

## ABERDEEN-ANGUS CATTLE.

### A HISTORICAL SKETCH.

By JAMES R BARCLAY, Secretary, Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Society.

JUST as the story of every great movement centres round a prominent figure, or a succession of prominent figures, so the history of all our breeds of pedigree stock reveals names which stand out in special prominence on account of the success and extent of their work. This is especially the case in the history of the Black Polled race of cattle known as Aberdeen-Angus. The record of the work accomplished in establishing, improving, and developing the breed is to a very great extent summed up in the life-work of three great men—Mr Hugh Watson, Keillor, the founder of the breed ; Mr Wm. M'Combie, Tillyfour, the emancipator of the breed ; and Sir George Macpherson-Grant, Bart., of Ballindalloch, the refiner of the breed. Every history of Aberdeen-Angus cattle must provide a prominent place in its pages for the work of these three great master-builders of the fortunes of the breed, whose work on its behalf can be followed in minute detail through the various records that are now available. The names which we have mentioned stand, however, not only for individuals, but for distinct eras, in which each of them had co-workers in breed improvement, so that in considering the evolution and development of the breed as we see it to-day there must be kept in mind the steady, quiet, less prominent work of many breeders throughout the land, guided no doubt, as well as inspired, by the successes of the great triumvirate. In tracing the breed's history there cannot be pointed out each successive step of progress : the work accomplished does not permit of recapitulation in bare cold facts. It is only when we consider that a little over a hundred years ago not a single attempt had been made on systematic lines to "improve" these native cattle of the North-East of Scotland, and think of the position the breed occupies now, that there can be appreciated—and even then only in part—the truly marvellous work that has been accomplished.

### EARLY REFERENCES TO POLLED CATTLE.

Volumes have been written with the view of tracing the origin of our domestic races of cattle, but in the diversity of

opinions there are but few definite points which can be fixed upon by the student of Aberdeen-Angus history as practically bearing on the pre-improvement stage of the breed's existence. The breeding of cattle is an industry that has been going on for thousands of years; the classification of breeds is, by comparison, a thing of yesterday. Eminent naturalists can but at the best offer conjectures as to the progenitors of Aberdeen-Angus cattle. The testimony of the sculptor's chisel and the artist's brush reveal to us the existence of a hornless breed dating back to a period thousands of years ago. It is easy, therefore, to speculate as to the origin of the breed, but after all it is only speculation. proving, however, the one general fact, as applicable to the existence of a hornless race of cattle in Scotland, that such cattle belong to a race of great antiquity, while the self colour of black is a further indication of the breed's antiquity. This at least can be definitely said in tracing the history of the black hornless cattle now known as Aberdeen-Angus, that the breed is indigenous to the districts in the North-East of Scotland in which it is found, and that the earliest writers on Scottish agriculture, who distinguish between the varieties of stock, note the presence in these districts of a Black Polled race of cattle. As early as 1752 we find mention made of the presence of "humble" oxen and "dodded" heifers in the old territory of Angus, from which in part the breed derives its present-day name. In the adjoining counties of Kincardine, Aberdeen, Banff, and Moray there are equally distinct references of a very early date to Black Polled cattle. A reference of great historical value is found in the publication, issued by the Spalding Club, on 'The Antiquities of the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff' (vol. iii. p. 344). There is there reproduced a legal document describing the ceremony observed at putting John Cumyng of Culter, Aberdeen, into possession of his deceased father's property in 1523. Till 1845, when a property changed owners by death or purchase, sasine or actual possession was given by the Crown or the superior to the new owner by delivering to him on the ground a handful of earth as a symbol of the soil of the property, and a stone as a symbol of the building on it. This was called giving "yird and stane." At an earlier period, when land was held by personal military service, the Crown, before accepting a new owner, claimed a money payment, called relief from an heir, and composition from a purchaser. This made sasine-giving a more important function than it was after the abolition of military service tenure. In the case mentioned, sasine was effected by John Cumyng selecting and accepting *unum bovem nigrum hommyll*—"a black hummel (hornless) ox"—valued at 40s. 8d. Scots. Being a symbol and being selected, it is plain that it

was of the kind of oxen common and most esteemed in the county of Aberdeen at the time, and also that this had been a long-established custom.

The composite name—Aberdeen-Angus—is thus derived from districts where, as we have seen, the Black Polled race can be traced for hundreds of years through documentary evidence. For long, however, the designations were used as denoting distinct varieties, Angus cattle and Aberdeen; and more recently, when interchanging of animals amongst breeders became more common, the cattle were styled “Aberdeen-and-Angus.” In 1835 a report was submitted to the Highland and Agricultural Society which is of interest, as bearing on the definition of the different breeds at a time when classification was on a very general plan. After dealing with the Shorthorn and West Highland breeds, the report refers to breeds which “form a very mixed class of stock.” It then proceeds: “Of these breeds, one distinctly recognised, by its numbers and the permanency of its characters, is the Angus, now extending over the adjoining counties. This is a breed certainly well suited to a large tract of country, and having been cultivated with considerable care, deserves encouragement; and in this class of stock may likewise be placed what is called the Polled Aberdeenshire.” Thus in the classification drawn up for the shows of the Highland and Agricultural Society subsequent to 1835, we find the Polled Angus and the Polled Aberdeenshire given distinct and separate titles, the class being for “the Polled breeds of Galloway and the Northern Districts.” In 1848 separate classes were provided for the Galloway breed. Of the Northern Black Polled cattle, those bred in Forfarshire and immediate vicinity were termed “Angus,” and those bred in Aberdeenshire “Aberdeens”; and to those in which Aberdeen and Angus blood was mingled the term “Aberdeen-and-Angus” was applied. It has been thought well to explain at this point the early designations of the breed, as also to show how naturally it came about that two distinct breeds, the Galloways and the Aberdeen-Angus, came to be recorded together in the same register—‘The Polled Herd Book.’ As early as 1874 the Marquis of Huntly, the first President of what is now the Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Society, brought the question of the name of the breed under notice; and in 1886 the official designation “Aberdeen or Angus” was altered to “Aberdeen-Angus.” It may also here be explained that in the first four volumes of the ‘Herd Book’ there appeared the pedigrees of Galloway cattle, but in 1877 the Galloway breeders acquired the copyright of their portion of the ‘Herd Book.’ It was not till 1908 that the name of the Society was altered from “The Polled Cattle Society” to “The Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Society,” a similar change being at the same time

made in the title of the 'Herd Book,' through the various volumes of which there have passed in the intervening years the record of 118,046 animals.

