

CHAPTER IX

RISE of the modern conception of the theory of the Earth. Hutton, Playfair.

WHILE the din of geological warfare resounded across Europe, and the followers of Werner, flaunting the Neptunist flag in every corner of the continent, had succeeded in making the system promulgated from Freiberg almost supplant every other, a series of quiet and desultory researches was in progress, which led to the establishment of some of the fundamental principles of modern geology. We have now to turn our eyes to the northern part of the British Isles, and to trace the career of a man who, with singular sagacity, recognising early in life the essential processes of geological change, devoted himself with unwearied application to the task of watching their effects, and collecting proofs of their operation, and who combined the results of his observation and reflection in a work which will ever remain one of the great classics of science. In following the course of his researches, we shall see another illustration of the influence of environment on mental tendencies, and mark how the sea-shores and mountains, the