

CHAPTER XIII.

PURBECK AND WEALDEN STRATA.

AFTER the discovery by Dr. Mantell of the fresh-water nature of the Hastings Sands and Weald Clay, it became customary with some geologists, led by Edward Forbes, to consider the PURBECK BEDS as forming the topmost subdivision of the Oolites, and the Wealden strata as belonging to the Cretaceous series; but as, in reality, the interval between the marked marine series of the Oolitic and Lower Cretaceous epochs is, in Britain, bridged over by the terrestrial and fluviatile episode of the Purbeck and Wealden beds, it is more convenient, and, in the chief part of the British area, more philosophical, to treat of these formations as marking one great local epoch.

For the stratigraphical arrangement of these strata in the Isle of Purbeck, see fig. 75, p. 347.

I here use the term Lower Cretaceous, in the sense in which it has been applied to the Atherfield Clay and Lower Greensand ever since the days of Dr. Fitton, at the same time being well aware, that all the Wealden strata above the Purbeck beds, and up to the top of the Lower Greensand, are the geological equivalents in time of the marine Neocomian strata of the Continent of Europe, though with us it happens, that the lower and middle subdivisions of these beds are represented by fresh-water strata in the south of England.