

# Robert Stephenson (1794–1869)

President of the Belfast Medical Society

1850–51, 1851–52 and 1852–53

## Presidential Opening Address<sup>1</sup>

Belfast Medical Society  
2nd December 1850

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE  
BELFAST MEDICAL SOCIETY.

GENTLEMEN,

The following sketch of the revival of the Belfast Medical Library was prepared hastily, to be read at the first meeting of the present session. As its composition was hurried, it was not then very legible, and, of course, not very clearly delivered. The author begs leave to thank those present for their kind and unwearied attention on the occasion, and the expression of their wish that it should be transcribed, and placed among their records. That the members may be able to make themselves more generally acquainted with the contents than could be done through a manuscript, it has been printed, and a copy presented to each for his acceptance.

I remain, your very faithful Servant,

R. STEPHENSON, M.D.

Wellington Place, 9th December, 1850.

## ADDRESS

ON the 5th of November I was favoured with the following announcement from your worthy Secretary:—

BELFAST MEDICAL SOCIETY, *November 5, 1850.*

Dear Sir,—It is my very pleasing duty to acquaint you, that you were yesterday evening elected, by acclamation, President of the Belfast Medical Society, to which, I may say, you gave birth, and which you have cherished for so many years with such anxious care. May you long live to occupy the chair, which your high professional attainments, sterling principles, and ever merited esteem of the medical profession have so eminently entitled you.

I am, dear Sir,

Your's most truly and respectfully,

Æ. LAMONT,

Secretary, Medical Society.

To ROBERT STEPHENSON, Esq., M.D.,

Wellington Place.

On Thursday last I was waited on by Drs. Lynch and Collins, a Deputation from the Council of the Society, expressing a wish that I should take the chair on Monday the 2d December, and inaugurate, with an Address, the first meeting of the Society, since its constitution had been remodelled.

The changes, Gentlemen, which you have been pleased to make in its constitution have been very sweeping, though they tend to assimilate it, more than formerly, to the forms and regulations generally followed in our civic, and national institutions; yet they are very different in their principles and tendencies from the constitution originally formed for the Medical Society of Belfast, which was selected, at the time of its revival, as that most likely to develop the energy of the members, preserve a feeling of cordiality among them, and conduce to the permanence of the Institution. Under that organization, it cannot be said to have failed in its purpose, as it has now stood the test of nearly thirty years, embracing freely the whole range of the profession, as its own; and inviting them to meet together monthly, without recalling to their minds any distinction, or any difference among them, by conferring titles to high places. Under an equal and simple arrangement it advanced beyond the expectation of any individual, and increased yearly in value, and usefulness to the medical profession; and at length to such an extent, that none of the junior members feel now satisfied, that they enjoy the full benefit of their connexion with Belfast, until they have been admitted to share its privileges, which, since its revival, have been granted to 199 candidates.

As the deputation, who honoured me with their visit suggested, that an account of the revival of the present Medical Society, and of the individuals, who promoted its success by their exertions in its service, would prove acceptable to the members on the present occasion, I shall draw a sketch of its original constitution—give you an account of the downfall of its predecessor—of the benefactors to the present institution—and the sundry officers, deputed time by time, by its members to carry their regulations into effect. Since I retired from office, as your Secretary, I have avoided all opportunities of embarking in public business; my own affairs being fully adequate to engage my energies and attention. I have thus felt a good deal of distrust of myself in undertaking to hold the office of President to your Society, having lost my

<sup>1</sup> From Dun's Library, Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, with permission.

# Robert Stephenson

aptitude for addressing public bodies; and feel myself, from want of habit, not so equal as formerly to fill a prominent situation with satisfaction to myself, or credit to the appointment.

