



A glimpse of Collynie—Shorthorns in clover.

The World's Greatest Shorthorn Breeder*

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The Canadian who first lands in England and makes his way across its country almost feels as if he were passing through a continual succession of gardens, interrupted only here and there, by cities, towns and hamlets. Well-kept fields, wide spreading leafy trees, green hedges and rose and ivy-covered cottages give one glimpses of rural beauty, so enchanting as almost to appear unreal. A naturally mild and humid climate, responsive soil, and centuries of hard work, skill and enterprise have developed fields and homesteads to a degree far beyond the experience of a visitor from a newer country and more vigorous climate. One expects wonderful things, and the agriculturist who travels from place to place is not surprised as he sees grazing in the fertile fields or living on their products, horses, sheep, swine and other domestic animals of such excellence as he has never seen before. He is told that here is the home of more of the world's great breeds of stock than any other country and he readily believes it.

A day's journey finds the visitor away to the north in Aberdeenshire and he can scarcely believe he is still in Britain's Isle. No more those luxuriant elms and oaks, no more those endless lines of green hedges, but a much rougher, more broken country, largely unsheltered, except by, here and there, spruces and pines, possessing far less areas of good soil and swept for a great portion of the year by the chill east winds from the Northern Sea. Less than a century ago this bleak and comparatively unproductive country was little known to the outside world, except for its granite rock and the fish that were brought from the sea. To-day, thanks to its Aberdeen-Angus and Shorthorn cattle, to its great breeders, Capt. Barclay, Grant, Duff, Hay, Watson, McCombie, Cruickshank, Marr, and Duthie, it is universally known as a country where agricul-

ture flourishes and in which the prime beef of the world is produced.

It was to this country that, some three years ago, the writer, in company with a fellow traveller, turned his way, intent on spending a weekend at the home of that greatest of all breeders of Shorthorn cattle, Wm. Duthie. We met him first at the Royal Agricultural Society Show at Carlisle, and his genial countenance, whole-hearted handshake and outspoken welcome made us feel at home at once. Yet one could see that he was a man of business. You did not expect him to spend much time in mere general conversation, at least so long as there were Shorthorn cattle to be seen and business to be looked after. "Come to Tarves and spend a few days with us. We're just plain living folk, but shall be glad to see you." Then followed explicit directions as to which train to take from Aberdeen to Udry, some twenty miles north, where we would transfer to the coach that would take us six miles on to Tarves. This concluded the conversation, which, though brief, made us feel that, like many Canadians before, we should be welcome at Tarves.

It rained, at least we thought it was rain. But it was not—that is up in Aberdeenshire; it was only "a wee bit misty." No one seemed to mind it; and we, determining not to be outdone, donned our coats, after a comfortable night, and started for Tillycairn and Collynie, the two farms on which Mr. Duthie's large herd of Shorthorns graze.

Tillycairn is about a mile from Mr. Duthie's residence in Tarves, and adjoining the steading formerly occupied by the late Wm. S. Marr (now by John Marr), who, with Mr. Duthie, shared the distinction of possessing and breeding the best Shorthorns in Scotland. Collynie is some four miles farther on. Both farms are rented from Lord Aberdeen, formerly Governor-General of Canada, whose large private grounds at Hadro House we drove through on our way from Tillycairn to Collynie. The combined acreage of the two farms is about 400 acres, of which 150 acres are devoted to pasturage, 125 to cereals, mostly oats, or, as it is called there, "corn," 65 to turnips and 20 to hay. This acreage tells its own tale as to how the cattle are fed. Straw and "neeps" supplemented in the case of the younger animals with meal and "cake"—but of this anon. On neither place can it be said that the soil is naturally responsive. More

particularly is this the case at Collynie, which, in addition, occupies a very exposed situation, away up among the hills. It has taken labor and skill to bring these farms to their present high stage of productiveness, a fact well illustrated by figures quoted by Mr. Duthie, in regard to one of the fields which, originally a peat bog, was drained and reclaimed at a cost of about £30 (\$150) an acre. One feels the contrast from the fertile, sheltered home of the Shorthorns breed away south in the Teeswater valley; but it gives one confidence in cattle, which, though born in the lap of luxury, yet have adapted themselves to conditions sterner by far, and have been the means of bringing these naturally indifferent fields up to the high degree of productiveness of which they are now capable.

That day was worth a trip across the ocean. To wander through the fields where the very aristocrats of Shorthornism were grazing, some with their furry calves at their side, to revel among the bull calves all running in the pasture by themselves and, in your imagination, pick the one that would be yours if only those keen bidders from all parts of the world would give you a chance; to gaze in admiration upon those lords of the harem, whose calves would, next year, be sought after by the best breeders of the world; and to watch Mr. Duthie himself, whose enthusiasm over "the good ones" could not be restrained and whose zeal and energy seemed absolutely untiring as from field to field he led us and made some comment upon almost every animal of that large herd—such an experience as this gives one a new impetus, a renewed confidence, and a desire to aid by every means possible the breeding of the good stock in one's own country.

Over two hundred head of Scotch Shorthorns constituted this herd, the history of which is a marked illustration of those oft-quoted lines: "There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." Mr. Duthie's father lived on the farm at Collynie and kept a few Shorthorns, which were, however, of little more than local renown. But when in 1850, the famous herd of Shorthorns built up by that wizard of the cattle breeding art, James Cruickshank, was to be dispersed, Mr. Duthie placed himself in the front rank of Shorthorn men by purchasing some thirty-five head of the most useful cows and adding these to the already excellent lot in his possession. Since then, careful selection, careful feeding, and the best of management have been the means of gradually improving the excellence of these cattle until now at his annual fall sale of bull calves, it is no unusual thing for the whole lot to average upwards of one thousand dollars each.

Space forbids any comment on individual animals, although the pictures presented herewith will give the reader some idea of the sort of cows and bulls from which Mr. Duthie breeds his world famous calves. Strowan Champion was purchased last year to join the other four bulls that, at the time of our last visit, composed the head of the herd. Babylon Champion, now a four-year-old, is Mr. Duthie's favorite, and is, I think, one of the grandest bulls living. On the occasion of the visit of which I have been writing, he was in his yearling form, and well do I remember how the late Wm. Watt, of Salem, Ontario, who took his first and only trip to the Old Country in that year, used to admire

*Note.—The accompanying sketch by Prof. Cummings of a visit made by him three years ago to the home of William Duthie, Scotland's great breeder, will be read with interest by every Canadian Shorthorn man. A good photo of Babton Champion, one of the stock bulls at Collynie, appeared in THE FARMER of February 2nd last. Mr. Duthie is to judge Shorthorns at Toronto Show next fall.—EDITOR.