

From the epoch of Silurian crinoids to the era of the drift and its included traces of human arts, is a transition as vast in point of time as the distances in space which the astronomer reduces to definite figures, but which the mind in vain attempts to realize. Compared with such a transition, the lapse of time from the earliest traces of human art to our modern nineteenth century is brief enough; yet the contrast seems scarcely so great between the organic forms of our lower silurian rocks, and the mammals of the drift, as that which separates the first rude evidences of human ingenuity in the latter formation, from such triumphs of mechanical skill as the "Great Eastern" of the Thames, or the "Victoria Tubular Bridge" of our own St. Lawrence. The great achievement of mechanical science and fearless enterprise embodied in the gigantic structure which now spans the wide waters of the St. Lawrence, and has been opened for traffic since last we assembled here, is the crowning feature of that arterial system of railways which well nigh annihilates for us the impediments of time and space and is already revolutionizing our whole relations of commercial and social life.

It is impossible, however, to revert to either of those wonderful triumphs of mechanical science, without also recalling the painful coincidence that, alike in the Great Eastern Steam Ship and the Victoria Bridge, the inventive genius that had planned and directed each, throughout all the stages of its progress towards completion, was snatched away when seemingly on the eve of realizing his most cherished hopes. The death of Robert Stephenson, at the too early age of fifty-one, only a few weeks before the completion of that colossal creation of his genius which constitutes, not for Canada only, but for the world at large, one of the fittest memorials of the great Engineer, has already been referred to in the Annual Report of the Council: for, honored by ranking him among our Honorary Members, the Canadian Institute claims her share in the loss occasioned by the death of him whose remains have been laid amid the royal and noble dead of Westminster Abbey, with marks of distinction and tokens of public sorrow, rarely accorded but to such combinations of genius and great personal worth.

Your attention has been recalled by the interesting communication of Dr. Rae, to the latest results of Arctic discovery, which, while clearing up all mystery as to the fate of the lamented Franklin, ranks him in one sense among those whose loss we have anew mourned during