#### ESTABLISHING THE BREED.

Although, as we have seen, the Aberdeen-Angus breed can as a race lay claim to great antiquity, it was comparatively late ere any attempt on systematic lines was made to establish it as an improved breed. In considering the steps that were taken to bring about the improvement of the ancient "dodded" "hummle" cattle of the North-East of Scotland, there have to be kept in mind various contemporary conditions which had a distinct bearing on the work that was taken up in earnest by the pioneers of the breed in the early years of the nineteenth century. By common consent the first place amongst these is assigned to Mr Hugh Watson, Keillor, who was born in 1789. That was the year in which Mr Robertson, Ladykirk, made his first purchases of Shorthorn cattle from the Colling brothers; and in the intervening years, while Hugh Watson was yet a youth, there were being sent north from this Berwickshire stronghold of the "great intruder," as well as from other centres, continuous streams of Shorthorn blood, which were having a marvellous effect on the "common cattle of the country." Hugh Watson was but a little over thirty years of age when Barclay of Ury founded the first herd of Improved Shorthorns in the North of Scotland. That was in 1822, and six years later Mr Hay, Shethin, had taken the first Shorthorn bull right into the heart of that other cradle of the Doddies—in Buchan. This new breed from Durham and Yorkshire spread very rapidly in the cattle-breeding districts of Scotland, the more so because it had the field to itself for a considerable time, there being no other "improved" race in the North with which it could come into competition. It is right that these points should be kept in view when dealing with the first attempts that were made to "improve" the native cattle of the North-East of Scotland, and to evolve from the material at hand a distinct recognised breed, which within the succeeding century was to work out for itself a place of leading importance among the cattle breeds of the world.

#### EARLY ANGUS BREEDERS.

Hugh Watson took up his life's work in the improvement of the native cattle of Angus in 1808, in which year he became tenant of the farm of Keillor. As the nucleus of a herd, he

received from his father six of his best cows and a bull, and later on in the same year he purchased the ten best heifers and the best bull that he could procure at the Trinity Muir Fair at Brechin. These he selected because of the extent to which they showed those characteristics which in his mind he associated with the best specimens of the native cattle. It was an immense task which this young man of twenty years of age set himself—to “manufacture” out of the rough material which lay to his hand a breed of cattle with well-defined characteristics and properties. In these days, when we take the existence of the breed as a matter for granted, it is difficult to appreciate the greatness of the task, though all must pay tribute to the success with which it was accomplished. Hugh Watson was a man of great intellectual gifts, indomitable perseverance, and of far-seeing, accurate judgment. Though he was joined later on by many fellow-workers, he is the acknowledged “founder” of the modern breed of Aberdeen-Angus cattle. Mr M'Combie, Tillyfour, whose work on behalf of the breed, though at a somewhat later date, stands out with equal prominence, places Hugh Watson in the front rank of those noblemen and gentlemen who distinguished themselves as breeders of Aberdeen-Angus cattle. “No breeder of Polled Aberdeen and Angus cattle,” he says, “will grudge that well-merited honour to his memory. We all look up to him as the first great improver, and no one will question his title to this distinction. There is no herd in the country which is not indebted to the Keillor blood.”

There is little doubt but that Hugh Watson was a close student of the breeding methods pursued at Ketton and Barmpton by the Colling brothers; and the sale of Charles Colling's “Comet” in 1810, at the then undreamt-of price of one thousand guineas, must have fired his imagination and whetted his determination. It will not be necessary here—indeed, space would forbid—to follow in detail the steps that Hugh Watson took in the upbuilding of his herd, but to a very large extent these followed the lines which the experience of the great patrons of the more early improved Shorthorn breed had proved to be successful. He was very daring in the working out of his system, paying less regard to affinity of blood in the matings which he arranged than to the quality and choiceness of the animals from which he bred. A study of the earliest volume of the ‘Herd Book’ reveals many interesting cases of the mating of closely-related animals, but by working on these lines he was able to fix his type, and even to found his families with those characteristics which he had set out to evolve.

It is quite evident that this work of improvement represented a great amount of perseverance and the application of

scientific reasoning to the task in hand, for it was not till twenty years after he had started operations that Hugh Watson considered his work sufficiently developed to place its results before the public. This he did in 1829 (Perth), when for the first time at a Highland Show he appeared as an exhibitor of Polled cattle. Like the improvers of other breeds, he attached the greatest importance to the showyard as a means of promoting his breed, and of the two oxen which he exhibited in 1829, one was afterwards exhibited at the London Smithfield Show. Another entry which he sent forward to Perth was a heifer which, at the request of the Highland Society, was also displayed at Smithfield, in order to show to what excellence the Scottish Polled breed might be brought. Thus at the end of twenty-one years of persistent effort, Mr Watson received striking acknowledgment of the success of his work; and though he was yet to accomplish much on behalf of the breed before the dispersion of his herd in 1860 (he died in 1865), this may form a fitting point at which to consider other steps which were being taken in co-operation with him for the improvement of the cattle of the old territory of Angus and adjacent districts.

