the next chapter, while they vigorously contended for the igneous origin of the "whinstone" (basalt) rocks, in opposition to the teachings of the Neptunists, looked upon these rocks as "not of volcanic, nor of aqueous, but certainly of igneous origin," having been "formed, in the bowels of the earth, of melted matter poured into the rents and openings of the strata."[1] So intent were the Plutonists on collecting all the evidence they could find in favour of the deep-seated and intrusive origin of these masses, that they naturally neglected or explained away, in accordance with their own theory, the cases where there was no evidence of intrusion. The Neptunists, on the other hand, seized upon these very cases in support of their contention that sheets of basalt regularly interstratified with aqueous deposits must themselves have been precipitated from solution in water. The disputants on neither side perceived that a third and entirely distinct explanation of the facts could be given. If the strata of sedimentary materials were accumulated under water, as was universally admitted, might not the sheets of basalt and other presumably volcanic materials have been erupted upon the floor of that water, whether sea or lake, so as to alternate with the normal deposits of sediment?

Already two acute observers had led the way towards this, the true solution of the apparent contradiction, though neither school of combatants would accept their explanation. Desmarest, as we have seen, (p. 166) had declared as far back as 1775, that traces

[1] Playfair's *Illustrations of the Huttonian Theory*, §§ 234, 239.