

VI.

ANTIQUARIAN INVESTIGATIONS IN THE FOREST OF
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THE extensive tract of hilly country which occupies so large a portion of the central districts of Devonshire, has long possessed an invidious celebrity under the name of Dartmoor, as a region whose wildness and sterility have grown into "a proverb and a bye-word." This circumstance, however satisfactorily it may account for the slight and general notices which have been usually bestowed upon the Forest of Dartmoor by topographers and historians, will by no means justify the neglect of the antiquary; since the very barrenness which deters others from any investigation in a region so unpromising, often secures the most favourable field for his researches.

Finding in the mountains and morasses of Dartmoor the most authentic vestiges of a period of chronology, of which so little that is authentic remains to us, I cannot bring myself to

join in the lamentations* over the sterility of the district, which the mention of its name usually calls forth. Grand as they are in themselves, the hills and tors of Dartmoor acquire additional interest as the guardians and preservers of relics, which in more accessible, and more attractive spots, would have shared the fate of too many of their kindred, and disappeared under the tool of the workman. Such tracts of country afford still some shelter from the various modes of destruction, arising from multiplied population and increasing commercial speculations, which have pursued the vestiges of past ages from one retreat to another, like the antient Britons retiring before successive invaders, until the mountainous districts of the western and south-western parts of the kingdom afford them the only protection. In these districts, therefore, the antiquary naturally looks for the vestiges of this people and their times; and as many of the most interesting relics are in hourly danger of spoliation, the notices in the following paper have been collected and published, with the hope that some may escape impending destruction, and that others may be preserved from that oblivion which appears to endanger the very memory of their existence.

Of almost all the relics of Druidical antiquity, the moorland districts of Devonshire afford specimens, which, generally speaking, have been most imperfectly and unsatisfactorily noticed by antiquaries. Cornwall has had more justice in the accurate and laborious notices of Borlase, who has carefully enumerated the relics of that county;—but our Risdon, in mentioning the curiosities of Dartmoor, records only three remarkable things:—viz. the Stannary Parliament seats on Crockern Tor, Childe of Plymstock's tomb, and Wistman's

* On the contrary the apostrophe which the hills of Dartmoor call forth is that of Wordsworth—

Hail usages of antient mould,
And ye that guard them, mountains old!

wood. Yet on the moor and within its precincts, are to be found examples of the sacred circle—avenues—the cromlech—the kistvaen—the rock idol—rock-basin—monumental pillar—the cairn, or barrow—dwellings and track-ways.

Of these several relics of the olden time, I proceed to give some notices collected from personal observation, made during the summers of 1827 and 1828, by the following members of the Plymouth Institution:—Mr. Henry Woolcombe, Major Hamilton Smith, Mr. John Prideaux, and myself. The following paper, containing the results of our united researches has been drawn up for publication in the Transactions of the society, at the request of my esteemed coadjutors.

In the classification of Druidical antiquities, precedence seems due to the SACRED CIRCLE, both for the importance of its object, and from the circumstance that sacred circles in other places are usually ranked among the most interesting of such relics. The sacred circle was evidently a rude patriarchal temple, such as the genius of the people and of their religion demanded, and for the construction of which the region supplied ample and congenial materials. The accidents of nature have more to do with the decision of matters of this kind than we are usually free to allow. The colossal architecture of Egypt had its birth in the granite quarries of that country—the bituminous plains of Babylon suggested the employment of brick in the construction of the vast edifices of that gorgeous city. The granite tors of Cornwall and Devoa in like manner, furnished materials for the apparatus of Druidical worship, abundant in supply, and suitable in form and quality; as to form, sublime from their rudeness and vastness; and as to durability, imperishable as the hill from whence they were raised.

Although the Druidical doctrines inculcated the opinion that the Deity regarded not the worship which was paid to

him in temples, whose canopy was less comprehensive and sublime than the expanse of heaven; they held it indispensable, that certain spots should be dedicated to his peculiar service: and so profound was the respect with which the dogmas of this extraordinary priesthood were regarded, that they appear to have had nothing more to effect for the preservation of their sanctuaries from violation, than to mark their limits by some well defined boundary—a boundary which should denote the extent of the sacred area without obstructing the view of the rites and ceremonies therein performed. This object, which the Hellenic nations accomplished by celebrating their sacred rites in front of their temples and beneath their porticoes, the Druids attained by means of a circular fence of unwrought granite masses, rude from the neighbouring tor.

Such are the sacred circles found on Dartmoor, in a state as might be expected more or less perfect. They are of various dimensions, and constructed of moorstone blocks of irregular shapes, and by no means uniform in size. Taking a general view of monuments of this class in our island, some antiquaries have fixed the number of stones as varying from twelve to twenty-seven; and state that they are more frequently found of the former number than of any other; this conjecture, however, seems to be much at variance with conclusions founded on actual observation. We have found them consisting of ten, eleven, twelve, fifteen, twenty-five, and twenty-seven stones. The size of the stones varying from eighteen inches in height to five feet. The circumference of the circle varies from twelve yards to one hundred and twenty, which is the size of the Grey Wethers, the largest yet discovered on the moor.

The sacred circle sometimes has a cairn or *kistvaen* within the inclosure—sometimes is found in connexion with avenues—sometimes in connexion with others—and in one instance it contains two concentric circles within its circumference. This

description of circle is at once distinguished from the hut circle, or ruined dwelling, by the position of the stones composing it, which are always set up at intervals of greater or less extent; whereas the hut circles have the stones set as closely together as the nature of the construction would permit.

The most striking of the sacred circles are those near Sittaford tor in the centre of the moor, and that on Gidleigh common. The former are known to the moormen by the name of the Grey Wethers; and are two circles, whose circumferences almost touch each other. They were originally constructed of twenty-five stones each; nine remain erect in one, and seven in the other. These masses have been selected with care, being slabs, tolerably level in the upper edge; the largest is fallen—it is four feet nine inches wide, less than a foot thick, and must have stood about five feet high. Diameter of both circles, one hundred and twenty feet.

The Gidleigh circle consisting of stones, which are for the most part pointed, presents a very different aspect from the Grey Wethers. They are thirty-seven in number, ten of which are fallen. The highest of those in their original position, is eight feet above the ground; the medium height of the largest number is about four feet and a half, the smallest stone is three feet. Diameter of the circle, ninety feet.