"The constitution of the Medical Society of Belfast was originally framed with a special view to aid the junior members of the profession. Many of them enter upon business with narrow means, and are unable from these to expend much in procuring the current literature of the day. The first attempt of the Association, which numbered only four members, Drs. M'Donnell and Forcade, Mr. Moore and myself, the acting staff of the hospital, were directed by these views; and being very humble in our expectations, and uncertain of success, aspired then to nothing greater than the circulation, among its members, of the most approved works in medical periodical literature, guarded with such restrictions as should insure their regularity and fair distribution, and afterwards allow them to accumulate, for farther consultation, if required. If my memory serve me, we agreed to venture on ordering a London Journal, Johnson's Medico Chirurgical Review, and the Edinburgh Journal, which were quarterly in their publication; the London Medical Monthly Journal, and Thomson's Chemical Journal. Periodical literature may be of passing interest, but is invaluable to those whose ideas are still unformed, and whose minds are not yet stored sufficiently, with their own experience, to direct measures in practice, required often on the emergency of the moment. The lectures and reports published in the periodicals, supply to such an endless fund of materials, as well for reflection, as for guides in practice.

The idea of their circulation, was modelled on the regulation of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh, which gives to those, who wish to take part in its debates, an opportunity of studying, at home, the papers prepared for discussion at their meetings. The parallel was followed, still farther, by connecting this arrangement of the periodicals with essays occasionally read by members; many of those contributed being of great interest, were for a time transcribed, and placed among the archives of the Society. The profession in town were not long in discovering the advantages to be gained by these arrangements, and hastened monthly to secure the benefits which they conferred, by offering themselves candidates for admission at the stated meetings of the members. These were fixed at eleven o'clock, forenoon, to accommodate any country members, who should wish to attend, and assist at the meetings of the Society—to secure the presence of the hospital

attendants, who then visited about that time, and assisted in making the number required to form a quorum, which was five, the fifth always acting as chairman. The number thus formed continued to be considered the Standing Committee of the Society during the ensuing month, to look after its business in any case of emergency, or to give council to the Treasurer, or Secretary in any case of doubt. Admissions were granted freely by ballot, one in five rejecting the candidate proposed, who was required to produce a diploma from a college of medicine, surgery, or pharmacy, to make him eligible. The resources of the Society increasing above its wants, an accumulation of capital enabled it to add, occasionally, standard works to the donations, presented to the former Medical Society by the late Dr. Drennan, and Dr. William Halliday, which still remained in the hospital.

By steadily working the system detailed, and with additions made by other generous benefactors, your collection now numbers many hundred volumes; and the constitution thus planned has worked so harmoniously, that the members have continued to increase steadily during a term of nearly thirty years—in that time, secessions from its ranks among those that joined, having mostly arisen from the removal of its members from town, which was often caused by change of views in life, or from better prospects of success opening to them in other places, very few, indeed, having withdrawn from any want of satisfaction in the benefits, conferred by their connexion with the Society.

The permanence of its predecessor was of such short duration, that the early supporters of the Association added another tie, besides the circulation, to make this more secure. They gave, after a term of twenty years' uninterrupted subscription, exemption from further contribution to its funds—a bonus, which appears to have contributed its full share to secure their wishes, and has hitherto served also to avert from it the fate of the former Medical Society—as it has raised an increasing and steady reserve, ready at any time to take a part in the management—to come to the rescue, when its own, or the interests of the Library are endangered by injudicious changes. The fickle are deterred by it from wavering, the steady rewarded for their perseverance, while delinquents, when they wish, may be again admitted to share freely in its benefits—their secession being marked merely by loss of standing, without the infliction of any penalty, in the form of entrance, to compensate for the increased advantages, which they must reap on re-admission from the accumulation of property,

