

system, combining in these a large amount of original observation and reflection of his own. His volume appeared in the spring of 1802, just five years after Hutton's death, with the title of *Illustrations of the Huttonian Theory of the Earth*. Of this great classic it is impossible to speak too highly. After the lapse of a century it may be read with as much profit and pleasure as when it first appeared. For precision of statement and felicity of language it has no superior in English scientific literature. To its early inspiration I owe a debt which I can never fully repay. Upon every young student of geology I would impress the advantage of reading and re-reading, and reading yet again this consummate masterpiece. How different would geological literature be to-day if men had tried to think and write like Playfair!

There are thus three sources of information as to Hutton's geological system—his first sketch of 1785, his two octavo volumes of 1795, with the portion of the third volume published in 1809 and Playfair's *Illustrations* of 1802.¹ Let us now consider what were his fundamental doctrines.

Although he called his system a Theory of the Earth, Hutton's conceptions entirely differed from those of the older cosmogonists, who thought themselves bound to begin by explaining the origin of things, and who proceeded on a foundation of hypothesis to erect a more or less fantastic edifice of mere speculation. He, on the contrary, believed that it is

¹ To these may be added the memoirs by Sir James Hall which appeared after Hutton's death and from which some interesting particulars may be gleaned as to the master's opinions.