

At last, after an interval of some five years, De Luc assailed the "Theory" in a series of letters in the *Monthly Review* for 1790 and 1791. So far as we know, Hutton published no immediate reply to these attacks. He had often been urged by his friends to publish his entire work on the Theory of the Earth, with all the proofs and illustrations which had been accumulating in his hands for so many years. He delayed the task, however, until, during the convalescence from his first severe illness, he received a copy of a strenuous attack upon his system and its tendencies by Richard Kirwan, a well-known Irish chemist and mineralogist of that day.<sup>1</sup>

This assailant not only misconceived and misrepresented the views which he criticized, but charged their author with atheistic opinions. Weakened as he was by illness, Hutton, with characteristic energy, the very day after he received Kirwan's paper, began the revision of his manuscript, and worked at it until he was able to send it to the press. It appeared in 1795, that is, ten years after the first sketch of the subject had been given to the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Besides embodying that sketch, it gave a much fuller statement of his conclusions, and an ampler presentation of the facts and observations on which they were founded. It formed two octavo volumes. Playfair tells us that a third volume,

<sup>1</sup>"Examination of the Supposed Origin of Stony Substances," read to the Royal Irish Academy, 3rd February, 1793, and published in vol. v. of their *Transactions*, p. 51. For a crushing exposure of Kirwan's mode of attack see Playfair's *Illustrations of the Huttonian Theory*, §§ 119, 418.