The name of Mr Alex. Bowie, Mains of Kelly, also stands out prominently in the pioneer days of breed improvement. His father started a herd of Aberdeen-Angus cattle in 1809, the year after Hugh Watson had started operations at Keillor, though it was a good few years later before it took a leading place. In this old herd were produced some of the most famous of the early sires of the breed, supplying as it did "Hanton" to the Tillyfour herd, and "Cupbearer" to the herd of the Earl of Southesk, at that other very ancient centre of Aberdeen-Angus breeding, Kinnaird. When it is recalled that "Hanton" was the sire of "Pride of Aberdeen," and "Cupbearer" the sire of "Erica," and that these are the foundation names in two of the most famous tribes of the breed at the present day, it will be seen that the contribution to the early history of the breed made by the Mains of Kelly herd was substantial and far-reaching. In his herd were founded several well-known families which are held in repute at the present day, though he, like the great majority of the breeders in Forfarshire, was very badly hit by the ravages of pleuro-pneumonia, which, about 1865-67, completely annihilated so many of the old herds, such as those at Kinnaird Castle; at Mains of Ardvie (Wm. Fullerton, 1810-80), to whose herd Mr M'Combie was indebted for his best stock in the female line; at Balwyllo, where Mr Robert Scott prior to 1846 had accomplished much good work on behalf of the breed. Nor must we omit to make mention of the very real services rendered in the cause of breed improvement by Lord Panmure

(1771-1852). The prominence which is usually given to the work of Hugh Watson, the first great improver of the breed on systematic lines, is often allowed to overshadow the efforts put forth by his lordship, but by his example he stimulated many in his locality to give attention to cattle improvement; and through the medium of the East Forfarshire Farming Association, of which he was elected the perpetual President, Lord Panmure was able to greatly develop interest in the breeding of the native cattle of the county, these being the only kind for which prizes were provided at the annual com-



Fig. 3.—“LEGEND” 16,518 (four years old). Bred and owned by the late Colonel George Smith Grant, Auchorachan, Glenlivet.  
First Prize Cow at Highland Society's Show at Aberdeen, 1894

petitions on Trinity Muir. In the space at disposal, however, it is not possible to note the many contributions which were made towards the starting of the life-story of the Aberdeen-Angus breed, though mention should be made of the herd at Aldbar as one of the few links which still remain with the pre-improvement times of the cattle of Angus, Mr Chalmers' family of Nells of Aldbar having been, it is believed, bred on the farm from 1780 at least. Farther up the Vale of Strathmore, in the county of Kincardine, Mr Robert Walker, Portlethen, founded a herd in 1818, which is still in existence.

## WORK AT TILLYFOUR.

The outstanding figure in the founding of the Aberdeen-Angus breed is without doubt that of Mr Wm. M'Combie, Tillyfour (1805-80). Of the handful of far-seeing breeders who grasped the full significance of the craze for crossing which followed the introduction of the Improved Shorthorn into the cattle-raising districts of the North of Scotland, and who recognised the danger that threatened the native race of Polled cattle, none took up so prominent a stand as Mr M'Combie, who may well be described as the "deliverer" of the Aberdeen-Angus cattle. By the year 1829, when he became tenant of the farm of Tillyfour—to which later on several large adjoining farms were added in his operations as a breeder—the Shorthorn breed had begun to take a firm hold in the North. Recognising the risk that the native breed in its unimproved state ran of complete extinction, and being convinced that if their qualities were properly brought out they would equal, if not surpass, any other breed, Mr M'Combie resolved—to quote his own words—that "I would endeavour to improve our native cattle." With this fixed aim in view, he gave up the trade in lean cattle, in which he had been a very extensive participator, and turned the whole energy of his forceful and determined character, first to the rescue and then to the improvement of the breed. From the time that he won his first prize at a local show at Alford in 1832 to the crowning success at Paris in 1878, Mr M'Combie's achievements on behalf of Aberdeen-Angus cattle furnish a record which is perhaps unprecedented in point of brilliancy. He found a breed of a purely local nature, hemmed in by economic conditions and want of transport facilities to that circumscribed geographical area where it had existed as a local race for successive centuries, and in the short space of one half-century he raised the breed from this localised standard to a position of national and of international importance.

In tracing even briefly the work which Mr M'Combie accomplished in connection with the founding and improving of the Aberdeen-Angus breed, it has to be noted that, like Hugh Watson, Keillor, he started work with such material as he could find at hand. The greatest cattle-dealers in the North in those days were the brothers Williamson, St John's Wells, Fyvie, who generally sold about eight thousand head of cattle yearly in the markets of the South. They had a decided preference for the native "unmixed" Polled breed of Aberdeenshire, and it was from them that Mr M'Combie secured not a few of his best Polled animals. George Williamson, it may be noted, died in 1823, aged seventy-five years, and



in the churchyard of Fyvie there is a monument erected to his memory by the Aberdeenshire Agricultural Association, "as a mark of respect for his upright and honourable conduct in private and public life, and in testimony of the great benefit derived by the county of Aberdeen from his meritorious exertions as an eminent cattle dealer for upwards of fifty years." In maintaining the reputation of the native race—the forerunners of the Aberdeen-Angus breed—the Messrs Williamson accomplished work of lasting importance, and no doubt did much in laying those foundations upon which others,



Fig. 4 — "ELARK" 16,513 (three years old). Bred by Mr Arthur Egginton, South Ella, Hull; owned by Mr J. J. Cridlan, of MaiseMORE Park.

