

visit to the rocks on the coast at Siccar Point, described by Playfair, was made with Sir James from that house.

At first Sir James Hall could not bring himself to accept Hutton's views. "I was induced," he tells us, "to reject his system entirely, and should probably have continued still to do so, with the great majority of the world, but for my habits of intimacy with the author, the vivacity and perspicuity of whose conversation formed a striking contrast to the obscurity of his writings. I was induced by that charm, and by the numerous original facts which his system had led him to observe, to listen to his arguments in favour of opinions which I then looked upon as visionary. After three years of almost daily warfare with Dr. Hutton on the subject of his theory, I began to view his fundamental principles with less and less repugnance."¹

As his objections diminished, Hall's interest in the details of the system increased. His practical mind soon perceived that some of the principles, which Hutton had established by reasoning and analogy, might be brought to the test of direct experiment. And he urged his friend to make the attempt, or allow him to carry out the necessary researches. The proposal received little encouragement from the philosopher. Hutton believed that the scale of Nature's processes was so vast that no imitation of them, on the small scale of a laboratory, could possibly lead to any reliable results, or as he afterwards expressed himself in print, "there are superficial reasoning men who, without

¹*Trans. Roy Soc. Edin.* vi. (1812), pp. 71-186.