

The Holstein-Friesian.

Origin, Development and Characteristics.

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The history of the Holstein-Friesian breed begins about 300 B. C. when the Friesians settled on the shores of the North Sea, occupying the present provinces of North Holland, Friesland, Groningen and Drenthe. It is believed that the Friesians came from Central Asia, bringing with them cattle which tradition tells us were white as snow. Thither also came a German tribe from Hesse, bringing with them black cattle, and settled on a nearby island, which was formed by three rivers and which they called Batavia. The Friesians and the Batavians intermarried and, as Cæsar and Tacitus hint, cattle were probably given as dowry with the maidens. In any case the black and white cattle seem to have united producing a variegated black-and-white strain, and as the centuries rolled on, the Friesians reared their heavy milking cows, draining their low, swampy lands where they could be drained, keeping out the sea by building massive dykes, erecting their picturesque windmills and attending to their pastoral pursuits. In the hands of these thrifty farmers the Friesian cattle developed into the greatest milkers in the world. In 1864, according to Mr. Chenery, the first American Importer, the little country of Holland, about two-thirds the size of Nova Scotia, exported 32,000,000 pounds of butter and 61,000,000 pounds of cheese.

The history of the breed on this continent covers a period of less than seventy years. Animals were occas-

ionally imported from Holland, especially by the early Dutch settlers, but these were not kept pure and soon disappeared from sight. To Mr. Winthrop W. Chenery of Massachusetts belongs the honor of establishing the first purebred herd in America. In 1852 he brought over a cow from Holland, and as he himself said, the extraordinary good qualities possessed by that cow led in 1857 to a further importation of a bull and two cows and in 1859 of four more cows. A year later all this little herd, except one bull, were slaughtered by the state authorities on account of a pleuro-pneumonia scare. But Mr. Chenery was a man of unconquerable determination and in 1861 brought over another bull and four cows. These formed the groundwork of the present Holstein stock in America.

Holsteins grew gradually in popularity in the United States until the early eighties when a genuine boom began. The banner year for importations was 1885 when 2538 animals were imported. From that time there was a gradual falling off until importations ceased altogether in 1905 on account of the prevalence of foot and mouth disease in Holland. The first cattle of this breed came to Canada in the winter of 1882-3, several breeders in widely separated localities making small importations at about the same time.

In 1894 the Holstein business took a fresh lease of life with the advent of the official test, when plans were matured for the establishment of a system