

A R C T I C   Z O O L O G Y.

C L A S S   I.   Q U A D R U P E D S.

D I V.   I.   H O O F E D.

H I S T.   Q U A D.   G E N U S   II.

I. OX.

American Ox, *Hist. Quad.* p. 19. H.—*Smellie*, vi. 198.

I. BISON.

O X. With short, black, rounded horns; with a great space between their bases : on the shoulders a vast bunch, composed of a fleshy substance, much elevated : the fore part of the body thick and strong: the hind part slender and weak : tail a foot long, naked to the end, which is tufted : the legs short and thick.

The head and shoulders of the BULL are covered with very long locks of reddish woolly hair, falling over the eyes and horns, leaving only the points of the latter to be seen : on the chin, and along the dewlaps, is a great length of shaggy hairs : the rest of the body during summer is naked, in winter is clothed equally in all parts. The Cow is leffer, and wants the shaggy coat, which gives the Bull so tremendous an aspect.

It grows to a great size, even to the weight of sixteen hundred or two thousand four hundred pounds \*. The strongest man cannot lift the hide of one of these animals from the ground †.

Size.

\* *Lawson*, 116.      † *Catsby* ii. App.

B

The

The *Bison* and *Aurochs* of *Europe* is certainly the same species with this ; the difference consists in the former being less shaggy, and the hair neither so soft nor woolly, nor the hind parts so weak. Both *European* and *American* kinds scent of musk.

WHERE  
ANTIEN-  
TLY  
FOUND.

In antient times they were found in different parts of the old world, but went under different names ; the *Bonafus* of *Aristotle*, the *Urus* of *Cæsar*, the *Bos ferus* of *Strabo*, the *Bison* of *Pliny*, and the *Biston* of *Oppian*, so called from its being found among the *Bistones*, a people of *Thrace*. According to these authorities, it was found in their days in *Media* and in *Pæonia*, a province of *Macedonia* ; among the *Alps*, and in the great *Hercynian* forest, which extended from *Germany* even into *Sarmatia* \*. In later days a white species was a native of the *Scottish* mountains ; it is now extinct in its savage state, but the offspring, sufficiently wild, is still to be seen in the parks of *Drumlanrig*, in the South of *Scotland*, and of *Cbillingham* Castle in *Northumberland* †.

WHERE AT  
PRESENT.  
  
EUROPE.  
  
ASIA.

In these times it is found in very few places in a state of nature ; it is, as far as we know, an inhabitant at present only of the forests of *Lithuania*, and among the *Carpathian* mountains, within the extent of the great *Hercynian* wood ‡, its antient haunts ; and in *Asia*, among the vast mountains of *Caucasus*.

It is difficult to say in what manner these animals migrated originally from the old to the new world ; it is most likely it was from the north of *Asia*, which in very antient times might have been stocked with them to its most extreme parts, notwithstanding they are now extinct. At that period there is a probability that the old and the new continents might have been united in the narrow channel between *Tchutki nofs* and the opposite headlands of *America* ;

\* *Aristot. Hist. An.* lib. ii. c. 1.—*Cæsar Bel. Gall.* lib. vi.—*Plinii Hist. Nat.* lib. xv. c. 15.—*Oppian Cyneg.* ii. Lin. 160.

† *Br. Zool.* 1. N° 3.—*Voy. Hebrides*, 124.—*Tour. Scotl.* 1772, Part ii. p. 285.

‡ There is a very fine figure of the *European Bison* in Mr. Ridinger's *Jagdbere Thiere*.  
and

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and the many islands off of that promontory, with the *Aleutian* or *New Fox* islands, somewhat more distant, stretching very near to *America*, may with great reason be supposed to be fragments of land which joined the two continents, and formed into their insular state by the mighty convulsion which divided *Asia* from *America*. *Spain* was probably thus disjoined from *Africa*; *Britain* from *France*; *Iceland* from *Greenland*; *Spitzbergen* from *Lapland*.

But that they passed from *Asia* to *America* is far the more probable, than that they stocked the new world from the side of *Europe*, not only on account of the present narrowness of the strait between the two continents, which gives a greater cause to suppose them to have been once joined; but that we are now arrived at a certainty, that these animals in antient days were natives of *Siberia*: the skulls, with the horns affixed, of a size far superior to any known at this time, have been found fossil not only on the banks of the *Ilga*, which falls into the *Lena*, but even in those of the *Anadyr*, the most eastern of the *Siberian* rivers, and which disembogues north of *Kamtschatka* into those straits: similar skulls and horns have been discovered near *Dirschau*, in *Poland*, also of a gigantic magnitude; and in my opinion of the same species with the modern *Bisons* \*.

