

KYLOE CATTLE.

Scotland possesses only two varieties of cattle that have been settled into breeds, the West Highlands and of Galloway, denominated the Argyle and Galloway breeds. The former exist in the largest size in the county of Argyle, as that country affords the best maintenance throughout the year. The size is lessened over the northern counties of the mainland, and the general conformation is impaired; the bulk is further diminished in the Hebridean Islands, and further still in the Orkney and Shetland Islands, which afford the coarsest animals, and those of the Hebrides are more thriving and symmetrical. The Argyle breed and the West Highland cattle, the Kyloes and the cattle of the Western and Northern Islands—these distinctions are the modern understanding of the terms.

These cattle are colored in very many shades and varieties, black being the favorite and prevailing colour, which is much intermixed with white, red, dun, and brindled. The horns are long, wide and tapering, and in accordance with the size of the animal. The Argyle cattle have the largest horns; the Hebridean Kyloe has the finest spear horn, clear glittering and pointed; while the Northern Islands show a coarse and stunted horn, short and proportional to the animal frames. The eye is fierce and the character mischievous, habits restless and unruly, body short, paunch deep, hide thick, flesh very good, and finely marbled with veins of fat. The maturity is regulated by the maintenance that is afforded the age of six years is attained before a fattened carcase is produced; four years in the native country, and two in the lowland treatment.

It is well known that the Galloway cattle afforded the material service of the short-horn breed, hence called the "alloo," in reproach of the coarse mixture that was introduced into the Yorkshire cattle. Passing over that point at present, as unconnected with our present subject, the Galloway cattle have been much improved among themselves by judicious selections, and much yet remains to be done. Vast quantities of these animals are transported to the southern turnip counties, and are much esteemed for beef and profit. But the old faults still remain, and in abundance.

The Kyloe cattle, properly so called, are a most motley production in colour, shape and quality, by a promiscuous breeding without any care or attention. The mountains and the open range of hill grounds do not afford the benefit of enclosures in the adaptation and restriction of the sexual intercourse, which is consequently altogether unconfined, and spreads into numberless descents and endless pedigrees. Good and bad animals are thus produced in accidental varieties; the latter always predominates and the former bear the usual proportion to the efforts of nature's course. This unrestricted breeding has gone on from the earliest records, and also the careless provision of winter food, on which the whole success depends of Highland farming with cattle or sheep. But the most unfavorable circumstances of situation do not prevent the selection for the purpose of breeding, of the best shape, and forms that are produced by accident, and from which every refinement of animals has progressed. It is not at all advocated here that the size of the Kyloe cattle be increased or any cross be introduced by foreign blood; the present bulk of the animal is very ample for the maintenance, and any mixture of blood would disarrange the long-established descent, and introduce an irretrievable confusion. Such mixtures of species and varieties in animals continue for a time, gradually degenerate into numberless branches, and at last are wholly extinguished. The true way is to improve cattle among themselves, by selecting the best specimens for breeding, and carefully rejecting all bad ones, and to continue in this course most obstinately; but not to produce a size or quality that is beyond the circumstances of use. Abundance of materials exist, and only want the application, even under the ordinary management of Kyloe cattle.

Our experience and acquaintance having been very considerable among the Kyloe cattle, our attention was very naturally directed to their qualities, habits, and varieties. It appeared that very valuable distinct breeds may be produced by a careful selection from the very heterogeneous multitude—a glossy black variety, that comes at present from the Western Islands, with white colours on the face, breast, and flanks, not largely intermingled, but pleasingly patched; a brindled variety, with little or no white colour on the body, at least very sparingly, the red brindles being of a very deep dye; and a breed wholly dun in colour, without the least mixture of any other stain, and the coat of hair thick and curly. This dun colour abounds among all the Highland cattle of Scotland, and always indicates a hardiness and vigorous constitution, and a propensity to fatten, in every animal organization. These two propensities cannot be surpassed in any