The avenues* or parallel lines of erect stones appear to have excited little attention, yet the peculiarity of their appearance cannot fail immediately to strike a spectator. They are sometimes found singly, and sometimes in pairs, but always in connexion with other British relics, and most commonly with the sacred circle.

* The word *avenues* is not altogether satisfactory, but we are at a loss for a more descriptive term.

These ancient erections when near streams were probably intended for the procession of the consecrated boat; in situations remote from waters, it is more probable that they were constructed for gymnastic performances in connexion with the celebration of religious worship.

The largest and most perfect relic of this class is in the ancient British village, near Merivale bridge. Here is a pair of avenues parallel to each other, one hundred and five feet apart, running east and west; the longest one thousand one hundred and forty-three feet, the shortest seven hundred and ninety-two feet. The stones of which they are formed are scarcely two feet above the ground, placed at irregular distances, but generally about three feet and a half apart. The shortest terminates in a circle, and the longest has a circle at mid-length. The shortest at its east end, has a stone of larger dimensions; and in the other avenue opposite to it, is a corresponding block, although in this it seems at a distance from the termination of its avenue. The western half of this avenue is divided at mid-length by a higher stone, and ends with two stones now recumbent.

A similar pair of avenues, but not so extensive in their plan, is found in connexion with other similar antiquities on the brook side, below Black tor. The stones there employed in the construction, are two feet and a half high. A stream forms the western termination of both of these avenues, the southern is to be traced about one hundred and eighty feet, and the northern, which is much more perfect and distinct, three hundred. They are forty feet apart, and run parallel to each other, due east and west, and each is terminated at the east end, by a circle thirty feet in diameter, inclosing a cairn. The stones at the head of the avenues as in the former example, being of larger dimensions than the others.

In both these instances the avenues run east and west; but

others are found in the direction of north and south. A single avenue of this kind occurs on Challacombe down, three hundred feet in length;—another on Gidleigh common, four hundred and two feet in length, and four feet and a half in breadth; the latter is formed in connexion with a singular set of concentric circles. In this locality is another pair of parallel avenues in the same direction, in which many of the stones are three feet and a half high, of a triangular shape, the points forming a very acute angle. It is probable that a considerable portion of the eastern avenue has been destroyed, as only one hundred and twenty-three feet of it can be traced, while the other can be followed to an extent of four hundred and thirty-two feet.

Of all our Druidical monuments, purely artificial, the Cromlech is that which is the most striking in appearance, and the most eminently characteristic of the age to which such monuments are usually assigned. The finest and perhaps the only perfect specimen in Devonshire is at Shilston, in the parish of Drewsteignton. The masses whereof it is constructed have been selected, as adapted for the purpose in their natural state,—no tool appears to have been passed upon them,—and this absence of artificial preparation, contrasted with the indication of great power exerted in the fabric, confers a venerable rudeness on this singular and interesting relic.

The Drewsteignton Cromlech is formed of four stones; viz. three supporters and the quoit or impost. The impost is forty-one feet in circumference, and in many parts is from two to three feet in thickness. From these dimensions a notion may be formed of the mass thus elevated on the supporters, the lowest of which stands five feet three inches above the surface, the others being sufficiently high for a man to stand erect beneath the massive canopy of the impost. This has an inclination to the westward, which with a bevil in the same direction gives to the surface of the impost a considerable slope.*

* Cromlechs are of two kinds. I. The Cromlech properly so called, consist-

This is not only the finest and most perfect specimen in Devonshire, but it is generally regarded as furnishing the sole example of which our county can boast. Could this opinion be established it would appear singular, if not anomalous, that in a region where the other Druidical relics are so abundant, this characteristic monument should so sparingly appear. In the adjoining county of Cornwall we know they are numerous; and the most cursory observer could not visit a single tor on Dartmoor, without perceiving that a want of appropriate and ready materials, did not stand in the way of their erection in this chosen district. The supposition naturally arising from these circumstances has been justified, in more than one instance, by the discovery of monuments of this class hitherto unnoticed. On Shaugh moor is one, which, if it be that noticed by Polwhele, is mentioned by that author only to have its claims disallowed; but for reasons which a view of the cromlech will instantly show to be both inapplicable and groundless. The quoit is doubtless supported in an unusual manner, resting partly on a natural ledge of rock—but that stone itself possesses every characteristic of the cromlech quoit, and apparently remains in its original position. At Karn Boscawen near Penzance, is a similar monument (figured in Borlase's Antiquities,) where the quoit is partially supported by the natural rock, as in the present instance.

In the antient ruined village at Merivale bridge, is a pros-

ing of three upright stones and a quoit. II. Arkite cells, consisting of rude walls and single stones, covered with one quoit or four large stones. The former of these appear to be altars, the latter mysterious cells in which the arcana of religious worship were practised; and inhumation was occasionally allowed, or at least where human remains have been found. Drowstalgoton cromlech is of the first kind, where the ground beneath the stones could not have been opened for burial without endangering the whole structure—Calligern's or Kit's Coty house, in Kent, is of the second. A third are Arkite temples, resembling the second, but larger, and often with several chambers; such are the Grottes des feu near Tours, and another near Rennes in France. They are six feet high in the clear and full forty feet in length; and served for the greater mysteries.—*Note by Major C. H. Smith.*

trate cromlech. The quoit, ten feet six by five feet four inches, has fallen from its three supporters, and remains in an angle of 45° . Natural circumstances would not satisfactorily account for the present position of the stones; the ground being nearly flat the quoit could not have slipped from a higher spot into its present site—nor are there, as on tors, numerous blocks of a similar description promiscuously scattered around; this is sufficiently distinct in appearance to attract immediate attention. In the same village is another conformation of four stones, appearing like three supporters and a quoit, less decidedly artificial, though bearing great resemblance to a prostrate cromlech, wherein the quoit is of much larger dimensions, being no less than sixteen feet in length, and nine feet eight inches in breadth.

Below Furtor, near the Tavy head, is another fallen cromlech, about a furlong from the eastern bank. Although surrounded by scattered masses of granite, its distinction is sufficiently marked. The quoit thirteen feet by five, remarkably regular in shape, has fallen with its longest side to the ground, into which it has partly imbedded itself; the base being overgrown with luxuriant heather. The supporting slabs are crippled under the quoit, and retain it in a position less inclined than the former. These slabs are three, and three only—for there are no similar masses so near, as to render the monument of a doubtful character; nor are there any appearances which would induce the observer to refer it to natural circumstances. Its site is one of the most secluded spots on the moor, apart from any other relic of Druidical antiquity.

