laid down for cereals, forms a considerable proportion of our meadow land. It is blue when unweathered, and includes many beds of limestone, and bands of fossil shells are scattered throughout the clay itself. From its exceeding stiffness and persistent retention of moisture, it is especially adapted for grass land, for it is not easy to plough, and thus a large proportion of it in the centre of England is devoted to pastures, often intersected by numerous footpaths of ancient date, that lead by the pleasant hedge-rows to wooded villages and old timbered farmsteads. When we pass into the Middle Lias, which forms an escarpment overlooking the Lower Lias clay, we find a very fertile soil; for the Marlstone, as it is called, is much lighter in character than the more clayey Lower Lias, being formed of a mixture of clay and sand with a considerable proportion of lime, derived from the Marlstone Lime-rock itself, and from the intermixture of fossils that often pervade the other strata. The course of the low flat-topped Marlstone hills, well seen in Gloucestershire, and on Edgehill, and all round Banbury, striking along the country and overlooking the Lower Lias clay, is thus usually marked by a strip of peculiarly fertile soil, often dotted with villages and towns with antique churches and handsome towers, built of the brown limestone of the formation.

Ascending the geological scale into the next group, we find the Oolitic rocks formed, for the most part, of beds of limestone, with here and there interstratified clays, some of which, like the Oxford and Kimeridge Clays, are of great thickness, and spread over large tracts of country. The flat tops of these limestone Downs, when they rise to considerable height, as they do on the Cotswold Hills, were, until a comparatively