

The President's Address.

Mr. STANLEY said it was the custom of the Society that he whom they honoured by electing President for the year should address a few observations to them on such points of the archaeological or other questions of the district as he might think desirable to bring to their notice. He must thank them, after twenty years, for having again invited him to become their President. On the first occasion he had to send an excuse to the Society, and he did it with great regret, although the circumstance which obliged him to be absent was one which he knew would give him great happiness, which had continued ever since. He had read as much as he had been able of the different opinions of different people regarding the antiquities of the neighbourhood, and he was sorry to find the opinion of one who said that they were not many in number and had been frequently described at great length. He did not think that was right, and he thought he could point out several features of special interest which were not included in their list of tours for the next three days. He believed they would find that the Natural History department had not been very much considered by the Society, and there were several quarries near Quantock Lodge which were of an interesting character. He had the authority of so well-known a geologist as Sir Roderick Murchison for stating that the quarry of green stone of which Quantock Lodge was built was of very great interest. Most people who saw the house considered that it was built of green sandstone ; but it was not so, for the stone used was a highly igneous rock which took a polish, and the party visiting Quantock Lodge on the next day would see a table of the polished stone. The late Rev. Mr. Lance, of Buckland St. Mary, had had some columns of the stone polished, with which he decorated his beautiful church which was still being adorned and beautified. There was another large quarry near Adscombe, in which the stone alternated very largely, and it

contained building-stone, and limestone, which when burnt produced lime as well as polished marble. From this quarry a large chimney-piece for Dunster Castle was carved for Mr. Luttrell.

Another object of interest was a cave at Holwell, which had never been thoroughly explored. There was a little difficulty in the exploration, inasmuch as to make further progress one had to crawl upon the knees, and as the ground was rather wet people shrank from further explorations. Some day, however, it might be completed, and it was rather curious that in a limestone district like the Quantocks it should be the only cavern of which they had any knowledge. There were also in the district the remains of the workings of upper mines, as he knew to his cost, because after heavy rains the soil fell in and he had to send several cartloads of soil to fill up. In addition there were a number of marble quarries to which a certain interest attached. If they had time on the next day some might like to visit the quarry from which the stone of Quantock Lodge was obtained. Sir Roderick Murchison had expressed the opinion that it was igneous rock from very near the crater of a volcano; but he reassured those to whom he told that, by saying that it was not likely that the volcano would break out again in the same place. There was one portion of their Natural History in which he would like to destroy a fallacy. There was a general belief that, as on Exmoor, which had been a Royal forest from time immemorial, so in the Quantocks red deer had been for centuries. These beautiful animals, however, were claimed to have been first turned out on the Quantocks by Mr. C. E. J. Esdaile's father, and this was confirmed by Lord Ebrington.*

* The Rev. W. Greswell has shown in a letter to *The Somerset County Gazette*, dated August 7th, 1897, that there were red deer on the Quantocks in early times. He writes, "Leland travelled through the Quantock country on one of his journeys (1538-40). Coming to Nether Stowey, he notices that here was a goodly manor house of the Lord Audley, who had a park of redde deere and another of fallow."

Mr. Greswell also brings forward evidence to prove that a large portion of this part of Somerset was accounted "forest" from Domesday downwards.—ED.

Speaking of Admiral Blake's connection with Bridgwater, he said a large number of the Blake family from America and elsewhere often came to Plainsfield Farm to see a chimney-piece there, on which were carved the letters "E. B."; but the date 1668 or 1663 showed they were placed there long after the Admiral's death. What was the meaning of the initials would be an interesting question to solve. Then, again, in Over Stowey Church, in front of the Communion table, there was the tombstone of "Humphrey Blake, clothier, died 1619," while they knew that Humphrey Blake, the Admiral's father, lived to a later date. He had known the clergy a good deal worried by descendants of the Blake family for particulars as to the relations of the Admiral. One, after getting a copy of the register, wrote to know if any of the family had been omitted, and the clergyman wrote back saying he had forgotten to mention one Edward Blake, who was put in the stocks.

An interesting question which had come rather prominently before them of late years was the great part which ladies took in holding property in that neighbourhood. As to his own position he had himself bought a few farms, but the great mass of the Quantock Lodge estate belonged to his wife. Then close by at Brymore they all remembered the fact of Miss Hales leaving that property to Mr. Bouverie's grandfather; while the large estate of Fairfield descended to Sir Peregrine Acland's daughter. Further on there was Crowcombe Park, which belonged to the wife of Mr. Trollope; and next there was Mrs. Bisset, of Bagborough, and long might she continue to enjoy the beautiful property which she owned. A little further on was the Tetton property, which came to the Earl of Carnarvon's family by marriage with one of the Aclands, and which had previously come to the latter by marriage with the Dykes. Then there was the Portman property, which came to the Berkeley family by a marriage with the heiress of the Portmans. Pixton Park also came to

Lord Carnarvon through marriage with an Acland. Further west they met with the extraordinary fact of the Dunster Castle estate having been sold only once since the Conquest, and then by a woman to a woman. It was given to Lord de Mohun by William the Conqueror. One of the Lords de Mohun was known as Earl of Somerset, and the wife of a later owner, who had great influence over him, got him to leave the property to the Archbishop of Canterbury and others, who were to do with it as Lady Mohun desired. She desired them to make the property over to her, and then, retaining the use of it to herself for life, she sold it for a sum of money to Lady Elizabeth Luttrell, who had three daughters—the Duchess of York, the Countess of Salisbury, and Lady Strange of Knockyn. The Duchess of York and the Countess of Salisbury died without issue, and Lady Strange, of Knockyn, carried on the line. On the death of Lady de Mohun legal proceedings were taken, and an almost unprecedented thing occurred, for the House of Commons petitioned the Crown that it should be tried at bar. This was probably claimed on account of the influence of the Duchess of York, one of the claimants. The trial was ordered to take place at Ilchester, but he knew no record of the result, although the property remained with Lady Elizabeth's son. He (Mr. Stanley) was directly descended from Lord and Lady Strange, of Knockyn, and it was rather interesting to find himself settled in Somerset for twenty-five years, and then after all to find himself to be a Somerset man. There were other properties held in the same way. Halswell, for instance, came to the present worthy owners through an heiress; while an interesting fact was that the first document he ever signed as a Somerset magistrate was one brought to him by Mrs. Farthing, who was churchwarden of Dodington.

The MAYOR proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Stanley for the very able and attractive address he had given them on that occasion. He was sure they must have listened to it

with a vast amount of interest and pleasure. He (the Mayor) hoped time would enable them to visit the quarries alluded to by Mr. Stanley, for they were a very instructive and interesting feature of the neighbourhood.

The Right Hon. J. W. MELLOR, Q.C., M.P., seconded. He said there was no one better qualified than Mr. Stanley to preside over them. He (Mr. Mellor) had known Mr. Stanley for many years, but that gentleman had never previously told him that he was of Somerset descent. He was very glad indeed to hear that Mr. Stanley was a Somerset man, as that would give additional interest in the proceedings. The vote was adopted with acclamation.

The CHAIRMAN briefly acknowledged the compliment, and this closed the meeting.

The members then attended a

Luncheon,

hospitably given to the Society by the Mayor of Bridgwater (Mr. M. C. Else).