The LOGAN STONE and ROCK IDOL, though belonging to the class of Druidical antiquities, can boast so little, if any, artificial preparation, that in an enumeration of the present kind, they will not long detain our attention. The celebrated specimen of the first of these monuments, the Drewsteignton logan stone, might be repeatedly passed, without exciting more curiosity

or attention, than any other fine granite mass in the bed of a river. Advantage was doubtless taken by the Druids, of the natural circumstances on which this rock was found, and its motion might have been rendered subservient to the purposes of superstition. On the application of considerable strength at its east end, its motion is just perceptible.* But it is impossible to traverse the moor in any direction, without observing many a block, which once might have been a logan stone, or even now might be easily made to *logg*;—so fantastical and singular are the positions in which those masses are continually found.

Similar observations will apply to the Rock-idol. "Moulded" as they are, as Carrington sings,

"Into a thousand shapes
Of beauty and of grandeur,"

few are the tors which would not attract sufficient attention, when pointed out to the adoration of an ignorant and superstitious people. To give any accurate notice of objects of this class, would be scarcely less than to enumerate the principal tors on the moor; or rather, it would be impossible in a classification with which the imagination would have much more to do than the judgment. Yet when we gaze upon such a mass as Viassen Tor, grand and huge as it rises above the vale of the Walkham,—or view such a singular pile as that of Bowerman's nose, we can scarcely err in believing, that if the Druids had their rock-idols, *these* must have held an important station in their granite mythology. Bowerman's nose consists of five layers of granite blocks, some of them severed into two masses, others entire: the topmost is a single one. This singular pile stands about thirty feet in height, and rising perpendicularly from the brow of a rocky hill, is a conspicuous object, and strongly recalls the rude colossal idols, which were found by our navigators when they visited Easter Island.

* In September, 1828.

But none of these observations, here applied to the Logan stone and rock idol, appear to bear upon the rock basin, although some authors have attributed them to the formation of nature, by the action of water, and from the decomposition of some parts of the rock more than others. It seems extraordinary however, that any one who has examined these singular relics of antiquity, should advocate an opinion so devoid of the confirmation of facts. Were the rock basins natural productions, why are they found so uniform in size? Why are they so frequently seen on those parts of granite masses less favourable than other parts to their natural formation? Their situation is commonly on the highest spot of the loftiest pile of the tor, very often near the edge of the block upon which they are formed,—in many instances with a lip or channel to convey the water over the edge of the mass, and generally varying in diameter from twelve inches to thirty-six.

A very fine example, illustrating this general description of the Dartmoor rock basins, occurs on the north end of the topmost Great Mistor, one of the loftiest hills of the moor. The basin is in a most perfect state, in form a circle, three feet in diameter and eight inches deep. Its sides are perpendicular, its bottom flat; having a lip cut in the rock in its northern edge. It would be most characteristically described as a pan excavated in granite, and bears such evident marks of artificial preparation as could not fail to convince an unprejudiced inquirer.

That this rude and primitive species of basin formed part of the apparatus of Druidism, there can little doubt remain; but the specific purpose for which they were constructed has excited much inquiry, and no small controversy. The frequent occurrence of rock basins on the surface of logan stones, induced Dr. Borlase to suppose that they were employed for the purpose of regulating the motion of the logan stone, and of causing it "to move obsequious to the gentlest touch;" or "to stand as

fix'd as Snowdon;" so that the ordeal might exculpate or condemn, according to the private intentions of the ministering Druid. This object he believes might be accomplished by causing a certain quantity of water to be poured into, or be withdrawn from, the basins, and thus the centre of gravity be changed. But all logan stones have not basins; nor are they found on logan stones in a majority of instances, being far more numerous on other masses. The hypothesis that they are formed on the loftiest tors for the purpose of obtaining water for lustration, in a state freest from earthly pollution, is far more probable, and derives strong confirmation from the situations in which they are so frequently found.

The **ROCK PILLAR**, monumental column, *maen* or *mên*, is also found on Dartmoor. A striking specimen appears at the ancient Merivale village;* an unwrought granite shaft, of a tapering form, presenting a rude type of the obelisk, twelve feet high, and eight feet in girth at the base. On Bair down is another of these primitive obelisks, twelve feet high; its general character and dimensions being similar to the former.

Those who wish to derogate from the antiquity of these monuments, have pronounced them to be mere bound-stones of comparatively modern date, to mark the limits of such divisions as hundreds, parishes, manors, or commons. A slight inspection will, however, satisfy an observer that this conclusion is ill-founded; for although some of the *maens* may have been thus appropriated, as at Gidleigh, a marked distinction will be perceived, when a known modern bound-stone is compared with one of those venerable obelisks.

It will be remarked that the antiquities hitherto mentioned, have, more or less, decidedly a sacred or religious destination.

* The *maen* of Merivale is in connexion with the avenues, cairn, and cromlech, as is evident on referring to the plan. I suppose it to be a *gnomon* to mark the mid-day moment.—*Notes by Major C. H. Smith.*

We now proceed to enumerate those which are of a civil or military description; viz. the Barrow or Cairn, the Kistvaen, the Beacon, Huts, Pounds or Inclosures, and Trackways.

The **BARROW** and **CAIRN** are too well known to require any more than a passing notice, as the tombs, or sepulchral monuments of the antient inhabitants of this island. Like the maen, or rock-pillar, they are among the most ready and obvious means, at the command of a simple and uncivilized people,* to perpetuate the memory of any solemn or remarkable transaction. Where stones are not plentiful, and to be made easily available, the *barrow*, or *mound of earth* has been resorted to; but those on Dartmoor are chiefly cairns in the more limited sense, and being very commonly placed on the summits of the highest hills, became the chosen site for beacons—from which some of the loftiest Devonshire mountains have acquired their appellations, as Pen beacon, West and East beacon, and Cawson beacon.

Cawson is the highest land in Devonshire, its summit being more than one thousand seven hundred feet above the sea-level. On this spot is a cairn ninety-one yards in circuit, which has been opened in two places. No point could be chosen for the site of a beacon, to alarm a wide extent of country, more advantageous than this, which commands the surrounding districts, as far as the shores of the English and British Channels. The great cairn at Three-barrow tor, which is entirely composed of small stones, is one hundred and twenty yards in circuit.

