

The human hand is unquestionably the most perfect of hands, whatever be its relation to inferior developments of a similar organ. The wonderful complexity of its structure, its nice delicacy of touch, and its adaptation in all ways for being the organ of an intelligent volition, fitted for the execution of every requirement of ingenuity and skill, alike suggest its recognition as one special and distinctive feature of man's organization. The hand of the monkey is a locomotive, as well as a prehensile organ; whereas the differences between the hand and foot of man point to essentially diverse functions for each. The short, weak thumb, the long, nearly uniform fingers, and inferior play of the wrist, are advantageous to the tree-climber, and pertain to the hand as an organ of locomotion; whereas the absence of all such qualities in the human hand secures its permanent delicacy of touch, and its general adaptation for all manipulative purposes.

There are, however, unquestionably, traces of prehensile capacity in the human foot; and even of remarkable adaptability to certain functions of the hand. Well-known cases have occurred, of persons born without hands, or early deprived of them, learning to use their feet in many delicate operations, including not only the employment of pen and pencil, but the use of scissors, with a facility which still more strikingly indicates the separate action of the great toe, and its thumb-like apposition to the others. Still the human foot is not a hand. The small size of the toes, as compared with the fingers, and the position and movements of the great toe, alike point to diverse functions, and a greatly more limited range of action in the normal use of the toes. But the latent capacity of the system of muscles of the foot—scarcely less elaborate than that of the hand,—is obscured to us by the rigid restraints of the modern shoe. The power of voluntary action in the toes manifests itself not only in cases where early mutilation, or malformation at birth, compels the substitution of the foot for the hand; but among savages, where the unshackled foot is in constant use in climbing, and feeling its way through brake and jungle, the same free use of the toes, and especially the power of separating the great toe from the others, which may be seen in the involuntary movements of a healthy child, is retained. A very brief experience of the soft, yielding deer-skin moccasin of the Red Indian, in place of the rigid European shoe, restores even to the unpractised foot of the white man a freedom of action in the toes, a discriminating sense of touch, and a capacity for grasping rock or tree in walking or climbing, such as he had no concep-