First and Breed Champion at Highland Show at Aberdeen, and at Royal at Carlisle, 1902.

at a later date, were to build. It was accordingly very natural that Mr M'Combie should find some of his earliest stock at St John's Wells, but his practice must have been to secure the best individual animals he could. Thus the cow that was first at the Aberdeen Highland in 1847, bred by Mr M'Combie, though exhibited by Mr Scott, Balwyllo, had for dam what Mr M'Combie described as "the first female of note at Tillyfour." She was bred by Mr Wilson, Netherton, in the adjoining parish of Clatt.

Though the Tillyfour herd dates from about 1830, the first few years of its existence were devoted to working upon old local strains to a very great extent, and the purchase in

1844 of the cow "Queen Mother" at the Ardovie sale (Wm. Fullerton), inaugurated a new era not only in the history of the Tillyfour herd, but in the history of the Improved breed. Mr M'Combie has himself put on record the fact that it was to Mr Fullerton that he owed his success as a breeder, adding, "I shall always look up to him as the founder of my stock." It does not fall within the scope of this article to trace the remarkable system of in-and-in breeding which Mr M'Combie practised in developing his type, but fabricated pedigrees of some of the foundation cows of Mr M'Combie's herd form interesting commentaries on the lines of breeding followed in the evolution of what was to all intents and purposes a new breed.

#### BALLINDALLOCH INFLUENCE.

There is another name which must be mentioned in connection with the early work of breed improvement—that of Sir George Macpherson-Grant, Bart., of Ballindalloch, who died in December 1907, and who for a space of close on half a century took a leading part in the improvement of the breed; for if Hugh Watson may be termed the founder of the breed, and Wm. M'Combie the emancipator of the breed, the late Sir George Macpherson-Grant may equally be termed the refiner of the breed. By common consent he built up what was acknowledged to be the premier herd of the breed, and during its long and honourable existence the Ballindalloch herd has contributed more to the history of the Aberdeen-Angus breed throughout the world than any other herd. The show-yard successes won have been phenomenal, and such was the system of breeding followed to concentrate and intensify certain lines of pedigree that Ballindalloch became the recognised Warlaby of the Aberdeen-Angus breed, and as such has exercised an influence equalled by no other herd on the general upbuilding of the leading herds of the present day. Though details cannot be entered into here, it would be wellnigh impossible to exaggerate the far-reaching effects on the breed of the scientific system of refining which it underwent under the directing ægis of the late Sir George Macpherson-Grant.

There is no record of a time when there were not black Polled cattle at Ballindalloch, but it was not till 1861, when Sir George Macpherson-Grant came to reside there, that the real foundation of the present-day herd was laid. Purchases, which by their after-results may truly be termed epoch-making, were made, such as "Erica" from the Earl of Southesk in 1861, "Jilt" from Mr M'Combie in 1867, "Kindness" from Mr Skinner, Drumin, in 1873, "Pride of Mulben" from the Mulben herd in 1876, "Rose 3rd" from Westertown, "Blackbird of Corskie 3rd," "Miss Burgess,"

and "Georgina"—all of which were early additions to the herd. These, and others which might be mentioned, will be recognised by breeders as the foundresses of families of the breed, which are held in the highest estimation wherever Aberdeen-Angus cattle are bred.

#### ESTABLISHING HERD BOOK.

We shall have occasion to refer further to the work of Mr Wm. M'Combie, Sir George Macpherson-Grant, Bart. and others

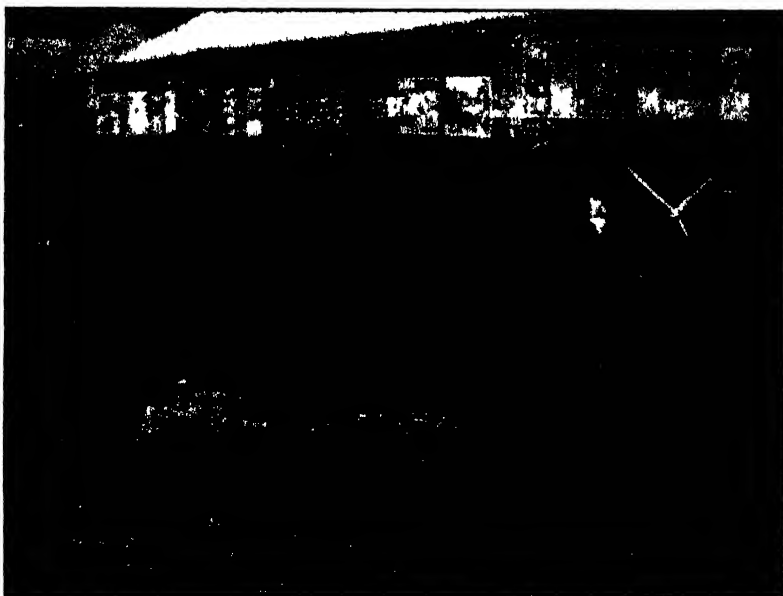


Fig. 5. —"Jt ANA ERICA" 36,285 (three years old). Bred by Countess Dowager of Seafield; owned by Mr J. E. Kerr, of Harviestoun Castle, Dollar.

First and Bred Champion at Highland Show at Peebles, and at Royal Dublin, 1906.

on behalf of the development of the breed, but there may, at this stage, be recalled that about 1840 the work of collecting the material for the first volume of the 'Herd Book' had been begun by Mr Edward Ravenscroft. The fruits of a decade of work were destroyed by the fire in the Museum of the Highland Society Offices, and though the work was recommenced in 1857 it was not till 1862 that there was issued the first volume of the 'Herd Book,' which contained 1183 entries by some eighty owners. In the preface special mention is made of the assistance given by the Earl of Southesk, Sir John Stuart Forbes, Bart., the Hon. Charles Carnegie,

Mr Alex. Bowie, Mr Wm. Fullerton, and Mr Robert Walker—names which will for ever be associated with the early improvement of the Aberdeen and Angus breed of Polled cattle. Shortly after this there passed over the Angus country that terrible visitation of rinderpest, which swept so many of the leading herds almost completely out of existence, and it was little wonder, in face of the many discouraging difficulties that had to be encountered, that it was not till 1871 that a meeting of breeders took steps for the issue of a second volume. In 1879 the Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Society was formed, and the 'Herd Book' has now reached Volume 45.

