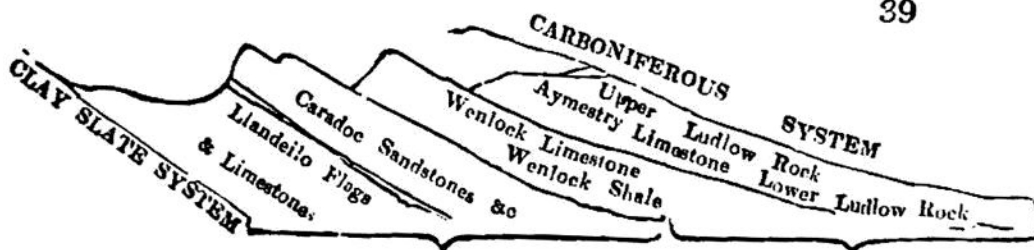


laceous and calcareous sediment, round corals, and other organic marine exuviæ. The great abundance of corals in these rocks (Aymestry, Dudley, Wenlock, &c.) leads further to the supposition of their being really formed, like a coral reef, in the present seas. If this were correct, the whole of the substance of the rock must be supposed to have been abstracted from sea-water, by that vital action which dissolves the strongest chemical aggregations, and fixes the unwilling elements in new combinations. The perfectly laminated or bedded structure of the rock requires, further, the admission that the materials were arranged in obedience to the fluctuations of water: this, which implies the removal and partial drifting of the corals and shells, is strongly confirmed by the worn and rounded forms of some corals (Aymestry), the unattached condition of almost all (Dudley), the broken and crushed condition of many. If, therefore, we must compare the origin of the Wenlock and Aymestry limestones to that of a modern coral island or group of islands, the Bermuda group, where vital action furnishes the substance, and oceanic currents determine the form and arrangement, offers us the best analogies. The coral islands of the South Seas are in this respect very dissimilar.

*Succession and Thickness of Strata.*

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The best, or rather the only, complete series yet known of these rocks is that of the Welsh border, of which the above section is a sketch: below is Mr. Murchison's summary.