

Stock Department.

Wild Cattle.

HISTORY and tradition are alike silent on the original or Paradisian breeds of cattle. The sacred narrative reveals nothing as to the effect produced upon races during the antediluvian world. We gather, however, from its inspired pages that from very early periods of the world's history, a high degree of importance has been attached to the herd of the field. In Egypt—at one time the most civilized country of the earth—divine honours were paid to oxen, and they had their priests and their obsequies. Even where a more enlightened faith prevailed, they were among the first religious sacrifices offered to God, and the first accepted. The herdsman, too, as well as the shepherd, was a patriarchal king, and his riches chiefly consisted of cattle.

Much has been said and written in our times about the improvement of breed, but if, as some profound thinkers aver, cattle were originally created perfect, in the widest sense of the term, in the sunny realms of Paradise, a great amount of deterioration must have taken place before improvement was practicable. On this hypothesis, the "curse" must have fallen upon cattle as upon all other products of the soil, and, as the domestic companions of our fallen race, a thousand misfortunes must have befallen them. If originally created perfect, they were then incapable of improvement. The subject is altogether too vast for human solution. We will, therefore, for the present, at least, leave it, and confine ourselves to the subject of our present article.

In Britain, there are, as most of our readers are aware, several very distinct tribes of animals, differing in their features and characteristics in many very important points. Some are domesticated and even companionable; others are as shy and untamable in their nature as the wild deer or bison of the forests. It is, as we have already hinted, impossible to determine what existing breed, if any, had the honour of being the primeval race. Of the wild ox, however, it is almost certain that one remnant, at least, survives in the wild cattle of Chillingham Park, Northumberland, England, the property of the Earl of Tankerville. The accompanying illustration gives a very accurate representation of these fine animals, and their origin, character, and habits form the subject of the present article.

In the first place, we must premise that our information respecting their origin is very scanty. On this point, we cannot supply more satisfactory evidence than that adduced by a late Lord Tankerville, in a communication to the Society of Arts, bearing date June 8, 1838. His lordship then said. "I remember an old gardener, who died many years ago, at the age of perhaps 80 or more, who used to tell of what his father had told him as happening to him when a boy, relative to these wild cattle, which were then spoken of as wild cattle, and with the same sort of curiosity as exists with respect to them at the

present day. . . . The probability is that they were the ancient breed of the island, inclosed long since within the boundary of the park."

Sir Walter Scott—no mean antiquary—supposes that they are the descendants of those which inhabited the great Caledonian forest extending from the Tweed to Glasgow, at the two extremities of which, Chillingham and Hamilton, they are found. His lines in the ballad of "Cadyon Castle" describe them pretty accurately as they are to be seen at the present day.

"Mightiest of all the beasts of chase,  
That roam in woody Caledon,  
Crushing the forest in his race,  
The mountain bull comes thundering on.

"Fierce on the hunter's quiver'd band  
He rolls his eye of swartly glow,  
Spurns with black hoof and horns the sand,  
And tosses high his mane of now."

Chillingham park is a very ancient enclosure; and documents are in existence which prove that the castle and church were built about the year 1220.

It has been said by some writers that a similar breed is found at some other places in Britain—Lynn Park, Cheshire; Hamilton Castle, Scotland; and Chartley Park. We have had an opportunity of comparing the Hamilton cattle with the Chillingham



breed, and could discover little or no resemblance either in appearance, in habit, or in disposition. "Those at Chartley Park, on the contrary," writes Lord Tankerville, "closely resemble ours in every particular, in their colour,—with some small difference in that of their ears,—their size, general appearance, as well as their habits. This was a very ancient park, belonging formerly Devereux Earl of Essex, who built the bridge over the Trent, to communicate with his chase at Cannock and Beaudesert, then belonging to him; and the belief is, that these cattle had been there from time immemorial."

Respecting the habits of the Chillingham breed the description of the writer just quoted, is so graphic that we cannot do better than reproduce it:—"They have, in the first place, pre-eminently all the characteristics of wild animals, with some peculiarities that are sometimes very curious and amusing. They hide their young, feed in the night, basking or sleeping during the day. They are fierce when pressed, but, generally speaking, they are very timorous, moving off on the appearance of any one, even at a great distance. Yet this varies very much in different

seasons of the year, and according to the manner in which they are approached. In summer, I have been for several weeks at a time without getting sight of them, they on the slightest appearance of any one, retiring into a wood, which serves them as a sanctuary. On the other hand, in winter, when coming down for food to the inner park, and being in constant contact with people, they will let you almost come among them, particularly if on horseback. But then they have also a thousand peculiarities. They will be feeding sometimes quietly, when if any one appears suddenly near them, particularly coming down the wind, they will be struck with a sudden panic and gallop off, running one over the other, and never stopping till they get into their sanctuary. It is observable of them, as of red deer, that they have a peculiar faculty of taking advantage of the irregularities of the ground, so that on being disturbed, they may traverse the whole park, and yet you hardly get sight of them. Their usual mode of retreat is, to get up slowly, set off in a walk, then a trot, and seldom begin to gallop till they have put the ground between you and them in the manner just described."

"In form they are beautifully shaped, short legs, straight back, horns of a very fine texture, thin skin, so that some of the bulls appear of a cream color, and they have a peculiar cry, more like that of a wild beast than that of ordinary cattle. With all the marks of high breeding, they have also some of its defects: they are bad breeders, and are much subject to the rash, a complaint common to animals bred in and, in which is unquestionably the case with these as long as we have any record of them."

"When they come down into the lower part of the park, which they do at stated hours, they move, like a regiment of cavalry, in single files, the bulls leading the van, as, in retreat, it is the bulls that bring up the rear." To this able description of Lord Tankerville, we will briefly add the impression created on our own mind by frequent opportunities of observing these

animals:—  
In respect of symmetry, they appear almost perfect. They are of a pure white colour, and their horns are of a fine crescent shape, characteristics which render them, when moving in a body, a very imposing sight. The eyes, eye-lashes, and tips of the horns alone, are black; the muzzle is brown, the inside of the ears red or brown, and all the rest of the animal white. Even the bulls have no manes, but only a little coarse hair upon the neck. Supremacy among the males is obtained by fierce contests for the mastery; and if, by accident, a bull gets separated from the herd for a day or two, his settled relation seems to be forgotten; for, on his rejoining the herd, a fight ensues, and the conflict continues until the previous amicable understanding is re-established.  
On comparing the previous description of the Chillingham cattle with those given by Boethius and Leslie of the wild Caledonian cattle, we cannot but be struck by their generally close correspondence. Making some allowance for hyperbole in the old historians, with the exception of the mane, the resemblance between the Chillingham and Old Cale-