#### DEVELOPING THE BREED.

Having referred thus briefly to the work of a few of those who contributed to the establishment of the breed, there may now be noted the steps taken for its development. There has been quoted in Mr M'Combie's own words the aim with which he took up the breeding of the native cattle of Aberdeenshire. The late Sir George Macpherson-Grant, in quite as definite terms, showed that it was with a very definite end in view that he took up the breeding of Aberdeen-Angus cattle. He has left it on record that about the end of the 'fifties and beginning of the 'sixties, it was not easy to get the Polls to the front, but "some of us were determined to do what we could. It was a hard fight." It is only when we realise what these men did accomplish that we are able—even though then only in part—to appreciate the greatness of the task to which they thus, with fixity of purpose, set themselves.

Aberdeen-Angus breeders, from very early times, have been good supporters of the show system, and it has been by taking every advantage of that system that most of the breed development has been brought about. As early as 1829 we find Hugh Watson exhibiting Polled cattle at a Highland Show, though it was not till 1848 that a separate section was provided at these shows for animals of the Aberdeen-Angus; and even yet it may be noted that it is only by contributing a subsidy to the prize fund of the Royal Agricultural Society of England that the breed is able to secure at Royal English shows a full classification of six classes. Early in the 'forties we find Mr Watson an exhibitor at the Irish shows, but it was when the mantle of Keillor fell on the shoulders of the owners of the Tillyfour and Ballindalloch herds that the greatest progress was made by way of the showyard rings, and that there were reached those points of excellence in fat-stock show circles which established the pre-eminence of the breed in beef production, to which reference will be made later on. From the very first, success at-

tended their efforts so far as the improvement of the breed was concerned. So much was this the case that in 1852, when the leading exhibits were from Keillor, Mains of Kelly, Craigo, Tillyfour, and Balwylo, the Directors of the Highland drew special notice to the section, recording that they "rejoice that this and preceding shows indicate a praiseworthy amount of effort and care on the part of breeders of Polled stock, followed by a corresponding improvement in the stock. They cannot but regard it as the most valuable breed of Scotland, combining as it does in a great measure the constitution of



Fig. 6 — "MINA OF GLAMIS" 22,408 Bred and owned by the Earl of Strathmore.

Champion of Birmingham and Smithfield Fat Stock Shows in 1890, weight, at under three years, 16 cwt 10 lb

the Highlander with the feeding properties of the Shorthorn." It is worthy of note that this show of 1852 was the last time Mr Watson's name appears on the list of exhibitors, and the first time that Mr M'Combie figures first for breeding cattle bred and owned by himself. It is an interesting coincidence that it was under these circumstances that the Directors passed their gratifying comment on the progress that was being made in the improvement of Aberdeen-Angus cattle.

Not only was improvement being effected, but the interests of the breed were during these years marked by a steady progress at home. When it is recalled that the main railway

systems of Scotland date only from 1845, and that it was not until 1854 that there was any railway transport to the north of Aberdeen, it will be seen that breeders in the North of Scotland were greatly handicapped in their efforts to reach new markets. Even in 1876 there were not more than half a dozen herds of the breed either in England or in Ireland, while, according to the latest volume of the 'Herd Book' (Vol. 45, published in March 1921) the entries show 326 herds in Scotland, 76 in England, and 132 in Ireland.

#### FRENCH EXHIBITION SUCCESSES.

It was, however, when the early breeders could get further afield that they were able to do the most far-reaching development work for the breed; and while home interests were advanced by repeated successes at Birmingham and London Smithfield shows, it was perhaps the brilliant record of the breed at the French International shows that contributed more than anything else to the spread of the breed, and certainly to its introduction into new countries. At the Exhibition of 1856, exhibitors included Mr M'Combie, Mr Watson, Mr Walker, Lord Southesk, Sir George Macpherson-Grant, Mr Bowie, and Mr Scott. Then at the International of 1857, when for the first time a section was provided for fat stock, Mr M'Combie was very successful, showing one ox—the heaviest of the British exhibits—which weighed 2744 pounds. In 1862 Mr M'Combie secured the *Prix d'Honneur* for the best animal of any breed, French or British—a happy accompaniment to the issue of the first volume of the 'Herd Book' for the breed. The winning of this, the fat-stock championship of the world, was followed in 1878 by an event the importance of which cannot be exaggerated, as giving impetus to the growing interest that was being taken in the breed. On the occasion of the International of that year a prize was offered by the French Government for the best animals for breeding purposes bred by exhibitors in the sections for cattle other than French. Seventeen distinct breeds competed for the trophy, and in this great world-wide contest the winners were a group from the Tillyfour herd, while reserve to them was a group from the herd of Sir George Macpherson-Grant. Greater even were the honours which were that day to be showered upon the Aberdeen-Angus breed, for when it came to the competition for the best group of beef-producing animals—the only contest in which British and French cattle had an opportunity of testing their respective merits—the Blackskins from Tillyfour again triumphed.

When it is recalled that the first public sale of the breed took place in 1841 (when that Hubback of the breed, "Pan-

mure" 51, was acquired from his breeder, Lord Panmure, at seventeen guineas!); that it was only in 1844 that Mr M'Combie really laid the foundation of his fame as a breeder by the purchase of Mr Fullerton's "Queen Mother" 348; and that it was only in 1861 that Sir George Macpherson-Grant made the initial purchases of the modern Ballindalloch herd, it will be acknowledged that great indeed had been the work accomplished for the breed.