Sometimes the cairn has a kistvaen or small cromlech on its summit, like Molfra cromlech, Cornwall. The kistvaen,

* The cairn or tumulus of stones was resorted to, as a perpetual record of the treaty of reconciliation and amity between Jacob and his father-in-law Laban, and what is very remarkable, this cairn, which was called Mizpeh, the *heap of witness*, was accompanied by the monumental pillar; and to this day, cairns are found with a columnar stone in the centre.

which may be described as a rudely formed sarcophagus, is sometimes also found imbedded in the cairn. An instance of this occurs on the top of Cawson; where the cairn though not large, is composed of large stones, and contains a kistvaen of a rectangular outline, formed of granite slabs four or five inches thick. Two corner slabs remain in an erect position, and are joined as closely, and with as much precision, as the unwrought material would permit; the remainder are more or less fallen, and some appear to be wanting.

Kistvaens are also found in connection with the sacred circle, but are more usually observed in a state which may be described as *simply placed*, i. e. independently of any other relic. Examples of both these kinds occur on Archerton hill. Sometimes they are found in groups as Colden tor, on the brink of Blackabrook, placed around a rock basin. Their general dimensions are three feet three inches long, two feet wide, and two deep. A flat unwrought stone covers this cell, and in the centre is a round pit, from which, there is good reason for supposing, a cinerary urn has been removed. This group of tombs forcibly recalls the burial places described by Ossian. Here then we have a Druidical cemetery; and that, probably, one where the ashes of the less distinguished dead found a repository; while the warriors and chieftain were honoured by the enormous cairn or barrow, and the Druid slept his long sleep beneath the massive cromlech, within the sacred circle.

The huts or dwellings of the antient inhabitants are to be found in every part of Dartmoor, in a state generally very imperfect; the foundation stones, and those forming the door jambs, being all that remain of these dwellings, with few exceptions. The huts are circular on the plan; but are at once distinguishable from the sacred circle, which has been already described as consisting of larger stones, placed with considerable intervals, as in these the stones are set on their edge, and placed closely together, so as to form a secure foundation for the superstruc-

ture, whether that they were wattle,* turf, stone, or other material. These vestiges strikingly illustrate the descriptions which Diodorus Siculus and Strabo give of the habitations of the Britons of their times. The former describes them as "poor cottages constructed of wood and covered with straw;" the latter as "wooden houses, circular in form, with lofty conical roofs."

The foundation slabs above-mentioned, generally stand from eighteen to thirty inches above the surface. The door-jamba in most cases higher, placed nearly at right angles to the outline of the circle; in a very considerable proportion of examples the door faces the south. These hut circles measure from twelve to thirty feet in diameter; the most usual size being about twenty-six feet, though some are found much larger. The single foundation is most common, but some have a double circle. A very perfect specimen of the antient dwellings has been observed, and it is believed, for the first time noticed as such, by Miss Dixon of Prince-town; a lady whose industry and perseverance in investigating the antiquities of Dartmoor have been as successful as unusual, and whose kindness in pointing out this and other interesting relics merits the most public acknowledgment. This venerable dwelling, belonging to the most ancient class of domestic buildings in the world, is found in the corner of a very remarkable inclosure which is divided by irregular lines of upright stones. The hut is in a state comparatively perfect, the upper part only having fallen in. It appears to have been shaped like a bee-hive, the wall being formed of large stones and turf, so placed as to terminate in a point.—The circumference is twenty yards.

These huts have their counterparts still extant in the shealings of the Orkneys, some of which, composed of stone and turf, have the form of ovens or bee-hives; and others with

* *Junctæ cortice virgæ. OVID.*

a base of stone, consisting of two circles within each other, have a superstructure of fir or pine poles converging to a point, and covered with branches and heather. Both these kinds appear to have existed in Dartmoor. All these huts approach, with greater or less accuracy, to the circular form.

With very few exceptions, these antient dwellings are found in groups, either surrounded by rude inclosures, or unprovided with this protection. On the banks of the Walkham, near Merivale bridge, is a very extensive village, containing huts of various dimensions, built on a hill sloping towards the south-west. This village or town, appears to have been of considerable importance, as there are found in it, the avenue, the cromlech, maen and sacred circle. In this, as in many other villages on the moor, regard seems to have been had to a supply of water in the immediate vicinity; and, generally speaking, a preference appears to have been given to a south or south-western aspect. Near Littleford tor, is a group of sixty-seven hut circles, and many more appear to have been destroyed. Another village, scarcely less extensive, is near Black tor, on the banks of one of the tributaries of the Plym.

The Cyclopæan inclosures, or Pounds, as they are called by the moormen, frequently surround these antient towns. They are either low walls of stones piled rudely together in a ridge-like form, or belts of larger stones placed erect in the ground. Their general form is circular, but some examples are elliptical. Remains of habitations are in most cases found in these inclosures, so that we may justly conclude that they were originally constructed for purposes of security and defence.

Grimspound is by far the finest and most extraordinary of all the relics of this class. Viewed from Hooknor tor, which commands its entire area, it presents to the spectator an object of singular curiosity and interest. Its situation is on the N. W. slope of Hamildown, bordering on the parishes of Manaton, and Widescombe in the Moor. The wall or mound is formed

of moorstone blocks, rudely piled together, but so large as not to be easily displaced. The base of this mound extends in some parts to twenty feet, but the average height of any section would not exceed six feet. With the exception of openings for ingress and egress, the wall is perfect, inclosing an area of about four acres. The vestiges of antient habitations within this primitive fence are numerous, and occupy the whole inclosure, leaving only one vacant spot at the upper end, which might have been a place of public resort for the inhabitants of the town. A spring, rising on the eastern side, supplies the inclosure with water, and the whole presents a more complete specimen of an antient British settlement, provided with means of protracted defence, than will be found in any other part of the kingdom.

Many similar inclosures on a less extensive scale are found in every district of the moor. One, however, is so essentially different in construction from all the others we have noticed, that it merits a particular description in this place, especially since it appears that it belongs to the unrecorded and undescribed antiquities of Dartmoor.

