

CHAP. XX.

On the geological Relations of the organic Fossils.

OF all the appearances which the earth presents, nothing has excited more attention than the existence of animal bodies in the strata; while the air of mystery which attended it stimulated curiosity, and may be said to have laid the foundation of Geological science. If the presence of animals, once submarine, in rocks and on lofty mountains, was a cause of wonder and a source of theories, so did the discovery of the bones of large animals lead to the belief of pre-existing races of giants, while, in both cases, philosophy, with history, sacred and profane, were perverted to find explanations.

The increase of knowledge has given a very different complexion to this subject, and a more rational direction to the pursuit. Yet the Geologist seems in danger of forgetting that it is but one part of his science. Its details belong to zoology and botany; and he loses sight of his main object when he pursues these minutiae to the neglect of their more interesting connexions with the history of the globe. Still more deeply does he err, when he imagines that a theory of the earth can be founded on what involves so small a portion of its structure and history. It is doubtless, essential to know these objects; as, to arrange and name them is the grammar of this department. But it is unfortunately true, that whether the contemplation of minutiae disables the mind for wider views, or that only a minute mind can be engrossed by such things, the power of profiting by collections and their study, diminishes in proportion to their extent