

Section VI.*

Inferior members of the Third or Lower system of Oolites ; including—the Fullers' earth, Inferior oolite, Sand and Marlstone of Smith.

The Oolitic system of which it was the object of the preceding section to trace the superior portion, is continued (or rather, considering the order of formation, introduced) by the series of beds which we are now to consider. These, although in some localities presenting well marked lines of distinction, in other instances run so much into one another by insensible gradations, that it is far from easy to assign any exact point in which any given member of the series can be strictly said to commence, or accurately to distinguish the contiguous members from each other.

Speaking generally, the great mass of calcareo-siliceous sands on which the rock called the inferior oolite reposes, may be said to form the most universal and characteristic feature of this series. These sands pass almost insensibly, by the mixture of various loamy and marly beds towards their lower limit, into the argillaceous formation which covers the lias ; and towards their upper limit by an increase of calcareous matter, into the oolitic beds called, from their position, inferior. Between this inferior oolite, and that which we have already described in the last section under the name of the great oolite, a thick calcareo-argillaceous formation carrying beds of fullers' earth (whence it is denominated), and sometimes also beds of coarse oolite, is interposed, often forming a very conspicuous division in this part of the series. But, in other instances, this calcareo-argillaceous mass is either wanting, or by the prevalence of its calcareous matter passes into the form of an oolitic limestone ; so that the limit of the great and inferior oolites can only be ascertained (if at all) by an accurate examination of their organic remains.

It must at once appear from the above observations, that we cannot as yet regard the exact demarcation of all these subordinate beds as being completely ascertained throughout the island ; but this acknowledgment ought rather to be regarded as a proof of the high advance of geological information which has rendered the adjustment of points so minute an interesting object of enquiry, than as affording any ground for questioning its progress, in the consideration of the few and immaterial deficiencies still left unsupplied.

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