

The Scottish capital had not yet begun seriously to suffer from the centripetal attractions of London. It was the social centre of Scotland, and retained within its walls most of the culture and intellect of that ancient kingdom. Hutton, from his early and close connection with Edinburgh, had many friends there, and, on his return for permanent residence, was received at once into the choicest society of the town. One of his most intimate associates was Dr. Joseph Black, the famous chemist to whom we owe the discovery of carbonic acid. This sympathetic friend took the keenest interest in Hutton's geological theories, and was able to contribute to their formation and development. Hutton himself acknowledges that one of his doctrines, that of the influence of compression in modifying the action of heat, was suggested by the researches of Dr. Black. The chemist's calm judgment and extensive knowledge were always at the command of his more impulsive geological friend, and doubtless proved of essential service in guiding him in his speculations.

Another of Hutton's constant and intimate associates was John Clerk of Eldon, best known as the author of a work on naval tactics, and the inventor of the method of breaking the enemy's line at sea, which led to so many victories by the fleets of Great Britain. A third member of his social circle, who may be alluded to here, was the philosopher and historian Adam Ferguson, a man of remarkable force of character, who, to his various literary works, which were translated into French and German, added the distinction of a diplomatist, for in 1778-1779 he acted