In a small pasture field, about a furlong S. E. of Manaton church, adjoining a parish road, is an inclosure of an elliptical form, in an exceedingly perfect condition. The stones of which the fence is composed, are from four to six feet high, placed in a double row and set closely together. One stone, however, is so large that it fills the whole breadth of the fence, being six feet wide and five feet thick. The diameters of the area are one hundred, and one hundred and thirty-eight feet; and there are no vestiges of any Druidical relic within the precincts. It will be instantly distinguished from the sacred circles of Gidleigh and the Grey Wethers, by the position of the stones, which are without lateral intervals.*

* I conjecture this inclosure to have named the village of Manaton, or rather *Maen-y-dun*, the inclosure of erect stones.—*Note by Major C. H. Smith.*

TRACKWAYS, under which designation those roads or causeways, or perhaps boundary lines, which cross the moor in different directions are included, might with more accuracy be distinguished into the two classes of trackways and tracklines. *Trackways* in this more confined sense, would then mean those which traverse the moor to a very wide extent, ascending the hills, penetrating the bogs and swamps, and fording the rivers; while *tracklines* will describe those which connect inclosures or huts, commencing and terminating within the bounds of each village.

The most extensive trackway which has come under our notice, is one which is supposed to traverse the moor in a direction E. and W. from Hamildown to Great Mistor. Considerable portions of the line can be traced in a direction corresponding to these two points, but a large extent of it rests rather upon the testimony of tradition, than on existing remains; for this is one of the few relics of remote antiquity which seems to have excited any attention in the moormen. The oral topographers of the district recognise this trackway as the equator of the moorland region; all above it being considered the north, and all below it as the south country.* This circumstance, while it affords good evidence as to the antiquity of this relic, militates, it must be allowed, in some degree against the theory which would attribute to it the character of a road rather than that of a boundary.

The trackway may be seen in great perfection descending the northern slope of Chittaford down, towards the East Dart. It is formed of pebbly stones irregularly placed together, and forming a rude causeway, with its crest slightly raised above the level of the country; its mean breadth being from five to six feet. On this common, it is visible for a considerable

* On the authority of the Rev. J. M. Mason, Vicar of Widecombe, to whose intimate acquaintance with the topography of Dartmoor, and kindness in affording every information in his power, we are much indebted.

length, and can be traced, running due west, through Hollowcombe and up the opposite hill to Little White tor. Down the common towards the Dart it bends N.E. but takes a southerly direction in the level near Post bridge. With some difficulty it may be detected passing through the boggy meadows below Hartland farm. The peat cutters are said to come upon it below the surface; and the general direction is found to be E. and W.

Another portion has been observed passing over Archerton hill, and is visible to the extent of a mile. In formation and breadth it is precisely similar to the line already described. But the finest specimen of trackways as to breadth, is that which ascends the hill at Three-barrow tor. It terminates in the great cairn on the summit, but commences again on the opposite side, and proceeds down the hill in a N. W. direction. This trackway is full fifteen feet wide, though much obscured by the encroaching vegetation. The stones which have been recently torn out of the moss, have been piled up in a wall-like form; which will readily account for the disfigured character of some of the relics.

The TRACKLINES are greatly similar in construction to the trackways, but less extensive. They have been, hitherto, invariably observed in connexion with antient dwellings and sepulchral remains, and in great probability served for bounds or pathways, connecting and inclosing dwellings, while the former might have been designed in like manner to facilitate the intercourse between villages and towns.

Numerous examples of the tracklines occur in various parts of the moor. At Torbill, near Rippon tor, they intersect each other at right angles in such numbers, that nearly the whole of the eastern slope is partitioned into squares, conveying in a striking manner the idea of an antient rural settlement. This

notion is strongly supported by the appearance of hut circles, which are found in many of these primitive divisions.

But the tracklines are generally observed, as it might be expected, of more irregular forms. On the N. W. side of Cawson hill, they are seen in a winding or serpentine form. They also occur in irregular forms on the slope of the hill, south of Wistman's wood; and near Littleford tor, two dwellings are connected by a line which forms the segment of a circle. On the S. side of Heytor, more in the neighbourhood of Torrhill, they are again observed in rectangular outlines.

The trackways possess no characteristic which would lead us to assign their construction to the Roman period of British history; nor have we historical evidence that any of their roads ran through Danmonium in a direction corresponding to that of the Dartmoor trackways. Neither are there in them any marks of modern construction as fences or boundary lines; the remains of the oldest wall fences on the moor being constructed in a manner so strikingly different, as to be evident to any observer of common penetration. Similar remarks will apply to the tracklines in a great degree, and as they are found so intimately connected with ruined dwellings, and other remains of a remote æra, the inference seems just that would assign them to the same people and the same period. But as this relic of antiquity has hitherto received so little investigation, our opinions on this subject are not advanced without hesitation, and require further research before they can be considered sufficiently established.

Examples of the existing relics of Dartmoor and its precincts have thus been produced. I now proceed to a general notice of the principal of those relics, more agreeably to their topographical situation, commencing with Putor, near Sampford Spiney church, on the western skirts of the moor.

Putor is traditionally regarded as a Druidical court of judicature, probably from the conformation of the granite masses whereof it is composed. These are raised by the hand of nature, so as to form two divisions—that on the east consists of four piles of granite rocks standing at the four cardinal points, like rude bastions, connected on the E. and W. by an equally rude breastwork or curtain, but open to the N. and S. On the N. W. pile is a series of rock basins irregularly disposed over the surface of the granite mass. One, on its N. edge is complete, and is furnished with a natural lip or spout, calculated to pour the water over the edge. This basin communicates by a slight channel with a second, much broken, which has a like communication with the third, much more oval than the former, and placed E. of the second on the verge of the rock. Near the W. edge of the same rock, but detached from the others, is a fourth basin, slightly oval—depth eleven inches, diameter two feet.

N. E. of Putor, above the Walkham river, stands Vixen or Vissen tor, a natural pile, rising abruptly on the N. side from the heath, ranking from its size and form among the grandest on the moor. It faces exactly S. and is said to have been antiently employed for astronomical purposes: whether it were ever so used or not, it would at least form a colossal dial to determine the mid-day hour.

N. from Vissen tor, are the Three-staple tors, and Rolls tor—a line drawn from N. to S. would nearly intersect the five. Little Staple tor is first arrived at in ascending the hill. On the W. edge of the highest and largest mass of this tor, is a basin of irregular outline—lip nearly S., diameter two feet. On the N. W. pile of Great Staple tor, a basin less perfectly hollowed than the last—diameter sixteen inches, no lip.

Merivale bridge, adjoining which is the bound-stone of Walkhampton and Whitchurch parishes, is in the valley below.

