

by foot, dug out of the solid framework of the land by the same natural agents—rain, frost, springs, rivers—by which they are still made wider and deeper. “The mountains,” he said, “have been formed by the hollowing out of the valleys, and the valleys have been hollowed out by the attrition of hard materials coming from the mountains.” This is a doctrine which is only now beginning to be adequately realised. Yet to Hutton it was so obvious as to convince him, to use his own memorable words, “that the great system upon the surface of this earth is that of valleys and rivers, and that however this system shall be interrupted and occasionally destroyed, it would necessarily be again formed in time while the earth continued above the level of the sea.”

Although these views were again and again proclaimed by Hutton in the pages of his treatise, and though Playfair, catching up the spirit of his master, preached them with a force and eloquence which might almost have insured the triumph of any cause, they met with but scant acceptance. The men were before their time; and thus while the world gradually acknowledged the teaching of the Scottish School as to the past history of the rocks, it lent an incredulous ear to that teaching when dealing with the present surface of the earth. Even some of the Huttonians themselves refused to follow their master when he sought to explain the existing inequalities of the land by the working of the same quiet unobtrusive forces which are still plying their daily tasks around us. But no incredulity or neglect can destroy the innate vitality of truth. And so now, after the lapse of fully two generations, the views of Hutton have in recent years been revived, especially in Britain, and have become the war-cry of a yearly increasing crowd of earnest hard-working geologists.