



The Wild Cattle of England.

(See front page of cover.)

SOMETIMES a foolish rhyme will stay by one's memory when things of importance can get no lodgment there; and how a little incident out of history, a picturesque passage, even a name that sounds romantic, will cleave to one!

Long time ago, in idly turning over the leaves of a book, my eye was caught by a bit about some cows—a herd of white cows with red ears. These white cows passed across a page of English history, and vanished, but the picture remained with me as distinct as if it had been photographed. To me it was a wonderful thing never to be forgotten. I have been on the lookout for those beautiful cattle ever since, and every now and then, along the years, have had a glimpse of their kind, on some page of romance or poetry or record of travel.

They are historic cattle; and the subject to one who loves animals is a delightful one. There are actually in England at the present time, preserved in the parks of some of the nobility, a few herds of the same breed that roamed the island in aboriginal times; a perfectly distinct stock from all others so far as can be ascertained, retaining the race marks, being invariably white or cream-white, and having certain distinguishing colors about the muzzle and ears, either in red, brown or black—of which more hereafter.

One of the best accounts is to be found in a recent illustrated work called *Extinct British Animals*, where minute descriptions and a list of herds are given. We are told that the best authorities claim that they are direct descendants of the native cattle of Britain, and it is their kind meant by the *Ursus* (*Bos primigenius*) of Caesar; and as "the *Ursus* belonged with prehistoric times, coeval with man of the elder Stone age" (remains having been found in the fens and elsewhere), the evidence is that they are of very remote origin.

One likes to think of them—the same kind of white cattle there since the very beginnings of England, through all the changes that have taken place; that though

"Men may come, and men may go,"

and though men have come and gone, Britons, Romans, Picts, Scots, Danes, Saxons, Normans, have intermingled, or have died out, or lost their identity, these have remained not materially changed. There is a trifle of sentiment about it, a poetic and romantic side; but then, one must love cattle to feel it, and to like to think of those foregoers, those wild, untamable, beautiful creatures that belonged there even before the earliest kings.

There is the head of an ox on the obverse side of a coin of Cunobelin—and who was Cunobelin but the Cymbeline of Shakespeare, who kept his court at Silchester, the capital of Hants, now Hampshire? The cattle were familiar to the Roman invaders, the Roman legions, the Roman builders of the great roads. Over what long, long stretches of time they were to be encountered! King Alfred must have had to shun them in his wanderings, for they were almost as dangerous as the wild boars and wolves; they were hunted by Robert Bruce, known to Robin Hood and his merry men!

They ranged what is now Great Britain, from the wilderness where London is to the fens of Lincolnshire; from Northumberland on the Border through the vast Caledonian Forest even to "Far Lochaber;" and were all through the wild places of wild Wales. They are mentioned in the forest laws of Canute and other sovereigns; and in Wales, away back nine centuries or more ago, "white cattle with red ears" were paid as a penalty for certain offences. How explicit the wording, as if the fair color and the ear-marks made them distinguished and valuable! A woful tale is to be found in the history of King John of England, how, out of revenge, he had William de Braouse and his children put in prison and there starved to death, and how the distressed Lady de Braouse, hoping to propitiate the tyrant before it was too late, sent to his queen at Winchester a present of four hundred cows and a bull "all milk white with red ears."

In the ancient metrical romances the wild cattle appear. King Arthur (to put the words in modern English),

"He made a feast, the sooth to say,
Upon the Whitsunday,
At Cardiff that is in Wales,
And after meat there in the halls,"

Sir Colgrewnance recounted to the Knights of the Round Table

a tale of adventure in the forest, where were wild beasts and cattle and a man who could charm them around him, as St. Francis of Assisi could have done, or perhaps the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