In less than fifty years from the time that Mr M'Combie put his master hand to the work of evolving order and definite



Fig. 7.—"EVERWINE" 24,436 (four years old). Bred and owned by Mr J. J. Cridlan, of Maisemore Park.

First and Breed Champion at Highland Shows at Stirling and at Royal at Gloucester, 1909

type out of the raw and rough material represented by the native cattle of his native county, he and his fellow-workers in the same great cause had raised the breed to a position that demanded recognition by virtue of demonstrated merit in every corner of the cattle-raising world.

It is from this epoch in the breed's history that there takes origin the history of the breed in many other lands, and there may accordingly at this point be taken up briefly the spread of the breed abroad to those other countries where it has come to occupy a prominent place amongst the other though older-established breeds, noting only in passing that it was in 1879, the year after the "Triumph of Paris," that

there was formed the Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Society, which in the first year of its existence had a membership of fifty-six, a number that in the intervening forty years has increased to over six hundred.

#### THE BREED IN NORTH AMERICA.

In no country more than in the United States of America have Aberdeen-Angus cattle made greater progress, or come to fill so large a place among the cattle breeds. This development of the breed has a very distinct connection with the growth in the interests of the breed at home, for there is nothing so bracing to the welfare of any breed as a good export demand. Such a demand was experienced in the case of Aberdeen-Angus in the late 'seventies and early 'eighties, this being indeed the only real "boom" which has affected the breed to any very marked extent, though all along a fairly good export trade has been experienced. For almost a quarter of a century the Shorthorn and other earlier-improved breeds had enjoyed a firm footing on the American market ere the Aberdeen-Angus began to make its appearance, but the progress made by the breed was quite phenomenal. It was in 1873 that the first importation of Aberdeen-Angus bulls was made with the express purpose of improving the range cattle, but it was after the great victories of the breed at the French Exhibition in 1878 that the breed was seriously taken up in the United States. Indeed, it was in "M'Combie's Year" that the first pure-bred herd of Aberdeen-Angus cattle was established in that country. In the succeeding few years very large shipments were made by several exporters—between 1880 and 1883 it has been estimated that about two thousand head were imported—and the transactions carried out about this time included the outright purchase of whole herds of the breed. It is questionable whether such a "boom" as was then experienced is without drawbacks to the best interests of any breed, and it is to be feared that some of the exporters, in their enthusiasm for business, were not just so careful as they ought to have been for the ultimate welfare of the breed both in the United States and in Canada—the result being a very decided falling off in the demand for cattle of the breed, though happily of more recent years there has been renewed activity and very marked progress in Aberdeen-Angus circles in both countries.

The secret of the remarkable progress of the breed in a comparatively brief period is to be found in its strikingly uniform successes at the leading Fat Stock shows, and at the ordinary auction sales of butchers' cattle. It has been as a beef producer *par excellence* that the breed has prospered both at home and abroad, but nowhere has the progress been



more marked than in the States, which provided so extensive a field for inter-breed comparisons and competitions. It is of interest to note that the first appearance of an Aberdeen-Angus steer in an American fat stock show was in 1883, when Messrs Geary, who did so much for the breed in its early days in America, imported the Aberdeenshire-bred "Black Prince," bred by Mr Maitland, Balhalgardy, and exhibited it with great success and with far-reaching results. The true opportunity for the breed came, however, in 1900, with the institution of the International Exhibitions at Chicago ;



Fig 8. "ET ROTO" 39,206 (three years old) Bred and owned by  
Mr James Kennedy, of Doonholm, Ayr  
First in Class and Female Champion of the Breed at Highland Show at Aberdeen,  
and at Royal at Newcastle on Tyne, 1905

and through the medium of these large and representative shows the breed has built up for itself a record in connection with beef production which is without parallel in the history of any other breed of cattle in any part of the world. This record will fall to be dealt with when something is being said of the Fat Stock show successes of the breed.

The official birth of the Aberdeen-Angus breed as an American live-stock factor may be placed at 1883, for in that year the American Aberdeen-Angus Breeders' Association was formed ; and since that date over 300,000 animals have been recorded in the 'Herd Book,' while the membership

is round about 6000. Within the past few years great activity has been shown in breed circles, and by the appointment of Field Officers, extension work of a valuable kind has been accomplished, while a publicity and propaganda campaign has been vigorously carried on. In this connection mention should be made of the work in connection with the formation of calf clubs for the boys and girls. These clubs are exercising great and beneficial influences, and are bound to have equally great and beneficial results.

To Canada belongs the credit of owning the first breeding herd of Aberdeen-Angus cattle to be established on American soil, Professor Brown of the Ontario Experimental Farm at Guelph importing in 1876 a small herd, which formed the nucleus of the breed in Canada. In the leading shows of Western Canada, and especially at Brandon, a great record of wins for the breed has been established. There are not nearly so many breeders of Aberdeen-Angus cattle east of the Great Lakes as there are west, though a good many years ago this was the only part of the country in which Aberdeen-Angus cattle were to be found. The early set-back has not been easily recovered, but within the past few years the fortunes of the breed have been clearly in the ascendant. Within the last year or so the affairs of the breed have been placed on a firmer basis by the appointment of a whole-time permanent secretary, under whose direction very substantial progress is being made.