Ascending the hill, by the turnpike road, scarcely half a mile from the river Walkham, we enter the antient town or village already mentioned. Its site is on the slope of the common, inclining to the south-west, and the ground over which the houses are scattered is of considerable extent, on both sides of the road. The principal relics in this village have been already noticed under their respective heads; and among these, the avenues by their singular appearance will immediately strike the observer. Their direction is towards the river; they are in immediate connexion with sacred circles, the northern terminating in one, and the southern having another at mid-length: they are in apparent relative connexion with the larger sacred circle and maen on the south. From these circumstances the avenues will afford the best central station for describing the position of the several relics of this antient settlement, as laid down in the accompanying plate.

About twenty-four yards S. of the S. avenue, is an imperfect cairn of small dimensions; one hundred yards S., a circle,—diameter sixty-seven feet, stones ten, height not exceeding eighteen inches. S. of the maen is the circle already described, and sixty-six feet S. of the avenue, the fallen cromlech before mentioned.

N. E. by N. of the avenues is a Cyclopæan inclosure or pound; differing essentially from Grimspound and others in the construction of the fence—this consisting chiefly though not entirely, of upright stones, while at Grimspound they are rudely piled together. Advantage has been taken of the natural position of some huge blocks in forming this singular fence; the form approaches, though imperfectly, to a circular figure; mean diameter one hundred and seventy-five feet. At the upper or E. end is a vast block—a *fair edge* forming one wall of some interior enclosure, having remains of walls at right angles. In front of this, distant thirty feet, is a large quoit-like stone, sixteen feet by nine feet eight, which as the impost,

with three others, formed the group before alluded to as the possible ruins of a second cromlech of very large dimensions. There are hut circles or foundations of dwellings within, and immediately without, the inclosure, of a large size, and of the description already given, as are the other hut circles throughout the village, which extends about a mile along the side of the hill; on the highest point of which, Great Mistor (with its fine rock basin) overlooks the whole. There are many tumuli in the neighbourhood, one of which was opened, but nothing was found to repay the search.

Between the village and Great Mistor, is an old stream-work, with a primitive bridge or, rather, ford. On the summit of Great Mistor is the rock basin already described.

About S. S. E. of Mistor, above Dartmoor and Prince-town, rises Hessary tor. Southward, the land declines towards the springs of the Plym. One of the principal brooks is crossed by the Plymouth road, where an old stream-work will be observed. In the immediate neighbourhood are a number of ruined huts, four of twenty-six feet diameter, very near the road. There are many others on the slope of the opposite hill, eastward; the foundation slabs very perfect, with the door jambs standing, fronting S. North-west of these is a cairn, containing an imperfect kistvaen.

Twelve furlongs S. W. of Hessary, Black Tor rises immediately above the before-mentioned brook. On the edge of the pile on the highest ground, is a basin of an irregular oblong, two feet eight by one foot ten, with an open channel to the edge. The immense mass on which the basin is formed, rests very slightly on the tor, and has much of the logan character.

Nearly a furlong from this tor, in the glen below, are the avenues before mentioned, on the eastern bank of the stream. The N. avenue terminates in a circle, consisting of fifteen slab-

like stones, the highest, three feet from the surface; ten are erect, five fallen. Between this avenue and the stream is a cairn: there is one also at the extremity of the S. avenue, but very imperfect. A stream-work intersects the avenues diagonally.

On the slope of the adjoining hill, is an inclosure or Pound, similar to those already described, of an irregular form; diameter one hundred and twenty paces. It contains nine hut circles, whose general size is twenty-six feet in diameter.

On the same hill, fronting westerly, nearly opposite Stanlake farm, is a second Pound; its form approaching to a circle, diameter eighty-six paces. Within and without the fence, are numerous hut circles. On the E. runs a brook, which appears to have been diverted from an antient channel below the Pound.

Below Colden tor, near Prince-town, is the group of kistvaens before described; and near Two-bridges, on Bair down, the maen or rock-pillar. On the banks of the west Dart, above Two-bridges, is the celebrated Wistman's wood, the venerable relics of one of the most antient forests in the world. The wood extends along the acclivity which rises abruptly from the river, nearly half a mile in length, and about a furlong in breadth. The trees, which are all oaks, present a scene at once curious and interesting, from their stunted growth, and gnarled and twisted boughs matted with luxuriant moss, whortle, and parasitical plants. But although the trees do not exceed twelve feet in height, some of them are ten feet in girth, and the foliage is thick, flourishing, and vigorous.

Southward, towards Two-bridges, on the same acclivity, are numerous hut circles. Here is also a Pound of an irregular form, less perfect, but of a character similar to those in other parts of the moor. A hut circle near its lower wall, has a double foundation, different from any before noticed.

Crockern tor, celebrated by tradition as the situation of an ancient stannary court, crowns the southern summit of this ridge. The tor can scarcely be said to possess any vestiges of such appropriation, although it is believed that a granite table and benches existed within the memory of persons now alive. The natural rock, however, still retains a conformation sufficiently akin to that of a chair, to warrant the supposition that it might have been appropriated as the seat of the presiding officer.

On Littleford tor is a rock basin, of an oval form; its length, to the extremity of the lip, thirty inches; breadth, twelve inches.

Between Littleford and Longaford tors, is a trackway proceeding down the hill towards the West Dart; but being much overgrown with heath, its course can be only imperfectly traced. On the declivity of the same hill, between the tors and Wistman's wood, are very numerous remains of trackways or lines, hut circles, and inclosures. Two dwellings are connected by a trackline; the others stand singly, and the whole number is seven. Many more appear to have been destroyed by the building of *new-take* walls.

On Chittaford down, above Post bridge, is the grand central trackway, noticed in the general description; and near it, above Goggershole head, are detached hut circles, cairns, and a kistvaen five feet square. Archerton hill, near Post bridge, boasts the singularly perfect hut above-mentioned. Here is also a Pound of a remarkable construction, thought by the observers to resemble a fortification or camp. The area is partitioned by lines of stones, in directions apparently irregular; the hut is placed near the rampart, and without it are several hut circles. The diameter of the Pound is one hundred yards. On the same hill are various relics of trackways, inclosures, and hut circles; one of the latter is very complete, and is seven yards in diameter.

