altogether soft and spongy skeletons in these old times, their remains do not seem to have been preserved.

Here, it will be observed, are a great variety of vital and mechanical contrivances devised in the very early history of the earth, settled for all time, and handed down without improvement, and with little change, to our later day. They are indeed vastly more wonderful than the above general account can show; for to go into the details of structure of any one of the species would develop a multitude of minor complexities and niceties which no one not specially a student of these animals could appreciate.

These are not solitary cases. The student of fossils meets with them at every turn; and if he possesses the taste and imagination of a true naturalist, cannot fail to be impressed with them.

To turn to a later but very ancient period, what can be more astonishing than those first air-breathing vertebrates of the Coal formation referred to in a previous chapter, with all their special arrangements for an aërial habitat? I have mentioned their footprints, and when we see the quarrymen split open a slab of sandstone and expose a series of great plantigrade tracks, not unlike those of a human foot, with the five toes well developed, we are almost as much astonished as Crusoe was when he saw the footprints on the sand. Crusoe inferred the presence of another man in his island; we infer the earliest appearance of an air-breathing vertebrate and the pre-human determination of the form and number of parts of the human foot and hand, to appear in the world long ages afterward. We see also that already that decimal system of notation which we have founded on the counting of our ten fingers was settled in the framework of most unmathematical Batrachians. It has approved itself ever since as the typical and most perfect number of parts for such organs.

If sceptically inclined, we may ask, Why five rather than