

Letter from Erasmus Darwin to Matthew Boulton, 1789/01/18

A dispute had arisen between Darwin's son, Robert, by 1789 a physician in Shrewsbury, and Dr. William Withering, another Lunar Society member. Darwin's relations with Withering had been previously soured over the use of digitalis in treating heart disease and Darwin writes to Boulton for evidence against Withering.

Derby Jan 18-89

Dear Boulton

When I had the pleasure of seeing you, you mention'd to me that Dr Withering had congratulated Mr Francis of the Moat at Birmingham on the perfect recovery of his father the day before He died. Dr Robt. at Shrewsbury acquaints me, that He is about to answer Dr W's printed paper, and wishes to know the fact about Mr Francis, whether Dr W congratulated him on the recovery of his father the day before his death, or the day but one before his death. And I wish to know whether Mr Francis himself told you so – you may depend on your name not being mention'd, least it should bring a war upon you. I hear the faculty in Birmingham are on Dr Robt's side of the question; and will I trust be more so, the more it is canvass'd.

I often lament being at so great a distance from you – your fire-engine for coining money gave me great pleasure for a week after I saw it – and the centrifugal way of regulating the fire. If you ever come near Derby pray give me a day of your company. I hope your gravelly complaint does not now molest you – pray write me an account how you are in that respect.

Adieu from, dear Boulton,

Your old affectionate friend

E Darwin