#### PROGRESS IN ARGENTINA.

It was about 1876 that the first Aberdeen-Angus bull was introduced into the Argentine. Between that year and 1884 quite a number of bulls were shipped to the same country, and the experiments made in crossing the native "Criollo" cows with these bulls of so pronounced a beef breed were watched with close interest. It has to be stated, however, that those carrying on this export trade were rather unfair to the breed, the vast majority of the specimens exported being of an inferior and cheap type. Needless to say, the results were disappointing, and great harm was done to the interests of the breed—so much so that a distinct prejudice was set up against the breed, and indeed against black cattle generally. The breaking down of this prejudice is proving no easy task, and in the interval other beef breeds have come to secure a firm holding in most of the best cattle divisions of South America. About 1895, however, something in the shape of a new start for the breed was made, and a 'Herd Book' for the breed was opened by the Sociedad Rural, in whose hands the compilation of the 'Herd Book' still remains. Progress was, however, slow, and it was not till

1902 that the first show of the breed was held in connection with the Palermo shows of the Rural Society. Within the last ten years the interests of the breed have forged ahead, and now there are well over one hundred herds of registered Aberdeen-Angus cattle in Argentina, while the proportion of Black Polled grades is steadily increasing. The formation in 1917 of the Aberdeen-Angus Breeders' Association was followed in 1920 by the formation of another society of breeders, and both organisations are carrying on active work on behalf of the breed. The very satisfactory results of repre-



Fig. 9.—"PRINCE BLUE BLOOD OF BALLINDALLOCH" 29,807 (three years old). Bred by Sir John Macpherson-Grant, Bart., of Ballinalloch; owned by Mr D. Y. Stewart, Carse of Trowan, Crieff.

First Prize at Highland Show at Cupar, and First and Breed Champion at Royal Dublin, 1912.

sentatives of the breed at the carcase competitions held in connection with the Rural Society's Fat Stock Shows have assisted greatly in its development, and the favour shown by packing houses for the type of steer secured by the Aberdeen-Angus cross is opening up what will apparently be a very large market for Aberdeen-Angus cattle. Of recent years some of the best bulls of the breed have been shipped for herds in Argentina, and at the shows of the Rural Society the breed is now strongly represented, while much more attention is being given to this market by the regular exporters of pedigree cattle.

## SOUTH AFRICA AND AUSTRALASIA.

Another country which is providing an ever-expanding market for Aberdeen-Angus cattle is South Africa: indeed, within the last half-dozen years that country has been the most extensive customer for British breeders of Aberdeen-Angus cattle, though of late, owing partly to economic conditions in South Africa and to unpopular and inconvenient conditions of export in this country, business has fallen off considerably. Many of the large ranching concerns, such as the British South African Company, the Liebig Company, and many others, have gone in extensively for Aberdeen-Angus cattle, and the appearances of the breed at the Fat Stock shows have also contributed to its steadily growing popularity. The 'Herd Book,' of which over a dozen volumes have been issued, is taken in hand by the South African Stud Book Association, established in 1907, and in 1917 there was formed the Aberdeen-Angus Breeders' Society of South Africa. In tracing the history of the breed in South Africa, it will be noted that though at first rather poor prices were paid for such representatives of the breed as were imported, the breeders there are now offering for some of the best of the breed. Another significant fact is that during the year 1919-20 more Aberdeen-Angus cattle were registered than during the preceding fourteen years.

It will not be necessary to follow in detail the various migrations of the breed from the home haunts in North-East Scotland to new homes beyond the seas, but in dealing with this phase of the breed's history, mention must be made of New Zealand and Australia. Even before the fame of the Black Polls had been proclaimed far and wide as the result of the sweeping victories at the French International Show in 1878, the Aberdeen-Angus breed had made its appearance in New Zealand. There is record of a shipment in 1863, but it was not until the late 'eighties and the early 'nineties that there was very marked progress. In 1914 one of the leading sales realised an average of only 15 to 25 guineas for females, while bulls made up to 50 guineas. This was about the turning-point in the breed's career in New Zealand, for there was a steady improvement after that, and in 1917 at one sale 156 cattle from a single herd made an average of 94½ guineas, with top prices of 510 guineas for a bull and 375 guineas for a cow. That same year the New Zealand Aberdeen-Angus Breeders' Association was formed, and, with an ever-expanding outlet for surplus stock in Australia, the number of herds in New Zealand has since then received substantial augmentation, and several important consignments have been imported from this country.

## FAT STOCK SHOW SUCCESSES.

It was to the "verdict of the butcher's block" that Mr M'Combie appealed when he set about striving for the emancipation of the breed from its localised birthplace, and it has been in conformity to that verdict that the breed has prospered at home and abroad. Much might be written of the intricacies of breeding, of names of animals which have become famous in the annals of the breed, of individual



Fig. 10.—"ESCALAD OF BLEATON" 48,058. Bred by Messrs Marshall & Mitchell, Bleaton, Blairgowrie.

Sold at Perth, February 1921, to Mr W. G. Macbeth of Dunira, Comrie, at 3000 guineas.

herds which exercised far-reaching influences on the general welfare of the breed; but the spread of the breed and its success in the many lands to which it has gone within the past half-century must be attributed principally to the utilitarian qualities displayed by the breed in its mission of beef production. Though the Smithfield championship had been won by Mr M'Combie as early as 1867—after he had competed for it eight times—it was not till 1891 that a separate section was provided for the breed. Since that time Aberdeen-Angus cattle have taken a leading place at this the greatest of the British Fat Stock Shows, and over the