Immediately opposite, on the north side of the Moreton road, is a large inclosure, which, if undisturbed, would have approached nearer to that at Grimspound than any yet examined. Diameter three hundred and fifty feet; mean breadth of the rampart sixteen feet. This inclosure contains six hut circles; without are three others, and several tracklines.

On the hill above Stanwig bottom, is a circle of ten upright stones surrounding a small kistvaen. Diameter of the circle ten feet.

Hartland tor exhibits another instance of that form of inclosure which may have assigned the area, between two or more piles of rocks, to some specific purpose. The inclosure, as at Putor, will be best described as a rude breastwork, connecting natural bastions.

Northward, on the hill opposite to Hartland tor, is a dilapidated Pound, half of the rampart having been destroyed for the purpose of building a new-take wall. The rampart is of great breadth, much like Grimspound, being in some places twenty-five feet wide, and formed of enormous stones. One entrance remains nearly S. To the rampart are joined ten hut circles, and nine are contained within the area, the diameter of which is one hundred yards. Not far distant, on a hill commanding a brook, which falls into the East Dart, are twenty-five hut circles of various dimensions.

Northward is Sittaford tor, above Ladle bottom, near which, S. E. are the circles of the Grey Wethers. On the side of the opposite hill, S. E. are numerous hut circles, connected by short tracklines of a serpentine form.

On Challacombe down, opposite Grimspound, is a line of avenues, running N. and S. The N. end is lost in a stream work; the S. is so much overgrown by heath and moss that no

more than one hundred yards are discoverable. Almost all the neighbouring hills are capped with cairns, and have numerous hut circles on their sides,—as Warren tor, Birch tor, and others.

Adjoining the road, about five miles from Moreton, are some hut circles in an inclosure, one side of which is straight, the other portion forming an irregular curve. A trackway passes along the line of the inclosure, towards the valley below; at right angles to this is a second, which is lost in the valley, but re-appears on the opposite hill. There is a third, parallel to the last—all being connected with the inclosure.

Grimspound, on the N. W. declivity of Hamildown, has been already described. On the summit of Hamildown is a barrow; one of these monuments is also seen on King tor, N. E. The portion of trackway on Hamildown is supposed to be a continuation of the great trackway. On the N. E. side of Hamildown, a circular inclosure, called Berry pound, will be scarcely discernible, from the fern and heather by which it has been overgrown.

About three miles N. N. W. from Sittaford tor, is the high table land in the centre of the moor, forming an extensive morass, from which the principal streams in Devonshire take their rise. At Cranmere pool, within its precincts, is the source of the East Ockment. This swampy tract divides the water courses,—those streams which flow respectively northward, to the Bristol, and southward, to the English channel.

Near one of the springs of the Tavy, between Cranmere pool and Furtor, is a single hut of an oval form, thirty feet in circumference. Its situation is in one of the most secluded parts of the moor, and no antient remains, of any kind, have been observed in its vicinity.

Almost northerly, above the course of the Taw, rises Cawson or Cosdon hill, the highest in Dartmoor. On the side fronting Belstone church is a very perfect trackway, formed in the usual manner, with the exception of having a few stones placed erect at long intervals. Its direction is from the valley and cultivated grounds N. E. by E. four hundred and seventy paces. It terminates W. in another of similar character, meeting it in an acute angle. Near it is a dilapidated cairn.

On the ridge of the mountain, N. from its highest point, is a cairn, inclosed by a fence of slab stones, closely set, leaning outwards, apparently, so placed, by design. The highest of these inclosing stones is three feet, and the object seems to have been, to confine the small stones, of which the cairn is composed, within their compass.

S. W. sixty-four paces, a cairn formed of unusually large stones, contains a kistvaen, seven feet square,* already described. W. S. W. seventy paces, is a large circle, constructed of closely set slabs, like all the habitation circles on the moor, but considerably larger than any hitherto noticed. Its diameter is fifty feet, and if the smaller ruins convey a notion of the cabins of the people, this from its size bears the appearance of the mansion of the chief. Yet in the centre is a fallen kistvaen, eight feet square, within which we thought we could discover a rude sarcophagus, the cover of which was not more than two feet and a half in breadth. This relic altogether, if not unique, is of a very singular character, and very distinct in its appearance from all others we have met with.

S. W. of the last, one hundred and twelve paces, adjoining the beacon-cairn on the mountain top, is a low, circular inclo-

* This is probably 'Cawson house,' of which the moormen in the neighbourhood speak.

sure, in formation somewhat similar to the tracklines. The stones are thrown promiscuously together, a very few only being placed erect in the ground. With the exception of a small portion of its circumference, this circle is beautifully perfect; inclosing an area of boggy land, scarcely lower than the highest point of the mountain upon which the beacon is placed.

In the descent of the hill, towards Taw marsh, opposite Belstone tor, is a group of hut circles, nine in number, within and without a trackline inclosure, three hundred and forty paces in circumference. One part of the circumference breaks from the circular into a serpentine form, for no apparent reason. Still nearer to the valley of the Taw, on the side of the mountain, two trackways intersect each other, forming acute angles at the point of intersection. The trackways can be distinctly traced two furlongs from N. E. to S. W.

Four miles S. E. of Cawson, is Castor rock, which has a basin two feet by one foot six. Immediately below Castor, on Tincombe* down, are numerous tracklines, rectangular inclosures, and Pounds, with hut circles, similar to those in other quarters of the moor.

Near Castor is Gidleigh common, on the borders of which is an upright rock pillar or maen, similar in appearance to that at Merivale bridge. The height is twelve feet, girth at the base eight feet, tapering gradually upwards. It has been employed as a bound-stone, and inscribed with the letters G and D—*Gidleigh and Dagleigh commons*. Thirty-six yards from this stone, commences an avenue of upright stones, one hundred and thirty-four yards in a direction N. and S. At some distance, on another part of the hill, is a second avenue running down the hill one hundred and forty yards, in a

Correctly, *Teigncombe*, without doubt.

direction due N. and S. The breadth is four feet and a half, and it terminates in a very curious set of circles of upright stones, placed one within another; the outermost consisting of eleven stones, the second of six, the interior of eight; and within this, three stones, irregularly placed. Diameter of the whole fifteen feet. At a short distance is a columnar stone, having the appearance of an overthrown maen.

A few paces from these concentric circles commence a pair of avenues, leading down the hill, N. towards the Teign. The eastern of these avenues could be traced only forty-one yards, but the stones are peculiar and unusually large, some standing three feet six from the surface, and being of a triangular shape. The western is visible one hundred and forty-four yards; in a direct line from its termination, are two upright stones, two feet six high, and ten feet apart.