In *America* these animals are found in the countries six hundred miles west of *Hudson's Bay*; this is their most northern residence: From thence they are met with in great droves as low as *Cibole* †, in lat. 33, a little north of *California*, and also in the province of *Mivera*, in *New Mexico* ‡; the species instantly ceases south of those countries. They inhabit *Canada*, to the west of the lakes; and in greater abundance in the rich *savannas* which border the river *Mississipi*, and the great rivers which fall into it from the west, in the upper *Louisiana* §.

AMERICA.

\* *Nov. Com. Petrop.* xvii. 460. tab. xi. xii.—I am sorry to dissent from my esteemed friend Doctor *Pallas*, who thinks them to be the horns of *Buffaloes*; which are longer, straighter, and angular.

† *Purchas*, iv. 1560, 1566. ‡ *Fernandez, Nov. Hisp.* x. c. 30.—*Hernandez*, 58.  
 § *Du Pratz*, ii. 50. i. 116. 286.

B 2

There

There they are seen feeding in herds innumerable, promiscuously with multitudes of stags and deer, during morning and evening; retiring in the sultry heats into the shade of tall reeds, which border the rivers of *America*.

**TIMID.** They are exceedingly shy; and very fearful of man, unless they are wounded, when they pursue their enemy, and become very dangerous.

**CHASE.** The chase of these animals is a favorite diversion of the *Indians*: it is effected in two ways; first, by shooting; when the marksman must take great care to go against the wind, for their smell is so exquisite that the moment they get scent of him they instantly retire with the utmost precipitation \* He aims at their shoulders, that they may drop at once, and not be irritated by an ineffectual wound. Provided the wind does not favor the beasts, they may be approached very near, being blinded by the hair which covers their eyes. The other method is performed by a great number of men, who divide and form a vast square: each band sets fire to the dry grass of the savanna where the herds are feeding; these animals have a great dread of fire, which they see approach on all sides; they retire from it to the center of the square †; the bands close, and kill them (pressed together in heaps) without the least hazard. It is pretended, that on every expedition of this nature, they kill fifteen hundred or two thousand beeves.

**ANOTHER METHOD.**

The hunting-grounds are prescribed with great form, least the different bands should meet, and interfere in the diversion. Penalties are enacted on such who infringe the regulations, as well as on those who quit their posts, and suffer the beasts to escape from the hollow squares; the punishments are, the stripping the delinquents, the taking away their arms (which is the greatest disgrace a savage can undergo), or lastly, the demolition of their cabins ‡.

\* *Du Pratz*, i. 49. ii. 227.      † *Charlevoix*, *N. France*, v. 192.  
‡ *Charlevoix*, v. 192.

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The uses of these animals are various. Powder-flasks are made of their horns. The skins are very valuable; in old times the *Indians* made of them the best targets\*. When dressed, they form an excellent buff; the *Indians* dress them with the hair on, and cloath themselves with them; the *Europeans* of *Louisiana* use them for blankets, and find them light, warm, and soft. The flesh is a considerable article of food, and the bunch on the back is esteemed a very great delicacy. The Bulls become excessively fat, and yield great quantity of tallow, a hundred and fifty pounds weight has been got from a single beast†, which forms a considerable matter of commerce. These over-fed animals usually become the prey of Wolves; for, by reason of their great unwieldiness, they cannot keep up with the herd.

USE.

SKIN.

TALLOW.

The *Indians*, by a very bad policy, prefer the flesh of the Cows; which in time will destroy the species: they complain of the rankness of that of the Bulls; but *Du Pratz* thinks the last much more tender, and that the rankness might be prevented, by cutting off the testicles as soon as the beast is killed.

The hair or wool is spun into cloth, gloves, stockings, and garters, which are very strong, and look as well as those made of the best sheeps wool; Governor *Pownall* assures us, that the most luxurious fabrick might be made of it‡. The fleece of one of these animals has been found to weigh eight pounds.

HAIR.

Their sagacity in defending themselves against the attacks of Wolves is admirable: when they scent the approach of a drove of those ravenous creatures, the herd flings itself into the form of a circle: the weakest keep in the middle, the strongest are ranged on the outside, presenting to the enemy an impenetrable front of horns: should they be taken by surprize, and have recourse to flight, numbers of the fattest or the weakest are sure to perish ||.

DEFENCE  
AGAINST  
WOLVES.

\* *Purchas*, iv. 1550.      † *Du Pratz*.      ‡ *Topog. Descr. N. Am.* 3.  
|| *Du Pratz*, i. 288.

