

Our Scotch Letter—North.

PURE STOCK-BREEDING IN SCOTLAND.

In this letter I will glance at the result and some of the notable features of the spring sales of breeding stock, which have just been concluded. They have been held at a time of great agricultural depression, which is driving not a few of the landed proprietors away from this country to live on the continent, so keenly is it felt. Farmers, of course, were the first, as they have been the worst sufferers; and with them, too, money is getting very scarce. Reduced prices for agricultural produce, bad seasons and deficient crops have contributed to bring about a state of matters which threaten to bring ruin on all concerned. It was natural in the face of such a condition of things that the course of the spring sales of breeding stock this year was watched with more than ordinary interest and with great misgiving on the part of exposers, who feared the worst. The two great centres for these sales are Aberdeen and Perth, the latter being more convenient for purchasers, but Aberdeen having the advantage of being the chief town in one of the most noted breeding centres in Scotland. Besides these there are other sales held in Morayshire and Inverness-shire, while a few owners still dispose of their stock at home.

I find that the number of pure bred cattle brought under the hammer during the three first months of the year, from Perth northward, has been not less than 929, realizing a total sum of £24,308 5s. 6d. These figures include 530 Shorthorns at £13,464 15s. 0d., and 399 Polled Aberdeen-Angus at £10,843 10s. 6d., which gives an average per head of over £25 8s., and to the polled cattle of rather over £27. Two dispersion sales swelled the price for the polled stock, which otherwise would not have appeared so favorable when compared with the average for Shorthorns. Before noticing in some detail one or two of the sales I may here mention that last year 773 polled cattle were sold in the north of Scotland at an average of £36 12s. 11d., and 762 Shorthorns at an average of £27 17s. 9d. In 1882, 341 head of polled cattle realized an average of £62 18s. 6d., and in 1883, 242 head made £48 8s., so that there has been a somewhat sharp decline in the value of this breed of cattle, following, I suppose the withdrawal, at least temporarily, of American customers.

Mr. Duthie's annual sale at Collynie, which was the first of the season, began well the spring work, but the stock were excellent, the bulls, which were by such well-known sires as Earl of March, Cayhurst, Shapingshay, Ventriquoist, and Field Marshal, being exceptionally strong, and likely to make excellent stock-getters, which in these times are much needed to help to pay the rents. Sittyton blood, it will be seen, largely predominates among the sires, and their calves were well worthy the reputation of the parent stock. For 21 bulls Mr. Duthie got the handsome average of £37 7s. 6d., the highest price being 66 guineas, which was paid by a local breeder for a very massive, thick, well blocked roan got by the prize bull Field Marshal, and out of a daughter of the famous white bull Lord Irwin. A handsome red calf named Heir Apparent, was purchased for the Hon. Mr. Cochrane, Canada, for 50 guineas. The young bulls which were offered at the first joint sale of Shorthorns, held at Aberdeen on the 12th of February, were stronger than usual, the younger stock being retained for a supplementary sale, which took place in the following month. Of the animals catalogued the great majority, 103, were bull calves, there being only 36 females. Prices were not high all round, and the demand was not very steady, but for some of the

stronger lots the returns were fairly remunerative, the average for 97 bulls sold being £25 13s. 3d. In the following week a joint sale of polled cattle was held at Aberdeen, and the bulls offered were more select than usual, which cannot be said for those shown at the supplementary sale. The demand seemed to run on big long beasts—on the rather roughish lots than for those distinguished, more by quality and type than mere size. For 68 bulls the average was £26 5s. 9d.

At both the preceding sales Mr. Hill, St. Paul, Minnesota, was one of the principal purchasers. On the 4th of March a very important sale of young bulls was held at Perth, the total entry of males and females of both breeds being no less than 345, which is one of the largest if not the largest entry ever seen at any sale in Scotland. The cream of the lots was furnished by northern breeders from Inverness, Moray and Aberdeen. Lord Lovat, Beaufort Castle, carried first prizes for bulls, with a pair of very strong, big, massive yearlings, which at the sale made 100 guineas and 130 guineas respectively, the purchaser being Mr. McLennan, Buenos Ayres. Strong, heavy bulls made good prizes, but the smaller animals, although perhaps of nicer quality, were in many instances cheap. The average for 156 Shorthorn bulls was £26 12s. 10d. Several very good lots of polled bulls were sold at the same time, but as a rule the "blackskin" were poorly represented: indeed a large proportion of them should have been steered and turned into the feeders' stall. The average for 84 bulls was only £21 11s. The total proceeds of the sale amounted to £61,978 3s. 6d.

