

## FIRST REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON DARTMOOR.

FIRST REPORT of the Committee—consisting of Mr. C. Spence Bate, Mr. W. F. Collier, Mr. J. Divett, Mr. R. Dymond, Rev. W. Harpley, Rev. Treasurer Hawker, Mr. R. J. King, Mr. W. Lavers, Mr. G. W. Ormerod, Mr. W. Pengelly, Mr. J. Brooking Rowe, and Rev. W. H. Thornton—for the purpose of influencing public opinion in favour of preserving the peculiarities and antiquities of Dartmoor.

By W. F. COLLIER, Honorary Secretary.

(Read at Kingsbridge, July, 1877.)

THE Committee appointed at the meeting of the Devonshire Association at Ashburton, in 1876, have taken into consideration in what manner the interest which the Association has always exhibited respecting Dartmoor—made manifest as it is in the numerous papers on that attractive subject published in their *Transactions*, illustrated by drawings and figures—can be best directed to the practical object of preserving the peculiarities and the beauties of the Moor, together with the relics of former times, so much valued by antiquaries and archæologists.

They beg leave, therefore, to recommend that a standing committee be appointed, to be called The Dartmoor Committee, for the purpose of obtaining information, and reporting annually to the Association matters relating to Dartmoor; recording in their reports trustworthy facts that may be classified under the following heads :

1. *Geography*.—Information respecting the natural features of Dartmoor, the tors, the rivers, the names of places, lands cultivated and uncultivated, &c.

2. *Geology*.

3. *Fauna and Flora*.

4. *Archæology*.—Information respecting the antiquities now to be found on Dartmoor, and those known to have been destroyed.

5. *Tenure of the Land*.—Information respecting the tenure of the Duchy of Cornwall, and other landowners, forest laws,

venville rights, rights of common, rights of way, public rights, encroachments, &c.

6. *Industries.*—Information respecting the mines, clay works, granite works, farms, and other enterprises.

7. *Sundries.*—Information on any other subject not included in the first six ; such, for example, as the French war prisons, the convict prisons, circumstances of interest, sporting on the Moor, &c.

With respect to No. 4, Mr. Spence Bate adds to this report as follows :

“That as far as practicable, without calling on the funds of the Association, an attempt should be made to restore the relics of more especial interest. As a stone lies, fallen, it frequently attracts no interest ; but if restored to its proper position, under the careful superintendence of the committee, it would become an object of attention even to those who may not study archæology.

“That the names of places as they are now known be recorded, and those also by which they were formerly known, with references to the documents, with the dates, in which the names occur.

“The antiquities of this country are gradually decreasing from various causes. Those on Dartmoor are not less liable to destruction than others, and within the last few years some of the most interesting have been injured or removed. Among those that have been destroyed may be mentioned the quoit that covered the cromlech at Merrivale Bridge. A fine cairn that once stood near it was removed to make a road. Near Plym-head a barrow has been destroyed within the last year or two. It is therefore suggested that all known remains should be recorded, and their position on the Moor identified with accuracy, and their size and form entered in a register kept for that purpose. If at any time one should be destroyed the fact should be recorded, as well as the manner and cause of destruction, together with the observation of any objects discovered during its removal.

“By such means as these it is hoped that a veritable record of facts may be obtained, concerning a locality that is perhaps more primitive and unique in its character than any other in England.”

With respect to No. 5, Mr. Rowe adds :

“An important part of the work of this committee will be an enquiry as to the tenure of the land and the various claims made in respect of the Moor.

“This will involve a consideration of—

“1. The ancient forest laws.

“2. The rights and claims of the Duchy of Cornwall.

“(a) Ordinary—such as attach usually to lords of the manor and owners of the soil.

“(b) Extraordinary—where they differ from these found in other manors.

“(c) Peculiar to the manor of Lidford and the forest of Dartmoor.

“3. The venville tenants and their rights.

“4. The rights of those not being venville tenants, and not holding under the Duchy.

“5. The various encroachments upon the common rights.

“It will be seen that this part of the subject will require careful investigation, and the course which the inquiry will probably take is now merely indicated. In the next report the first portion of this division of the subject will be dealt with fully; viz., the ancient forest laws, and their connection with the forest of Dartmoor.”

For the more complete accomplishment of these objects the committee recommend that a large map of Dartmoor, on a scale of six inches to the mile, be prepared for the use of the Dartmoor Committee, on which should be marked everything of importance; and corresponding with the map a record should be kept, with numbers or letters having reference to the map, and also to the papers published in the *Transactions* in which particular descriptions of objects of interest may be found.

A member of the committee, Mr. R. Dymond, has kindly offered his services for preparing the map.

It will thus appear that the work of the committee will probably occupy some time, and that reports may be expected from them for some years to come which will be of a very interesting character.

The committee also recommend that a communication be opened between this Association, through the President and other officers, with the officials of the Duchy of Cornwall at the Duchy Office, London, for the purpose of representing to the Duchy authorities that it is in their power to assist this Association materially in preserving many very interesting objects on Dartmoor, and of obtaining from them some assurance that the views of the Devonshire Association on the subject of Dartmoor shall have the consideration of the Duchy officials when placed before them in a proper form.