Not such, however, the case of Guy, Earl of Warwick, in the Saxon legend of King Athelstan's time. There was no charming then, but, according to the verses, a most dire fight with a "dun cow" on Dunsmore Heath—"dun" is a word of frequent occurrence in such description in the old ballads, and is as likely to mean a tawny white as anything else. As to the ferocity of these cattle, Sir Walter Scott speaks of it in not less than three of his novels, besides in the spirited ballad of "Cadyow Castle." In *Kenilworth*, at the close of Chapter XVII., he makes Wayland compare himself to the "Scottish wild cattle," and in the note, as in several other places, refers to those kept at Chillingham. In *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Chapter V., it was one of them that put Lucy Ashton in the deadly peril from which the Master of Ravenswood rescued her; an animal of "a dingy white, or rather a pale yellow, with black horns and hoofs." In *Castle Dangerous* many pages are devoted to a hunt of wild cattle; the savage country is described and the animals of the chase; a meet was appointed in the morning outside the barricade of Douglas Castle for a solemn hunting match, and in the afternoon the "recheat" was sounded to summon the huntsmen together beneath a big oak in Douglas Dale, where a great out-of-door feast was eaten Robin Hood-like. Sir John de Walton was the only one who had killed one of the formidable Caledonian cattle, though of other game there was no lack.

It is to be noticed that Sir Walter and many writers sometimes use the word "park" and at others "chase." Both represent tracts of land, which, according to Blackstone, the sovereign granted to the nobles, while he reserved the forests in general for his own diversion. A chase was not inclosed; a park was an inclosed chase. Is not the latter a captivating and meaning-ful word? There is a witchery in certain words, in the very sound of them; they are whole poems and stories to us—they suggest so much, and set our imagination wandering. I appeal to the romance in you if it is not so! Think of Chevy Chase and the famous ballad; of "The Talking Oak" of Tennyson with the tilt of its rhyme!—

"Once more the gate behind me falls,
Once more before my face,
I see the mouldered Abbey-walls
That stand within the chase."

And the apostrophe to the oaks—just such oaks as there are here and there over England:

"O, hide thy knotted knees in fern,
And overlook the chase."

As the population increased, the wild cattle were routed from their native haunts, just as deer and buffalo were in the far West of our own country, but they were saved from extermination in the parks that the great nobles were permitted to inclose, and that is "the clue to the history" of the preservation of herds of so many years; at least sixteen were known which have now become extinct, though several, as will be shown, still remain. In two of the cases they became so savage or troublesome that they had to be killed; in one, they all died out from sickness.

Different marks distinguished some from the Chillingham cattle, which are considered purest. In a few instances they had no horns. At one place they were pure white except the muzzle and inside of the ears which were black; at another, the tips of the tails were likewise black; at another, the hoofs. One herd was white with black ears; another had black muzzles, black ears, and a fine black circle around the eyes. But whatever the variations, all must have been beautiful animals. What pictures they must have helped to make in those magnificent forests of old England, as they stood knee-deep in the fern under the giant oaks and beeches, or were seen among the lush grasses of the fens, or on the purple moors, or far down the vistas of wildwood places, in spaces of light or spaces of shade on the greensward, in such a scene as that where *Ivanhoe* opens or such as we come upon in English story, and which English ballads are full of!

There are bits of genealogy and little incidents that might be given about some of these parks and estates; thus, Barnard Castle in Durham, where there was once a herd, was in the royal chase of Marwood, and belonged successively to the Baliols, Beauchamps and Nevilles, earls of Warwick, but became by marriage the property of Richard III., whose favorite abode it was till he was king. Concerning the herd kept at Gisburne Park in Yorkshire, there is a tradition that they originally belonged to a certain Abbey in Lincolnshire, but when the monks were turned out by Henry VIII., the cattle were "drawn by the power of music," to the new place. That may be pure invention, or it may not be wholly such, for we know that many animals are very sensitive to music and can to a certain extent be influenced by it. That other story, however, that the bulls had "manes like lions" is a myth,

since it is a fact that they have almost no manes, though on some the hair is long or curly.

At Bishop Auckland in Durham, there was, says the old narrative, "A daintie, stately parke," "a faire parke by the castille, having fallow deer, wild bulls, and kin" (kine); the cattle, all white, were killed out during the civil wars of the time of Charles I. This was a part of the forest of Weardale: note the beautiful forest names, like Englewood, Needwood, Sherwood, Norwood, Bowland, Teesdale.

There exist now (or did not long ago), a small, inconspicuous herd at Kilmory on the island of Arran, and one at Somerford Park, Chester, the latter so changed from the original type that they have tiny black spots on the neck, sides and legs. At Lyme Park, Chester, a few are kept in the family of Legh, and the breed is as ancient as the park, which was granted to Sir Piers Legh, standard-bearer of the Black Prince at the battle of Crecy. It contains a thousand acres, over which roam the cattle (these have red ears, or sometimes black or blue-black); in the summer keeping off on the high ground, in the winter they resort to the woods, and at that season they used to be fed "on holly boughs before holly became so scarce."

