yes Sir.

Q Will you please tell me about their general
physical condition, if you know?

A Why, I find it remarkably good.

Q Why would you want to use the word "remarkably"?

A Well, in this way, for so many people, I think
the percentage is very small of illness.

Q Have you opportunities for observation of the
general health of children in that village?

A Yes Sir.

Q How is that?

A It is good.

Q What diseases are prevalent among the children?

A Well, the diseases are colds and throat troubles
mostly. Of course we have all individuals under two
years old. They have teething and marasmus.

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Q Is there any such disease as marasmus?

A Yes Sir, it is an un-nourished condition. I have been noticing it a short time.

Q How long have you been here?

A Not two months.

Q You succeeded Miss Cloud?

A Yes Sir, there was another nurse for a month or five weeks.

Q The two months you have been here, how many cases of marasmus have you seen?

A Not over four.

Q Did any of these cases get well?

A Well, they don't get well in a short length of time. We have to change the treatment.

Q Do any of them die?

A No Sir.

Q They are still there are they?

A Yes Sir.

Q Is there any tuberculosis in that village?

A There is very little that I come in contact with. With in the clinic there is only one case.

Q How many cases of all descriptions have you seen in the clinic since you have been there do you think?

A I don't think I have seen but this one pulmonary

case and one bone case.

Q I was speaking of special diseases. Are large numbers of people coming in the clinic for treatment?

A We have a large clinic but not large to compare to the number of people in the community, and of course we have a great many accident cases, that is cases where children are burned and their fingers would be tied up and cases like that, that style of cases brought on by conditions. Our clinics are large but they are usually minor cases.

Q What do you know of inherited diseases if any?

A Well, we are taught that people are predisposed to inherit diseases, but we try to eliminate the idea that anyone inherits. It is of course due to surroundings or other predisposed conditions.

Q Owing to weakness caused by the condition of ancestry?

A Yes Sir; all can be overcome.

Q Do you find any indications of syphilitic troubles among the children?

A There is very little. I have noticed very little because I have worked so much among negroes where there is so much more of it usually than among these people.

Q It is a disease that would come down from the

father or mother, isn't it?

A Yes Sir.

Q And would probably show itself in the children?

A Yes Sir, in the children, but we have very little of it. I have been astonished at the little we have had in comparison with other works I have been connected with.

Q Does that hold true in the Nashville district where you worked?

A It does. There was more in the Nashville district.

Q Did you work among the negroes in the Nashville district?

A In the hospital I did before I went off to the cotton mill. I worked in there first as Head-resident after I had my training. In tuberculous conditions there has been so little that I have been very proud of it since I have been here.

Q Do you go into their homes?

A Yes Sir.

Q What is the condition of these homes in point of cleanliness?

A Well, we find very few really clean homes, but I think that the average, in comparison with my other work, is very good. We believe in beginning at the homes.

That is the distressing part to me.

Q Did you take steps to try to have the homes kept clean when you came into them?

A Yes Sir.

Q Do they pay attention to what you say about them?

A It is a slow process, but I think they do. I notice especially this, when I have had a patient in the infirmary - we have a small infirmary - whom I have kept for a few days after an operation and I go to that patient's home with the patient, they immediately apologize for the home being dirty. I think they realize they have come from a clean place to a dirty place, and I begin work right there and never lose an opportunity.

Q Leaving out diseases of children, such as measles, whooping cough, and diseases of that kind, to what would you attribute the low vitality of any of the people you have seen in that village? What does nourishment have to do with it if anything?

A Malnutrition.

Q Are there cases arising from that source of trouble?

A Of course nourishment has a great deal to do with it; but these people thrive differently from what most people do. It is just seeing what they do live on; that is the coarse food, but they are raised on it and it does not seem to hurt them and I think from what I have

seen among them a good deal of it is due to the carelessness and ignorance of the mothers. If she knew better she would do better.

Q You mean in the preparation of the food?

A Yes Sir, and in the cleanliness of it; and it is so hard to teach them. It takes a long time.

Q As I understand it that is one great source of lowered vitality and diseases, isn't it?

A Yes Sir the improperly cooked food.

Q Does the lack of food enter into it?

A They don't lack for food such as it is.

Q Have you observed the diet of some of these people?

A Yes Sir, I have.

Q What do they have?

A You hear them speak of meat. I notice in the clinic work in which Dr. Payne is the man in authority he will ask them about meat and they speak about meat as fat meat, pork meat. They do not think of beef, mutton and lamb, or anything of that kind. Everything that is meat is fat meat. Side meat. They live on meat and bread. I have noticed here more than anything else is the large amount of bakers' bread they use. They are not using any vegetables except the dried vegetables. You see them using the dried beans.

Q What would breakfast consist of in the ordinary home in that village?

A I guess it is not much more than biscuits and meat, and then there is syrup and sugar. They use a great deal of that and our physicians attribute pellagra largely to the eating of sugar cane.

Q What does supper consist of?

A Beans, meat, bread and coffee. They boil the coffee for breakfast and supper, but put so many more grounds in it and boil it on.

Q What would their lunch consist of, their dinner?

