

DEATH OF MR. NEIL SNODGRASS, C.E.

An extraordinary man has just been gathered to his fathers, Mr. Neil Snodgrass, whose death it is this day our painful duty to record was unquestionably one of the most inventive and remarkable geniuses of our time. The close of his brilliant but singularly unrewarded life, forms a fitting opportunity for doing public justice to those merits which enriched every one but himself, and which must forever unite the name of our deceased townsman and friend, with the history of the steam-engine, and of the rise and progress of the cotton manufacture in this country. Mr. Snodgrass died at his residence in South Portland Street, on the morning of Wednesday last, in the 73rd year of his age.

Of the early life of this eminent person we know comparatively little. He was, we believe, a native of Edinburgh, and was educated at the Ayr Academy, where he achieved high honours in mathematics. Although, however, enjoying greater advantages perhaps than Arkwright, he was like him almost entirely self-taught in those departments of mechanical science in which he was afterwards destined to excel. That he must have evinced, however, a very early capacity for comprehending

complex combinations of machinery is evident from an anecdote which he sometimes told, that the first watch he received when a boy he took entirely to pieces to the last wheel, and built it up again with perfect accuracy and success.

The first employers of Mr. Snodgrass were Messrs. George Houston & Co., Johnstone. This was about the year 1794. At that time cotton factories were heated by means of stoves, a process attended with many disadvantages, and it was while in Johnstone that the idea of employing steam for this purpose first suggested itself to Mr. Snodgrass. The late Sir John Robison of Edinburgh was likewise in the employment of Messrs. Houston & Co. at the period mentioned, and between the two young men, both of a scientific turn of mind, the project was often and earnestly discussed. In 1796, Sir John, then Mr. Robison, removed to the works of James Watt at Soho, near Birmingham, while Mr. Snodgrass proceeded to Glasgow to superintend the construction of the machinery for Messrs. Dale & Mackintosh's mill at Dornoch in Sutherlandshire, of which he had been appointed manager with a small share in the concern. The opportunity seemed favourable to Mr. Snodgrass for giving his steam-heating plan a fair trial and he urged its adoption in the Sutherlandshire mill with all

the energy he could command, but both Mr Dale and Mr. Mackintosh refused to lay out money on the experiment, in consequence chiefly of Mr. Kelly, the manager of the cotton mills at Lanark, and the inventor of the contrivance for moving the mule jenny by machinery, having been sent by Mr. David Dale, the proprietor, to Soho, expressly to consult James Watt on the subject, and having obtained an opinion from that eminent authority that it would not be found to answer, at least to any great extent, or in large tenements such as cotton factories. Mr Snodgrass, however, was convinced of the practicability of his invention, and in a correspondence with his friend Mr Robison continued to urge its claims in opposition to the views of Watt. Finding it impossible, however, to produce conviction in any influential quarter, Mr Snodgrass at length, in 1789, resorted to the bold course of fitting up the necessary apparatus in the Dornoch mill at his own personal expense and risk, and in that distant locality, removed from any kind of assistance, and in the teeth of the most formidable difficulties, he succeeded in accomplishing his purpose. The result, we need