## Robert Stephenson

that has accrued during their absence. These two regulations deserve always to be viewed with favour, as they promoted in a marked manner the permanence, and stability of the Association. The circulation of the periodicals keep it constantly before the members, by its weekly, and sometimes daily visits, refreshing their recollections with the interesting, and amusing style of their contents, and preparing them, at the same time, by bringing within view the intelligence of the day, to keep their minds ready to treat, and grapple with the epidemic of the season. Any irregularity, in conforming to these regulations, benefits the Society by contributing, in the form of penalty, a valuable addition to the funds, and these are again disposed of for the benefit even of the defaulters, as well as of the regular contributors, by adding to the accumulation both of books and property; in this way any loss sustained by the arrangements has been more than repaid by the permanent benefits created by the steady interest, and stability, which the circulation has given to the Institution. It has made members, in active practice, wary of forfeiting the renewed benefit and enjoyment, which it confers, sometimes daily, joined with the risk of incurring the penalty already stated; and tends to foster among them an unwearied steadiness, and support of the Society, by marking temporary secession with the loss of standing and privilege. These two principles should never be lost sight of by the supporters of the Institution, and those anxious for its permanence, as they have fulfilled the purpose of its founders, and served to give a duration to this Association much longer, than was enjoyed by its predecessor.

It ran no such lengthened course; but its principles and constitution were, until now, widely different from the present. The first Medical Society had its President and Council, but it never aimed at giving the same steady assistance to the junior branches of the profession; and finally became exclusive, chary of its admissions, centralized until nothing remained except the governing authorities, who finally seized upon it as their victim, dividing the spoil among themselves. When that institution had so far dwindled by their management, as to number as members merely the president, with the officials and council, it was consigned to ruin by partition among themselves. That was indeed the season of faction, and party-spirit among the profession in Belfast, arising from difference of opinion, and of views as to the best means of managing the interests, and medical care of the poor by gratuitous attendance, or by officers appointed, and paid by salaries. In

consequence of the difficulty of raising funds adequate to the current expenses, and the cases of sickness, claiming relief, being numerous and pressing, the views of the former prevailed; and, after much warmth of temper, and bitterness of opinion, the latter being foiled, seceded from the Hospital, and scattered the books connected with the library, the records of which have also passed into oblivion. Party-spirit rose so high at that time in the profession, that the seceders from the Hospital, not willing that their successors in attendance should reap even the benefit of what they themselves would not enjoy, or that the books should be left there, cleared the library of its contents, returning even the donations. The first proposal was to divide by lot the property collected, but this being overruled, it was finally decided to dispose of it by auction, that the proceeds of sale might be divided among themselves, without regard to the interest held in the property by those, who had been members, but seceded before the time of spoliation arrived—wary of the views, and of the measures of those, active in the management. With some difficulty, and after strong remonstrance, they were luckily prevented from bringing to the hammer the generous donations of Dr. Drennan and Dr. Wm. Halliday, who had contributed to enlarge the collection by gifts of their medical libraries—both having retired on competence from the fatigues, and worry of business. Their books had been selected with care and discernment, from the most approved publications of the day, for their individual instruction in the knowledge of the profession; and, with the current literature of the times, collected during the continuance of the Society, had made the library of considerable importance. But it had then become of little interest, or general utility to the profession, in consequence of the exclusive power acquired by the council of admitting members to its enjoyment and privileges. As the sale of the donations was overruled, they were returned to the donors. Dr. Drennan was by this time dead, and for some time the books continued to embarrass considerably the surviving relatives, to whom they were useless and annoying. The late Dr. Stephenson, who again took office as attendant to the Hospital in ordinary, well aware of the value of the donations to the profession, and of the perplexity of the legatees, solicited them to replace the books in the Library, becoming responsible for their safety. He was afterwards chosen an honorary member, as the application was liberally granted, and these collections restored to their places in the Hospital. A generous wish for the interest of the profession, and the revival of the Medical Society,

## Robert Stephenson

influenced Dr. Halliday to be persuaded by the same solicitation, and replace his donation in the Library, and his name in consequence now deservedly holds the first rank among your honorary members. He was justly esteemed by his cotemporaries for every quality that could make him respectable; and though unable for many years from bodily infirmity to follow the active duties of his profession, he continued to be a zealous student of it till near his death, as the records of your library show him to have been a constant applicant for books.