N. of the Teign is the fine Gidleigh circle, before noticed, on the declivity of a hill, above the North Teign; and near a path leading from Venworthy to Oakhampton, N. of Castor rock, and E. of Watern tor.*

On Ruggamede hill, in Venworthy new-take, one mile and a half from Gidleigh pillar, is a circle of upright stones, twenty-seven in number; the highest standing three feet and a half from the surface. From some wide intervals in the circumference, the stones appear to have been removed. Diameter sixty-four feet.

S. of the circle, three hundred and sixty feet, commences an avenue, taking a direction N. and S. one hundred and twenty-four feet, towards a brook. A large part of this avenue seems to have been removed, for the construction of a neighbouring wall.

* Remarkable for Thirstone rock, containing an aperture said to be large enough to admit a man on horseback.

Assacombe hill, overlooking a spring of the South Teign, has various relics, though chiefly in a more dilapidated state than usual. The adjacent fences too evidently account for the more than ordinarily ruinous state of the hut circles, and quadrangular inclosures on this spot.

In the neighbourhood of Venworthy, tracklines will be found, forming irregular figures, (and containing hut circles,) of a similar description to those on Lakehead hill.

Bowerman's nose stands on the promontory of a long ridge of hills, dividing the vales of Manaton and North Bovey from that of Widecombe. Below, is a road to Chagford, from which town, in the direction of Holy-street,* a lane leads to the celebrated Drewsteignton cromlech, in a field belonging to Shilston farm. S. of the cromlech, eighty-seven feet, are the remains of what has been regarded as a tumulo-cairn, with an excavation in the centre.

N. N. W. of Sandypark, a rocky ridge rises from the coppice and marshy grounds around it; tors appear on the summit, two of which have rock basins. The most perfect is very deep, and nearly circular, being two feet by one foot eight.

S. E. in the channel of the Teign, is the logan stone mentioned in the general description; and near Manaton church-town the large circle, also before described.

In the ascent of the hill above Becky fall, and opposite Lustleigh cliffs, is a large dilapidated cairn, with a trackway descending from it, towards the valley N. E. two hundred and thirty-six yards.

On the eastern pile of Heytor, is an imperfect basin, two feet

* Called by Polwhale, the *Via Sacra* of the Druids.

six in diameter. A trackway, running N. E. terminates at the west pile; a second, parallel to the last, ends in a smaller tor, W. of the great tor. Another, intersecting the second, has for some distance the appearance of an avenue, two hundred and thirty-six yards long, but gradually dwindling into a line; having at its southern end a trackline, at right angles.

N. W. of Heytor, Holwell tor presents a walk of one hundred yards, at least from one hundred to one hundred and fifty feet wide, between walls of granite, rising to one hundred feet in the highest part. Below Rippon tor, the second of the Dartmoor hills, a trackway forms an object so conspicuous, as to be taken at first for a modern fence. Descending the side of Rippon tor, it crosses a road leading from Heytor, and the road from Ashburton to Chagford. Many of the stones in this trackway are unusually large and high; presenting, from this circumstance, more of the fence, and less of the causeway character, than any before noticed. Near the trackway are two hut circles, the slabs of which are large and closely set; the largest, thirty feet diameter; the other circle eighteen feet diameter, having one door-jamb, four feet high; the former containing a dilapidated kistvaen.

Torrhill, W. of the trackway, has its declivity partitioned into rectangular inclosures by tracklines; many of these inclosures contain hut circles.

A circular inclosure, as large as Grimspound, occupies one portion of the face of the hill, and contains hut circles. Both the hut circles and inclosure are much dilapidated, and one fourth of the eastern circumference of the latter has disappeared. The western side of the hill, looking towards Widecombe, has some circles of erect stones, closely set, in the act of being demolished, for repairing the road!

The road to Chagford runs along the high moorlands, above

Widecombe church-town, adjoining which, a trackway may be traced, pursuing the same direction.

Yartor, on the opposite side of the dales of Widecombe, looks down upon Dartmeet bridge, the point where the parishes of Widecombe, Holne, and Lidford meet. This tor has two courses of natural rock, (similar to Putor) on the north and south. The west side has a low rude fence, formed of granite blocks; and the eastern has a similar breastwork, though less perfect, and somewhat in advance of the parallel courses on the other sides of the tor. The whole conformation presents a rude but grand inclosure, conveying the idea of a natural temple, admirably adapted to the wild and mystic rites of a dark and superstitious worship.

From Yartor, N. E. are some hut circles; one of which contains a kistvaen in ruins, the cover-stone of which is five feet by three.

Near the springs of the Erme, and not far from the old road called Abbot's way, is Erme Pound, an inclosure of similar character to the others already described. S. S. E. is Three-barrow tor, so named from the three enormous cairns on its summit. The cairns are observed to be generally of larger dimensions in this quarter than in other parts of the moor, and there is scarcely a hill in the neighbourhood, which cannot boast of its granite crown. At its western foot is an extensive group of hut circles, of large size, and less disturbed than in many other places. Many of them have inclosures attached, conveying the notion of a yard, or garden plot. One is double, the circles touching one another, but there is no appearance of an opening or communication between them. N. of this spot is a Pound, and another conformation of a similar character, not so well defined.

Southward, about one mile from the Western beacon, in a

fine mountain basin, is a double avenue, so nearly obliterated as to require a practised eye to detect it. It terminates in a stream, and is unconnected with any other British relics.

On the hill above Shavercombe head, near the springs of the Yealm, are some detached hut circles. On Shaugh moor are also some circles, about a mile east of the church; and on Sheepstor, which rises grandly above the church-town of that name, are hut circles and a rock basin.

There are detached hut circles on Cockstor, W. of Staple tor;—a straggling village with inclosures, on the Walkham, below Mistor, (the largest of which is ninety-three paces in diameter, each inclosure having a hut circle on the western edge;)—a trackway between Mistor and Rollstor, near an antient road to Lidford; tracklines and other remains below Lints tor;—but as these have not been so accurately examined as the other relics which came under our notice, a particular description cannot be given.

We are not, however, without the hope of pursuing these investigations on a future occasion, and of completing an enumeration of British relics in Dartmoor, and its precincts.

et

Allen Cronch

1880

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Kallen

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