

they went, until near the middle, where there were a few irregular steps, shorter, deeper, and more broken than any of the others; and then the marks of the small shoes altogether disappeared, and a small naked foot of corresponding size took their place, and formed a long line to the opposite bank. In this case, as in the other, the details of the incident were clear. Some urchin, in venturing across when the mud was yet soft and deep, after wading nearly half the way shod, had deemed it more prudent to wade the rest of it barefoot, than to bemire his stockings. In each case the incident was recorded in peculiar characters; and to read such characters aright, when inscribed upon the rocks, forms part of the proper work of the ichnologist. His key, so far at least as mere incident is concerned, is the key of circumstantial evidence; and very curious events, as I have said,—events which one would scarce expect to find recorded in the strata of ancient systems,—does it at times serve to unlock.

In some remote and misty age, lost in the deep obscurity of the unreckoned eternity that hath passed, but which we have learned to designate as the Triassic period, a strangely formed reptile, unlike anything which now exists, paced slowly across the ripple-marked sands of a lake or estuary.¹ It more resembled a frog or toad than any animal with which we are now acquainted; but to the batrachian peculiarities it added certain crocodilean features, and in size nearly rivalled one of our small Highland oxen. The prints it made very much resembled those of a human hand; but, as in the frog, the hinder paws were fully thrice the size of the fore ones; and there was a gigantic massiveness in the

¹ Reptiles are known to have existed from the period of the Old Red Sandstone, where their tracks have lately been discovered. The reptiles of the Coal are of the Batrachian type; the Permian reptiles are allied to Batrachians and Monitors; while the reptiles of the Trias are Labyrinthodont.—W. S. S.