As far as related to the Library, everything remained in this state from 1818 to 1822, when the first effort to revive it was made by myself, by summoning the attending and consulting staff to meet in the Hospital on the 8th of May, to take the revival of the Society into consideration. Only four answered to the call; but they took the right path, and fortified the institution with such regulations, and checks, to escape a second disaster, that it has outlived all then present except myself: while it did not cease to reward them during their lives, as well with the promise of permanent success, as to become afterwards to the profession a valuable legacy of their good wishes, and a valuable memorial of the lasting interest they had in the welfare, intelligence, and prosperity of their successors. Arrangements having been put into regular train for a supply of the best conducted periodicals, and the surplus funds devoted to the purchase of standard works in medicine, surgery, and the kindred sciences, the collection grew apace, and became daily more attractive to the members of the profession. In addition to the accumulation gradually arising from the purchase of books, it was farther enlarged by a generous donation from Dr. MacCormac, and, latterly, by the entire library of the late Dr. Thomson, numbering eight hundred volumes, which had been collected by him during a long career in a deservedly successful, and honourable professional life, during which he earned the confidence of the public, and the affection, esteem, and gratitude of his medical brethren, by a gentlemanly suavity of manner, and the affectionate interest, which he always took in promoting their success, and welfare in the profession. It would be ungenerous to avoid stating on the present occasion, that he was the only individual member of the first Association, who made an attempt to remedy the mischief formerly committed; but, by his splendid bequest, he has justly entitled himself to rank, as he well deserves to be placed, among our most liberal and generous benefactors. In addition to these, several smaller donations have been made by various

members and well-wishers to the institution, and mark their approval of its objects; among the most considerable of which, I have been reminded not to pass over unnoticed, that given by Dr. M'Gee. Though it may be thought indelicate to dwell on the merits of active, and ordinary members in eulogy, it must be equally ungracious to pass them in silence, as the example, in such a cause, should be known to have its influence on all.

The first shock felt by the Society arose from the removal, by death, of Dr. Forcade, in the year 1835. He had taken an early interest in its revival, accepted office as Treasurer, and from his accurate knowledge of finance, established, with unwearied zeal, such a system of checks, as made it difficult for any irregularity to escape detection, or any delinquent to cease from being a valuable and profitable member to the Association, or from increasing its welfare even by his errors. He levied all penalties without any feeling of remorse: but while he excelled in the "*fortiter in re*," he joined with it in his nature so much of the "*suaviter in modo*" that none took lasting offence at his energy in your service; but, making a merit of necessity, paid their fines with at least a seeming good grace, rather than withdraw from the Society. To his many estimable qualities he added a vast, and endless relish for conviviality, and, by a happy thought, engrafted on the institution an appendage which has served, as much as any other branch of it, to strengthen its hold on the good-will of the profession. The annual dinners were his thought, and during his life he promoted them with unwearying energy; sparing no toil capable of making them be looked to by the members as an annual festival, abounding in every social and convivial enjoyment. The octogenarian has sat there with the tyro, and there the elder members of the profession were happy to relax themselves from the toil of business, and meet those entering the goal with the right-hand of fellowship; while the asperity and bitterness of the day has there been mellowed in the generous juice of the vine. Nothing could have served better to hold together all in an united harmony, or to maintain that cordial union in the profession, which is not only creditable to the members, but necessary to maintain their weight and respectability with the public. It is pleasing to look back on such a character as Dr. Forcade, and to think of an individual, who could raise himself by his dexterity, as a surgeon, to the highest rank in the confidence of the public, and the profession, yet who would work with the diligence of a clerk on every detail, that could in any way tend to the perfection, and stability of a Society so essentially connected

## Robert Stephenson

with the mutual improvement, and intelligence of his professional brethren. He is gone, and we may muse with the sage, in his reverie, and exclaim with him –

“ When shall we look upon his like again?”