A They use a great many pies, dried fruit; I have noticed that; fruit pies. I never saw them before; and they have plenty of it. You can go there anytime and find it on their tables. Of course the kitchen and dining room is the same, and there are such loads of it I think what in the world do they get all that for but if you stay until the meal is over you will see. They use a great deal of buttermilk. The children drink buttermilk.

Q Do you know anything about their moral status?

A I would rather not say much about that, because as I say I have only been here nearly two months and feel Miss Burton or someone else is the proper person to give you that information. I have watched very closely the

children and young girls and I try to warn them as much as I can.

Q Do you think there is much immorality in that village from your observation of it since you have been here?

A I just feel it is there. I cannot say I have seen it. My office hours keep me in in the evening. In the little visiting I have done at night I have seen the children in their homes, and I just don't know. It is just that feeling that there is danger all the time; and if children come into the clinic at night in my office hours I try to see that everyone of them come and go straight home. I just have that feeling of doubt for them. That is all.

Q Do you know of your own knowledge about the incomes of these families that you have visited in this mill village?

A I just know that all the grown people are working. All that are large enough are working, and I ask different ones in making my charges in the matter of the infirmary work how much they are getting, and if they are getting as much as that it must be a good deal; but I have not investigated it.

Q You think the funds are ample upon which they

could live?

A Of course we find a great many people whose pride is preventing them from letting it be known.

Q From letting what be known?

A Their works, their suffering. We are here on the ground to look into these things and reason with them about it. There is no need for them to suffer.

Q Have you heard the people speak of the relationship they bear to the owners of the mills?

A Nothing in a critical way, none whatever. I would never know there was any disturbance in the community if I had not been told of it. They all speak -- there is no criticism whatever.

Q What do they say?

A They just speak about it as their company, that they are glad to come here and work. Do not speak of any hardships or wish they did not work, here or anything.

Q What is your opinion of the sixty-hour law a week for the children that work in the mill? Sixty-hours a week for men, women and children; what would you think of that in the cotton mills for time? Do you think that is long enough for children to work? Ten hours a day?

A You are leaving out the Saturday afternoon?

Q Yes?

A Well, what would they be doing if they were not in the mill?

Q You are not to ask me any questions, I am asking you.

A I believe in keeping the children young and keeping the children with everything to advance the physical side, - work and play and good times.

Q Have these children any opportunity to play that work sixty hours a week, do you think? What do you think about that? What do you think of children laboring down in the South, working sixty hours? Is that long enough or too long?

A I think it is long enough.

Q Well is it too long? Don't be afraid to answer, speak out.

A I don't know whether I have thought about the time enough or not. When I worked in the Nashville mill we did not have any compulsory education then, when I was there. We have it now. It was proper there because the children were not made to go to school.

Q Do you approve of whole families working in the mill?

A I think that matter has to be thought of first. If a woman has a young baby she I think she is the one out of the family to stay at home.

Q Do you think mothers ought to work children in the mill?

A No, I think that is the hardest thing, it seems to me, for a mother of little children to have to leave her children and work in the mill. I think the men are to blame for it.

Q Is it because men do not know how to spend their money or do not get wages enough to keep their family, and as a matter of necessity the mother must work? What do you think about that?

A I think he gets money enough if she will take hold and help with him. She need never work in the mill.

Q What percentage of the mothers work in the mill from the village, do you think?

A I don't know.

Q Do many of them work?

A It seems to me like they do, but I don't know the number in the village and I do not know the number in the mill.

Q Suppose you were the mother of a family of three or four children and you would take your children over to Wesley House, little children, and leave them there and then work sixty hours a week in the mill, do you think you would feel like paying much attention to your home after you got back at night and keeping it clean?

A I think I would be a very remarkable person if I did,

but yet the mother instinct will make them do it of course. I think they expect it; think that they have to do it.

Q It would not be natural for a mother to have very much reserve strength to put upon her home after working that length of time would it?

A No, I have heard mothers say they had rather work in the home than in the fields. Sometimes they move from the country into the mill district, and they would rather be here than in the country with the children on a quilt or under some tree while they were hoeing.

Q Would that show mothers ought to work still?

A No Sir.

Q Let me ask you one more question. You have had large experience in cotton mills in Tennessee, have you?

A Only one, the Warnock Company.

Q Were large numbers of people going through that mill every year, a great number changing?

A Yes Sir, they change a great deal.

Q What reasons did you assign for such changes?

A Often the reason would be that some other mill would offer them just a nominal sum in dollars over the other mill; maybe for a little while only; they would not make over a dollar more, but they would like to feel that they must move, that they would make the little

eight or ten or fifteen dollars out of the other mill, never thinking that they would probably have to give up their furniture that they owed a number of installments on, and insurance and carfare that would have to be paid; they would never take that into consideration but just go.

Q Are there people changing frequently out of this mill?

A I don't know. I would know nothing about it.

I have noticed one thing here I have been very much pleased over, and that has been the sanitary conditions here.

Q As compared with the Nashville mill are they better?

A Yes Sir. We had a great deal of typhoid fever there, due to loose sanitary conditions. We have them much better here.

Q You have sewerage?

A Yes Sir, running water.

Q There you did not have sewerage?

A Yes Sir, we had sewerage, but they have wells and the village is a low part and is not kept up like this one is.
