

remarkable peculiarity as distinguishable from the human hand, is the smallness of the thumb ; it extends no further than to the root of the fingers. On the length, strength, free lateral motion, and perfect mobility of the thumb, depends the power of the human hand. The thumb is called *pollex*, because of its strength ; and that strength is necessary to the power of the hand, being equal to that of all the fingers. Without the fleshy ball of the thumb, the power of the fingers would avail nothing ; and accordingly the large ball, formed by the muscles of the thumb, is the distinguishing character of the human hand, and especially of that of an expert workman.*

The loss of the thumb almost amounts to the loss of the hand, and were it to happen in both hands, it would reduce a man to a miserable dependence: or as Adoni-bezek said of the threescore and ten kings, the thumbs of whose hands and of whose feet he had cut off, “ they “ gather their meat under my table.”

In a French book, intended to teach young people philosophy, the pupil asks why the fingers are not of equal length? The form of the argument reminds us of the difficulty of putting natural questions—the fault of books of

* Albinus characterises the thumb as the lesser hand, the assistant of the greater—*manus parva, majori adjutrix*.