

Physicians, for their courtesy in granting the use of the College for the meeting.

The proceedings then terminated.

The annual dinner was held in the evening at the Langham Hotel; Dr. Wood, President, in the chair. Among the guests present were Dr. Jenner, Dr. Quain, Dr. Webster, Dr. Sieveking, Dr. Garrod, Dr. Stewart, Dr. Radcliffe, Mr. Erichson, Mr. E. Hart, Mr. E. Sercombe, &c., &c.

#### *Confession of Constance Kent.*

The following letter appeared in the 'Times' of Monday, the 28th of August:

"SIR,—I am requested by Miss Constance Kent to communicate to you the following details of her crime, which she has confessed to Mr. Rodway, her solicitor, and to myself, and which she now desires to be made public.

"Constance Kent first gave an account of the circumstances of her crime to Mr. Rodway, and she afterwards acknowledged to me the correctness of that account when I recapitulated it to her. The explanation of her motive she gave to me when, with the permission of the Lord Chancellor, I examined her for the purpose of ascertaining whether there were any grounds for supposing that she was labouring under mental disease. Both Mr. Rodway and I are convinced of the truthfulness and good faith of what she said to us.

"Constance Kent says that the manner in which she committed her crime was as follows:—A few days before the murder she obtained possession of a razor from a green case in her father's wardrobe, and secreted it. This was the sole instrument which she used. She also secreted a candle with matches, by placing them in the corner of the closet in the garden, where the murder was committed. On the night of the murder she undressed herself and went to bed, because she expected that her sisters would visit her room. She lay awake watching until she thought that the household were all asleep; and soon after midnight she left her bedroom and went downstairs, and opened the drawing-room door and window shutters. She then went up into the nursery, withdrew the blanket from between the sheet and the counterpane, and placed it on the side of the cot. She then took the child from his bed, and carried him downstairs through the drawing-room. She had on her night-dress, and in the drawing-room she put on her goloshes. Having the child in one arm, she raised the drawing-room window with the other hand, went round the house and into the closet, lighted the candle, and placed it on the seat of the closet, the child being wrapped in the blanket, and still sleeping; and while the child was in this position she inflicted the wound in the throat. She says that she thought

the blood would never come, and that the child was not killed, so she thrust the razor into its left side, and put the body, with the blanket round it, into the vault. The light burnt out. The piece of flannel which she had with her was torn from an old flannel garment placed in the waste bag, and which she had taken some time before and sewn it to use in washing herself. She went back into her bedroom, examined her dress, and found only two spots of blood on it. These she washed out in the basin, and threw the water, which was but little discoloured, into the footpan in which she had washed her feet over night. She took another of her nightdresses and got into bed. In the morning her nightdress had become dry where it had been washed. She folded it up and put it into the drawer. Her three nightdresses were examined by Mr. Foley, and she believes also by Mr. Parsons, the medical attendant of the family. She thought the blood stains had been effectually washed out; but on holding the dress up to the light a day or two afterwards she found the stains were still visible. She secreted the dress, moving it from place to place, and she eventually burnt it in her own bedroom and put the ashes or tinder into the kitchen grate. It was about five or six days after the child's death that she burnt the nightdress. On the Saturday morning, having cleaned the razor, she took an opportunity of replacing it unobserved in the case in the wardrobe. She abstracted her nightdress from the clothes basket when the housemaid went to fetch a glass of water. The stained garment found in the boiler-hole had no connection whatever with the deed. As regards the motive of her crime, it seems that, although she entertained at one time a great regard for the present Mrs. Kent, yet if any remark was at any time made which in her opinion was disparaging to any member of the first family, she treasured it up, and determined to revenge it. She had no ill-will against the little boy, except as one of the children of her stepmother. She declared that both her father and her stepmother had always been kind to her personally, and the following is the copy of a letter which she addressed to Mr. Rodway on this point while in prison before her trial:—

“ ‘Devizes; May 15th.

“ ‘SIR,—It has been stated that my feelings of revenge were excited in consequence of cruel treatment. This is entirely false. I have received the greatest kindness from both the persons accused of subjecting me to it. I have never had any ill-will towards either of them on account of their behaviour to me, which has been very kind.

“ ‘I shall feel obliged if you will make use of this statement in order that the public may be undeceived on this point.

“ ‘I remain, Sir, yours truly,

“ ‘CONSTANCE E. KENT.

“ ‘To Mr. R. Rodway.’

“She told me that when the nursemaid was accused she had fully made up her mind to confess if the nurse had been convicted, and that she had also made up her mind to commit suicide if she was herself convicted. She said that she had felt herself under the influence of the Devil before she committed the murder, but that she did not believe, and had not believed, that the Devil had more to do with her crime than he had with any other wicked action. She had not said her prayers for a year before the murder, and not afterwards, until she came to reside at Brighton. She said that the circumstance which revived religious feelings in her mind was thinking about receiving sacrament when confirmed.

“An opinion has been expressed that the peculiarities evinced by Constance Kent between the ages of twelve and seventeen may be attributed to the then transition period of her life. Moreover, the fact of her cutting off her hair, dressing herself in her brother’s clothes, and leaving her home with the intention of going abroad, which occurred when she was only thirteen years of age, indicated a peculiarity of disposition, and great determination of character, which foreboded that, for good or evil, her future life would be remarkable.

“This peculiar disposition, which led her to such singular and violent resolves of action, seemed also to colour and intensify her thoughts and feelings, and magnify into wrongs that were to be revenged any little family incidents or occurrences which provoked her displeasure.

“Although it became my duty to advise her counsel that she evinced no symptoms of insanity at the time of my examination, and that, so far as it was possible to ascertain the state of her mind at so remote a period, there was no evidence of it at the time of the murder, I am yet of opinion that, owing to the peculiarities of her constitution, it is probable that under prolonged solitary confinement she would become insane.

“The validity of this opinion is of importance now that the sentence of death has been commuted to penal servitude for life, for no one could desire that the punishment of the criminal should be so carried out as to cause danger of a further and greater punishment not contemplated by the law.

“I have the honour to remain,

“Your very obedient servant,

“JOHN CHARLES BUCKNILL, M.D.

“Hilmorton Hall, near Rugby;  
“August 24th.”