

he became the centre of all that was bright, vivacious and cheerful in that remarkable circle of eminent men. If he wanted advice and assistance in chemical questions, there was his bosom-friend Joseph Black, ever ready to pour out his ample stores of knowledge, and to test every proposition by the light of his wide experience and his sober judgement. If he needed companionship and assistance in his field journeys, there was the sagacious Clerk of Eldin, willing to join him, to examine his evidence with judicial impartiality, and to sketch for him with an artistic pencil the geological sections on which he laid most stress. If he felt himself in need of the counsel of a clear logical intellect, accustomed to consider physical problems with the precision of a mathematician, there was the kindly sympathetic Playfair, ever prompt and pleased to do him a service. With such companions he discussed his theory in all its bearings. Their approval was ample enough for his ambition. He was never tempted to court publicity by frequent communications to learned societies, or the issue of independent works treating of his geological observations and discoveries. But for the establishment of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, he might have delayed for years the preparation of the first sketch of his theory, and had it not been for the virulent attacks of Kirwan, he might never have been induced to finish the preparation of his great work. He was a man absorbed in the investigation of Nature, to whom personal renown was a matter of utter indifference, contented and happy in the warm regard and sympathetic appreciation of the friends whom he loved.