And now we come to the three most noted herds, at Cadyow (or Cadzow), at Chartley, and at Chillingham. Cadyow Castle is in Lanarkshire, Scotland, and the park is a part of the vast Caledonian Forest where Robert Bruce hunted the wild bull in 1320, and James IV. in 1500. It is the seat of the Hamilton family, to whom it was granted by Bruce just after the battle of Bannockburn. There are oaks in existence there, of which Scott said that they might "have witnessed the rites of the Druids." Pictures have been made of them, and they are famous as the "oaks of Cadzow"—giants of the days primeval, gray and shattered, gnarled and time-worn, but sturdy and showing immense girth. There are kept, where their ancestors roamed, a remnant of the wild cattle. Scott describes them in the introduction to the ballad of "Cadyow Castle," where of the hunt, he writes:

"From the thick copse the roebucks bound,
The startled red-deer scuds the plain,
For the hoarse bugle's warrior sound,
Has roused their mountain haunts again.

Through the huge oaks of Evandale,
Whose limbs a thousand years have worn,
What sullen roar comes down the gale,
And drowns the hunter's pealing horn?

Mightiest of all the beasts of chase
That roam in woody Caledon,
Crashing the forest in his race,
The Mountain Bull comes thundering on.

Fierce, on the hunter's quiver'd band,
He rolls his eyes of swarthy glow,
Spurns with black hoof and horn, the sand,
And tosses high his mane of snow."

Chartley Park is in Staffordshire, overlooking the Trent, belonging to Earl Ferris, and is likewise an estate of great antiquity. Elizabeth was there once as a guest, and Mary of Scots as a prisoner. The park is a part of Needwood Forest, and a large tract of it is wild moorland; "the turf is in a primitive state." The cattle have fine pointed horns tipped with black, black muzzles and ears; and the inference is that there are occasional departures even from this type, for a legend runs in the Ferris family that if a black calf is born a member of their race dies; therefore, says the story, the keeper immediately puts to death any such ill-omened new-comer—perhaps averting the calamity by concealing evidence of the event. There is a curious bit in a quaint *Natural History of Staffordshire*, by Robert Plat, Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, to the effect that if cattle eat the grass that grows in certain localities in that county "they will surely turn out *whittish dun*." He had got fact and fiction confused.

Chartley was visited by Elihu Burritt, who wrote of the cattle as "a kind of white buffaloes, which doubtless in their day and generation supplied the Druids with raw beefsteak." He goes on to say that they are quite untamable, and "the keepers must keep at a respectful distance;" "the touch of a human hand is an abomination to them." When the calves are born far out in the wilderness and need care, the keepers run two fork-handles under them, and so carry them, as on a litter, to the shed. The mothers would desert them if a hand touched them. Bewick, who went to see the cattle and made an engraving of a cow, with great limpid eyes, having a startled look like a hind, tells about the same story, and that if one goes near the calves, "they clap their heads close to the ground, and lie like a hare in form, to hide themselves," and if one should cry out, the whole herd would come bellowing to the rescue.

The herd at Chillingham is best known, and the purest, of beautiful form, with straight backs, "horns of fine texture bending forward and upward," graceful and of distinguished movements, their eyes, eyelashes and tips of the horns black, inside of the ears red or brown. Great pains is taken to keep the stock in perfection and beauty, and if any calves are born feeble they are killed. They are described as having "a thousand peculiarities," some of the ways of the deer, and their cries are like those of wild beasts instead of like ordinary cattle. In the summer they are so shy that one rarely can get sight of them, but in winter they "come down to the inner park" and it is even possible then to go among them, especially on horseback. They come winding down the forest in single file, and they have a habit of wheeling about and galloping off, then wheeling again and facing the supposed danger, then, as if seized by a sudden panic, dashing away to some of their hiding places in the depths of the wood. Much interest has been taken in them by antiquaries and scientific men, and by and by more will be known about the white cattle and their progenitors.

Chillingham Castle belongs to the Earl of Tankerville, and is in the north of England, in Northumberland County, on the Scottish border. It is a region of renown; the domains of the Percys of Chevy Chase bound the park on one side, and the Cheviot Hills are near by.—AMANDO B. HARRIS.