The Society paid his memory a merited compliment on his death. They kept their circulars in mourning until the appointment of his worthy successor, Dr. Burden, as Treasurer.

Since his time, I understand that another department has been engrafted on the Institution, not contemplated in the original plan of the Society. The Pathological Museum—a morbid excrescence which, I trust, shall never be allowed to prey deeply on its vitals—for, if at any time, it should become desirable for the Medical Society to break their connexion with the Hospital, it might give cause of umbrage and dispute, to claim these specimens, or remove them with their other property, from this situation, to a more approved locality. It is an acquisition, however showy, which is not likely to be interesting, or capable of being made useful to the generality of members, as it is inconvenient, and injurious to carry away the preparations for study, so that they can eventually only prove generally useful to the medical staff, connected with the Hospital, and in the habit of giving lectures to such pupils, as attend their clinical visits. On this account there can be no good grounds for consuming the funds of the Library for the benefit of the one, or the advantage of the other. There are many works, connected with all the branches of the profession, which are still wanted to complete the collection, and when these have been had, funds are yet needed to raise a building to contain it, free of the interference of any other body, and to place it within the sole control of the profession, where the members might meet freely, and take council in a style worthy of their rank; and, like their brethren in other places of distinction, have an edifice, which would confirm the standing, and importance, and independence of the profession in Belfast. We shall not, till then, be clear of the risk of having our collection again scattered, or free from the effects of any broil, that may arise again among the Hospital attendants.

The last topic with which I shall detain you will be a passing allusion to my own tenure of office, as Secretary. As most of the members present are in possession of what has passed here since my resignation, it will not be necessary to encroach longer on the business of the meeting by entering on details, with which they must be more familiar than myself.

I acted as Secretary to the Medical Society during the treasurership of Dr. Forcade, and held office until the year 1838, when embarrassed by business, and other perplexing duties, and being determined to relax for some time, I visited the Continent. Having from severe experience found, that no individual could continue to fulfil the increasing duties of the situation, I recommended, that these should be lessened by throwing part of them on the Librarian, who should in consequence have a salary: and I have the satisfaction to think that this arrangement has been useful to the Library, and more satisfactory to the members. Having to the utmost set all things in order, I hastened to free myself of the trammels of office, and had the satisfaction of being succeeded by the late Dr. Sanders. With his zeal, and successful exertions in the service of the Society, until death deprived us of his valuable assistance, you are all well aware. I cannot pass over unnoticed the distinguished compliment made to me on that occasion by the members connected with the Society, which, of itself, would more than compensate for any labour given in their behalf; and an indifference, even now to their attention and kindness to me then, would on my part, be highly unbecoming. They not only favoured me with an invitation to a sumptuous public entertainment, but presented to me an enduring mark of their acknowledgment—a copy of the “Bridgewater Treatise;” marking their esteem, individually, by favouring me each with his autograph attached to the work, and an Address, couched in all the suavity of diction, with which our late accomplished member Dr. Thomson was so familiar. It was as follows:—

Sir,—the Members of the Belfast Medical Society, regretting deeply your resignation of the office of Secretary to the Society—the laborious duties of which you have performed since the revival of the Library, in 1822—cannot allow the occasion to pass by, without expressing their utmost satisfaction with the very efficient manner in which those duties have been discharged—certainly with the greatest advantage to them, but with much inconvenience and trouble to you, and at an immense sacrifice of valuable time, considering your many other important professional engagements.

Although, Sir, you were not the original founder of the Medical Society, one object of which has been to collect and diffuse all the information, either literary or strictly medical, that may conduce to the improvement and consequent respectability of the profession; yet, we believe it is not going beyond the truth, nor exaggerating in the slightest degree, to say that the founders of the Society may attribute the success attendant upon the carrying out of their

# Robert Stephenson

laudable intentions to the punctual regularity, and untiring zeal of their Secretary.