On the 24th of March I was present at the dispersion of the Earl of Southesk's herd of Polled Aberdeen-Angus cattle, but the event was of such unique importance that I will reserve my notice of it till next month.

What to me seemed the most remarkable thing in connection with the opening sales this year was the fact that buyers did not pay so much attention to breeding as they used to do, but went in more for animals of a large, heavier, and, I may say, coarser type. This latter sort of bulls are probably, in most cases, wanted for crossing purposes. The struggle now amongst farmers is to get their young stock ready for the butcher as early as possible, and they find that size in such cases goes for a good deal in the market; but it would be a misfortune if ever breeders were induced to be less careful than hitherto of the character of the breeding quality of their stock and to strive only for size in their animals. I would advocate rather combination as far as possible of both, but at once you lose sight of that neat, compact form of animal, indicating quality, neatness and breeding, your breed, whatever it may be, will degenerate. I have heard more grumbling this season, among owners of first-class herds than I have ever heard before, that purchasers do not appreciate quality and breeding so highly as they ought, and this has been felt more since the inauguration of the joint sales than before. Aberdeenshire, though enjoying some advantages that assist breeders of stock, does not grow young cattle to such a large size as several other parts of the country, and Aberdeenshire men have to provide against a tendency in their cattle to lose size. But this very disadvantage is probably one of the greatest benefits they enjoy, for nowhere can cattle be better finished than in Aberdeen, thanks to the excellent class of stock raised within this county. They are not big, but for hardness of bone and quality no other cattle can excel them. I think it is a pity that our local buyers do not pay more attention to other points which are more requisite to the maintenance of a

first-class race of cattle than mere size. Let all the points be combined as far as practicable, but I would say, let quality and character rule, rather than size. The sales that have just been concluded are, on the whole, regarded as being, considering the scarcity of money that exists and the dullness of the times, fairly satisfactory.

QUIDAM.

Aberdeen, 6th April, 1885.

FOR THE CANADIAN LIVE STOCK JOURNAL.

Breeding Light Horses in Canada.

There is no country in the world better adapted for breeding horses than Canada, especially the western portion of Ontario, where the blue grass is a native plant, and the soil of a rich limestone formation like that of Kentucky. The only advantage that Kentucky has over us is, that we require warmer stables and have to feed longer in winter.

In the number of the JOURNAL for March, page 58, the editor remarks, "The breeding of light horses is about to receive a new impetus in England, where the owners of such are at the present time being urged to increase the supply. In this country we conclude that too much of this has been done. We do not mean to say that too many good carriage and road horses have been produced in this country, but that too many mongrels, too light for the farm, and too slovenly for the carriage, have been bred."

Now the facts are these: England has been the home of the thoroughbred horse for two centuries, more of them (light horses) being reared there than of all other classes put together; and while during that whole period she has been trying to make road-horses out of thoroughbreds, she has failed. She now recognizes that fact, and has therefore formed an association for breeding and encouraging the road-horse. So, too, have the Russians. Both countries have purchased stock from the Americans.

The time was in Canada when roads were rough and when people all wore homespun dress, that any nag would answer for a road and drive horse; but now there are but few farmers and business men who can not afford a good driver, as the custom here is to drive, not ride. The highstrung thoroughbred does not answer the purpose, though he may look as though he did. He is not a fast trotter, and people nowadays get out of patience with slow traveling since the railway have come into vogue.

What we want for this purpose is a horse fifteen hands and upwards, stylish and speedy. He should be able to trot in three minutes. Coachers should be sixteen hands or over, and trot close to three minutes. For these classes of horses there will be ready sale and good prices paid.

When the editor says that "too many mongrels" are bred here, he does not remember that outside of those mongrels there is no road-horse worthy of the name. Were not the founders of all our road and carriage horses throughout Canada and the United States mongrels of the first water? What was Tippoo Saib? What was Royal George, Clear Grit, Grey Eagle, Black Hawk, Old Pilot, North American, the Mos cows and Columbooses? One and all might be called pure-bred mongrels. These have left names and records that will never be forgotten.

Although the little Canadian pacer has been much despised by the "thoroughbred men," yet his blood streams in the foremost ranks, as is attested by the records. See Westmont 2.14; Maud S. 2.9½; J. I. C. 2.10; Maxy Cobb, 2.13¾; Fuller, 2.13¾; Clingstone, 2.14¾; Billy R., 2.14¾; Lorine, 2.14¾; Hopeful, 2.14¾; Lula, 2.15; Smuggler, 2.15; Clemie G., 2.15½; Minnie R., 2.16; American Girl, 2.16½.