Attempts

HARD TO BE  
 TAMED.

Attempts have been made to tame and domesticate the wild, by catching the calves and bringing them up with the common kind, in hopes of improving the breed. It has not yet been found to answer: notwithstanding they had the appearance for a time of having lost their savage nature, yet they always grew impatient of restraint, and, by reason of their great strength, would break down the strongest inclosure, and entice the tame cattle into the corn-fields. They have been known to engender together, and to breed; but I cannot learn whether the species was meliorated \* by the intercourse: probably perseverance in continuing the crosses is only wanted to effect their thorough domestication; as it is notorious that the *Bisons* of the old world were the original stock of all our tame cattle.

These were the only animals which had any affinity to the *European* cattle on the first discovery of the new world: before that period, it was in possession of neither Horse nor Ass, Cow nor Sheep, Hog, Goat, nor yet that faithful animal the Dog. Mankind were here in a state of nature; their own passions unsubdued, they never thought of conquering those of the brute creation, and rendering them subservient to their will. The few animals which they had congenerous to those mentioned, might possibly by industry have been reclaimed. This animal might have been brought to all the uses of the *European* Cow; the *Pecari* might have been substituted for the Hog; the Fox or Wolf for the Dog: but the natives, living wholly by chase, were at war with the animal creation, and neglected the cultivation of any part, except the last, which was imperfectly tamed.

Such is the case even to the present hour; for neither the example of the *Europeans*, nor the visible advantages which result from an attention to that useful animal the Cow, can induce the *Indian* to pay any respect to it. He contemns every species of domestic labour, except what is necessary for forming a provision of bread. Every

\* *Kalm*, i. 207.

wigwam

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wigwam or village has its plantation of *Mayz*, or *Indian* corn, and on that is his great dependence, should the chase prove unsuccessful.

Domesticated cattle are capable of enduring very rigorous climates ; Cows are kept at *Quickjock* in *Lecha Lapmark*, not far from the arctic circle ; but they do not breed there, the succession being preserved by importation : yet in *Iceland*, a small portion of which is within the circle, cattle abound, and breed as in more southern latitudes : they are generally fed with hay, as in other places ; but where there is scarcity of fodder, they are fed with the fish called the Sea-Wolf, and the heads and bones of Cod beaten small, and mixed with one quarter of chopped hay : the cattle are fond of it, and, what is wonderful, yield a considerable quantity of milk. It need not be said that the milk is bad.

LAPMARK.

ICELAND.

*Kamtchatka*, like *America*, was in equal want of every domestic animal, except a wolf-like Dog, till the *Russians* of late years introduced the Cow and Horse. The colts and calves brought from the north into the rich pastures of *Kamtchatka*, where the grass is high, grow to such a size, that no one would ever suspect them to be descended from the Ponies and Runts of the *Lena* \*. The *Argali*, the flock of the tame Sheep, abounds in the mountains, but even to this time are only objects of chase. The natives are to this hour as uncultivated as the good *Evander* describes the primary natives of *Latium* to have been, before the introduction of arts and sciences.

KAMTSCHATKA.

Queis neque mos, neque cultus erat, nec jungere tauros,  
Aut componere opes norant, aut parcere parto :  
Sed rami atque asper victu venatus alebat.

No laws they know, no manners, nor the care  
Of lab'ring Oxen, or the shining Share ;  
No arts of gain, nor what they gain'd to spare :  
Their exercise the chase : the running flood  
Supplied their thirst ; the trees supplied their food,

}

*Dryden.*

\* *Pallas, Sp. Zool. fasc. xi. 76.*

Musk.

## 2. MUSK.

Musk Ox, *Hist. Quad.* N° 9.

Le Bœuf musqué, de *M. Jeremie, Voy. au Nord*, iii. 314.—Charlevoix, *N. France*, v. 194.—*LEV. MUS.*

**BULL.** With horns closely united at the base; bending inwards and downwards; turning outwards towards their ends, which taper to a point, and are very sharp: near the base are two feet in girth; are only two feet long measured along the curvature: weight of a pair, separated from the head, sometimes is sixty pounds \*

The hair is of a dusky red, extremely fine, and so long as to trail on the ground, and render the beast a seeming shapeless mass, without distinction of head or tail †: the legs and tail very short: the shoulders rise into a lump.