Another important object of this Society, and one the accomplishment of which was to you a matter of anxious solicitude, has been to a great extent realised by your indefatigable exertions—namely, the union of the members of the Medical profession in Belfast and its vicinity, by a cement the most binding, and likely to be permanent, because pure and unselfish—the love of science; and their mutual friendly co-operation in the pursuit of that knowledge peculiar to the medical profession—which, whilst it ennobles its possessors and raises them high on the social scale, is, in its exercise and practical application to the relief of human suffering, incalculably beneficial to mankind at large.

But, Sir, it is unnecessary to dilute on the many advantages, which have accrued to the profession in this town and neighbourhood by your unwearied and honourable exertions—suffice it to say, that there is, and can be but one sentiment on this subject among the Members of the Medical Society, and it is, that the Society owes its present prosperous state to your labours. The intimation of your intention to retire from the Secretaryship was therefore received with unfeigned regret by all the members, feeling as they did that it would be nearly, if not altogether, impossible for any new officer to discharge the duties so efficiently; but their gratitude to you for past services was much enhanced by your kind promise to give your valuable assistance and advice to our new Secretary, on any occasion when they might be required, and by your encouraging assurance to him and to every member of the Society, that by increased labour undertaken, and greater responsibility incurred for the good of the institution, their interest in its welfare would be proportionably augmented.

From these considerations, Sir, we feel impelled by a deep and lasting sense of gratitude for the obligations you have thus conferred upon each and all of us, to return you our most sincere thanks for your invaluable services, and to assure you of the high satisfaction we have always experienced in your society; but as we know that all-destroying time is apt to obliterate in part the remembrance even of the strongest feelings, we deem it due to you to present, and would venture to crave your acceptance of, the accompanying volumes, not as a suitable return for your kindness, or an adequate test of our gratitude, but as a small and more enduring testimonial of them; and to mark our high esteem and sincere respect for you as a physician and a gentleman, considering it superfluous further to refer to your characteristic qualities in either capacity, because they are so well known and appreciated.

SAMUEL SMITH THOMSON, M.D., } *Chairman and Secretary*  
CHARLES HURST, SURGEON. } *to the Meeting.*

To which Dr. Stephenson returned the following reply:—

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—Since the day on which I understood that the Members of the Medical Society wished to favour me with the pleasing compliment which they now pay me, on retiring from the discharge of the official duties of Secretary to their Society, I have been attempting to arrange my thoughts in such a manner as to enable me on this occasion to give utterance to my feelings, in words expressive of my sentiments of its worth. Having failed in all my attempts to give myself anything like satisfaction in arranging them, I have been obliged to content myself with the following irregular and imperfect expression of my thanks. It is necessary to give you this explanation, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, at the commencement, to prepare you for the imperfect manner in which I am about to thank you for your attention and your invitation on this occasion—that you may be assured that the failure on my part is the result of my inability, in the present instance, and not of any tendency to disrespect or to undervalue the high favour, which you have conferred. In conducting the business of the office, to which I have been so often re-appointed, I feel well aware that I have been, in many respects, inefficient, and in other points, especially in looking after the details, ill calculated to fulfil the duties of it. The difficulties were increased by the avocations of my professional business, with which I have been struggling during the same time, and must have contributed on many occasions to the loss of the institution. Being thus circumstanced, and unable to control even my own irregularities, I found it requisite, notwithstanding your solicitations, to come to the resolution of resigning. Though each individual of our medical commonwealth strove to be foremost in working for the Society, at every call made on his exertions, and brought the arrangements committed to his superintendence to a perfection even above the most sanguine expectations, I could not be insensible to the ready assistance that was thus largely afforded to me, and always at my command. Knowing still how much practical benefit arises from the infusion of fresh ardour into any establishment, and the invigorating influence which zeal, well directed by the energy of a new agent, effects on the efforts of preceding trials, I feared, that by holding office longer, in these circumstances, I should not be doing justice to the interest of an Institution, which we all cherish.

