

nately right and left, and separated from each other by intervals of about five feet. At one spot there was a space several yards square, where the entire surface of the shale was irregular and jagged, owing to the number of footsteps, not one of which could be traced distinctly, as when a flock of sheep have passed over a muddy road; but on withdrawing from this area the confusion gradually ceased, and the tracks became more and more distinct. The Professor informed me, that since he first announced his belief, in 1836, that these impressions were referable to birds, he had observed above two thousand foot-prints, probably made by nearly thirty distinct species, all indented on the upper surface of the strata, and only exhibiting casts in relief on the under side of the beds resting on such indented surfaces.

This sandstone is of much higher antiquity (see p. 125.) than any formation in which fossil bones or other indications of birds have been detected in Europe. Still we have no ground for inferring from such facts that the feathered tribe made its first appearance in the western hemisphere at this period. It is too common a fallacy to fix the era of the first creation of each tribe of plants or animals, and even of animate beings in general, at the precise point where our present retrospective knowledge happens to stop. The discoveries in the Connecticut valley ought to teach us extreme caution in deducing general conclusions from mere negative evidence, especially when we infer the non-existence of land animals from the absence of their remains in contemporaneous marine strata.

On leaving Amherst for Springfield, we ascended Mount Holyoke, the lower part of which is formed of