

G E N I U S .

PART II.

Not only throughout Great Britain, but over the whole continent of Europe, the fame both of George Stephenson and his son, has been diffused and rendered lasting by works of almost imperishable magnificence and stability,—proud triumphs of engineering skill. See the tubular bridge at Conway, or the Britannia across the Menai Straits, with many others, too numerous to mention, besides the innumerable lines of railway projected or carried out by them, both at home and abroad. From Leopold of Belgium the elder Stephenson received the honour of knighthood, but neither fame nor wealth could ever sully the beautiful simplicity of character for which he was so remarkable.

His benevolence was universally felt and acknowledged. He resided principally in the neighbourhood of one of his extensive mines, where he employed upwards of one thousand labourers, and it was his greatest delight to superintend, or personally satisfy himself about their welfare and well-doing; in return, they looked up to him almost in the light of a father.

I have heard many amusing and interesting anecdotes of his benevolence of disposition, his child-like simplicity, his love of nature, which he kept untainted to the last, from the same gentleman before alluded to, who had the privilege of his friendship. He might well be called the “poor man’s friend.” Here where fuel is so easily obtained, and where the labourer rejoices in such liberal wages, a faint idea only can be formed of the privations of the poorer classes at home during a severe winter, where coal is so expensive. Acting with the true philanthropy of his nature, Mr. Stephenson set himself strenuously to oppose everything approaching to monopoly in the coal trade, and laboured hard and successfully in lowering the price of it by means of transportation by railway to the midland and southern counties of England. He was truly a *public* benefactor; no selfish views ever corroded his great undertakings; it was for public benefit he laboured, and that alone. Courted and flattered by the wealthy and the aristocracy of Britain, he nobly resisted any importunity or temptation to open a line on what he knew would prove a non-paying route, though often urged by most plausible and powerful arguments from those