Having had so many years experience in the business connected with the Secretaryship, and aware how much the vital interests of the Institution were connected with its efficient performance, and being well aware, from a knowledge of my own inaccuracies, of the difficulty of selecting a successor adequate to undertake all these, and continue to perform them while they increased with the increasing importance of the Institution, I have for some time past felt anxious to have such alterations completed in the constitution of the Society, as should most effectually insure the continuance and action of these arrangements, and while they should relieve your Secretary, contribute at the same time to the benefit of the members, and enlarge the utility of the Library. The result has indeed induced a

## Robert Stephenson

permanent demand on the funds of the Society by the payment of a Librarian for relieving the Secretary of superintending the circulation, issuing it with regularity, and sending notices to members to insure their attendance at the monthly meetings. Though this expenditure may detract from the available funds of the Society to a certain extent, yet it was pleasing to observe such unanimity of sentiment on these points, that they were adopted without hesitation, and acted on without delay, before Dr. Sanders accepted office. They promise, too, to answer every purpose for which they were enacted, and this circumstance is particularly gratifying, as these two regulations seem to me to have contributed largely, and to have become the foundation of our success as a Society, and their observance will indubitably contribute in future to its strength and permanence. By the circulation of the periodical literature of the day, the immediate benefit arising from our close connection, and our mutual interest in its continuance and support, is renewed weekly, or perhaps oftener, and by the monthly notices the members are reminded of the duty required of them, in return for the knowledge and information that have been brought home to them at so easy, and so reasonable a rate.

As far as my recollection serves me, this is the first convivial favour that has been conferred by his fellow-practitioners on any member of the profession in this town, and should call forth corresponding feelings and high expressions of thanks on my part, for having been selected as the object of it—for it cannot be but a pleasing gratification to any individual, that, in his intercourse with his professional brethren, he has conducted himself so as to acquire this flattering mark of kindness from so many as are present here; and that it has fallen to his lot to render them such service, as they are not inclined to pass over unnoticed. In undertaking, from the commencement, the duties of your Secretary, I had pleased myself with the idea of doing such service to the members of the professional community to which I have the good fortune to belong, as should unite them hereafter in an honourable, and an useful fellowship, and bind them together in future by the pleasing bonds of mutual kindness and interest, and that this reflection on the accomplishment of the task, effected so as to render the success permanent—should prove my never-ending reward. The experiment having at length shown that the attainment of those results is not only practicable, but interesting and useful, I calculated on being now allowed to retire calmly to the enjoyment of such reflections; but you have been pleased to deprive me of these quiescent gratifications; and, by your flattering marks of attention this morning, and your valuable and classic remembrance, you now, on the other hand, must ever after leave me largely your debtor.

ROBERT STEPHENSON, M.D.

11th June, 1838.

Overwhelmed with so many favours, and acts of kindness, private and public, I shall be unable to look with indifference on anything connected with the

interests of the Medical Society, or its Library, and shall always feel myself happy in being allowed in any way to contribute to its prosperity and advancement. Having been for some years superannuated as an active member, I have been inclined to leave the management entirely in the hands of the members in ordinary, who would suit its constitution to the times, and make, with less hesitation, those alterations, which the increasing extension and importance of the Medical Library requires, and, perhaps, do this with more judgment, than some, who may be wedded to old and early associations, by useless and hurtful prejudices. For these reasons, I should have wished to have been allowed to live out of harness for the time to come, if it had been your pleasure; still, I do not like to make a stand in opposition to the deliberate arrangements of my professional brethren, and if my services can now aid them in carrying forward the Institution to higher degrees of utility, and advancing it still higher in distinction, I am ready, in virtue of my engagements, to join them heartily, and labour again, if required, in a valuable, honourable, and creditable enterprise.

2d November, 1850.