## SIZE.

In size lower than a Deer, but larger as to belly and quarters ‡. I have only seen the head of this animal; the rest of the description is taken from the authorities referred to: but by the friendship of *Samuel Wegg*, Esq; I received last year a very complete skin of the cow of this species, of the age of three years, which enables me to give the following description:

**Cow.** The nostrils long and open: the two middle cutting teeth broad, and sharp-edged; the three on each side small, and truncated: under and upper lips covered with short white hairs on their fore part, and with pale brown on their sides: hair down the middle of the forehead long and erect; on the cheeks smooth and extremely long and pendulous, forming with that on the throat a long beard: the hair along the neck, sides, and rump hangs in the same manner, and almost touches the ground: from the hind part of the head to the shoulders is a bed of very long soft hair, forming an upright mane: in the old beasts the space between the shoulders rises into a

\* *M. Jeremie*, in *Voyages au Nord*, iii. 315.

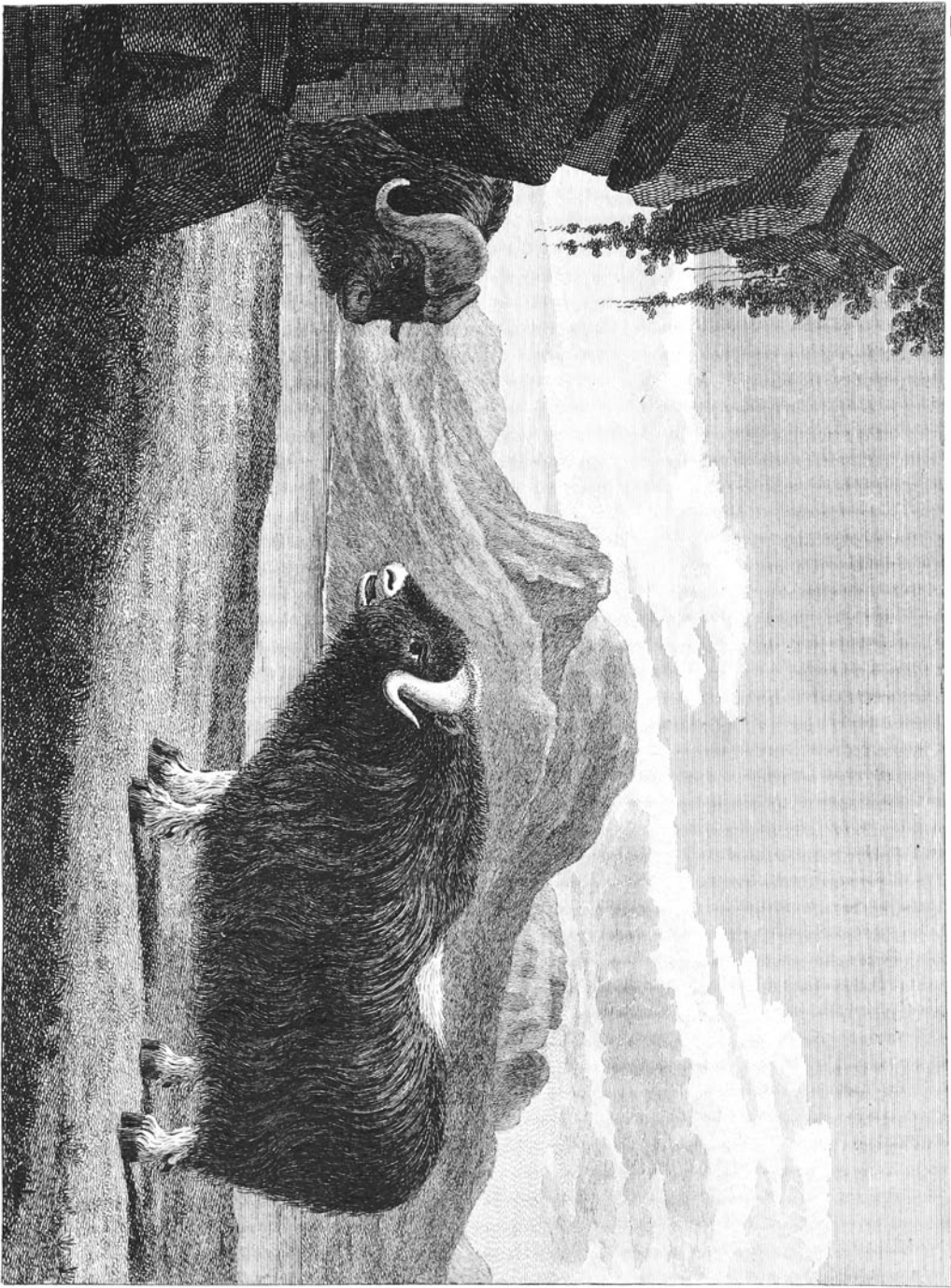
† The same.

‡ *Drage's Voy.* ii. 260.

hunch:



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