

finds its limits; but I shall go further and assert that shells are the intermedium which Nature adopts for the formation of most kind of stones; that chalks, marls, and lime-stone are composed only of the powder and pieces of shells; that consequently the quantities of shells destroyed are infinitely more considerable than those preserved. I shall here content myself with indicating the point of view in which we ought to consider the strata of which the globe is composed. The first stratum is composed of the dust of the air, the sediment of the rain, dew, and vegetable or animal parts, reduced to particles; the strata of chalk, marl, lime, stone, and marble, are composed of the ruins of shells, and other marine productions, mixed with fragments or whole shells; but the vitrifiable sand or clay are the matters of which the internal parts of the globe are composed. They were vitrified when the globe received its form, which necessarily supposes that the matter was in fusion. The granite, rock, flint, &c. owe their origin to sand and clay, and are likewise disposed by strata; but tuffa*, free-stone, and flints (not in great masses), crystals, metals, pyrites, most minerals, sulphurs, &c.

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* A kind of soft gravelly stone.