last twenty-six shows it has won the championship over all other breeds upon no fewer than fourteen occasions. It has also been very successful in the carcase competitions, and in those contests which more clearly demonstrate the qualities of early maturity it has taken a leading place. At the other Fat Stock shows throughout the country the record has been equally outstanding, and in the ordinary markets for commercial cattle the Aberdeen-Angus and its black or blue-grey crosses have long occupied a pre-eminent position in the estimation of all connected with the meat trade. But the brightest page of the beef history of the Aberdeen-Angus cattle is provided by the results of the great inter-breed competitions, held in connection with the Chicago International Shows. Indeed, the great opportunity for the breed came in 1900 with the establishment of the International Shows, which gave scope for comparisons on a larger scale than possible in any other country as to the merits of the different breeds in regard to beef production. There is no desire to pit one breed against another in these notes, but it is only by the application of comparisons that there can be brought out the marvellous record of the breed. Mr M'Combie, when he put his hand forth for the improvement of the breed, put it on record: "I was led to believe that if the properties of our Polled cattle were properly brought out, they would equal, if not surpass, any other breed as to weight, symmetry, and quality of flesh. I resolved that I would endeavour to improve our native breed." The improvement of that breed was carried out with the aid of many stepping-stones—Birmingham, Smithfield, the French Exhibitions, and the many shows of breeding stock—but chief amongst all agencies which have contributed to the growth of the Aberdeen-Angus breed, and have justified the claim of the late Mr M'Combie for breed supremacy in beef production, have been the shows at Chicago. Over the nineteen shows the grand championship for single steers has been won twelve times by Aberdeen-Angus, three times by Herefords, twice by Shorthorns, and twice by a cross-bred. In the car-loads there have been fifteen Aberdeen-Angus grand championships, with three for Herefords, and one for Shorthorns; while in the carcase competition every champion-winning animal over the nineteen shows has, with one exception, been of Aberdeen-Angus breeding. Taking all the inter-breed competitions at Chicago since 1900, it is found that the Aberdeen-Angus claim fifty-seven grand championships, Herefords eight, Shorthorns six, and cross-breds three. These figures are quoted simply to show how the breed compares in important aspects with those other breeds whose establishment in America is traceable to a much earlier date.

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS.

Just as three names stand out prominently in the early history of Aberdeen-Angus cattle, so three events in its history mark distinct epochs—the initial purchases by Hugh Watson on Trinity Muir, the winning of the Smithfield championship by Mr M'Combie, and the success of the breed at the French International in 1878. The first event gave point and direction to efforts at improvement all over the North-East; the second proved what the breed could do in the keenest of competition with older-established breeds for the honours in beef production, and had as a direct outcome the establishment of a herd on the Royal farm in Scotland, and the granting of Royal patronage to the Society that was established to foster the interests of the breed; while the third event caused the echoes of the breed's victories to be heard all over the cattle-raising world, preparing for it new homes in far-off lands, where neither the ravages of drought, the colds of the sub-Arctic regions, nor the heat of the subtropical countries seem to stand in the way of the steady progress of the breed.

The more wide the breed's distribution, and the more varied the conditions to which it was subjected, the more clearly were there brought out those inherent qualities of hardiness, vigour of constitution, precocity, and early maturity, which are so outstanding characteristics of the breed. Though possessing valuable dairy qualities, it has been through the ever-widening recognition of the merits of the breed in beef production that Aberdeen-Angus cattle have increased the number of their patrons. Alike as store cattle for the feeders and by the retail butchers, the breed has always been held in the highest repute. In regard to early maturity, it is interesting to note that the breed was the first to supply a two-year-old champion at the London Smithfield Show, and is the only pure breed to supply a yearling champion at the Scottish Fat Stock Show.

The breed possesses valuable crossing qualities, and this has also been an important factor in its extension both at home and abroad. The "grades" of the breed came early to be known in American market parlance as the "Market Toppers," just as the breed itself, on account of market performances in that great cattle country, was styled "the breed that beats the record." In the home markets great preference has long been shown by meat salesmen for cattle of the Aberdeen-Angus type, and it has been these utilitarian qualities that have tided the breed over many a dull day when its fortunes were at a low ebb.

Much could be written of the extent to which the breed, when used for crossing purposes, imparts its peculiar properties

of hornlessness and beef supremacy to its offspring, but it may be sufficient to instance the fact that the Smithfield champion of 1919—the first and only occasion in the long history of these shows upon which a yearling won that honour—showed three parts of Aberdeen-Angus breeding.

#### SALES AND PRICES.

A great deal of the prosperity of any race of pedigree stock depends upon the extent of the export trade which it enjoys. The Aberdeen-Angus breed has not been favoured with that extensive and sustained export trade which has marked the history in recent years of certain other breeds, and this fact is reflected in the exceedingly slight fluctuation which marks values over a long series of years. One of the earliest sales of which we have a record was Mr M'Combie's first public sale in 1850, when the average was £20, 13s., and the top price £35. Thirty years later, when the Tillyfour herd came to be dispersed—namely, in 1880—the average for seventy head was £48, 1s. 6d., with a top price of £283, 10s., this being the highest individual price for an Aberdeen-Angus animal sold at any public sale up to that time. The American "boom" was then setting in—the only experience of the kind which the breed has had to hasten on its development. Large prices were then current, but the spurt was but short-lived, and it is questionable whether it did not do more harm than good to the general interests of the breed. Numbers were not then large enough to cope with the extraordinary demand, and at the same time to comply with conditions which would have conserved the best interests of the breed in the new countries to which it was going. A few years in the early 'eighties saw a very active export trade to the United States and Canada—one of the most successful sales of that period being the disposal of the Earl of Airlie's herd in 1882, when there was an average of £108, 11s. 6d., with a top price of £525.

With the passing of this demand, prices fell away to a very marked extent, the market being almost exclusively a "home" one. Values of the year's public sales represented averages of from £17 to £22, and the wonder is that the breed did not suffer to a greater extent than it did, in view of the fact that certain other beef breeds, which were finding an extensive foreign outlet, were steadily rising in monetary value. During the last ten years or so, however, Aberdeen-Angus breeders have had the satisfaction of experiencing a steadily-rising market. Prior to the war, prices were showing a distinct upward tendency, due to the growing popularity of the breed in Argentina and in South Africa. Then, since the com-



pletion of the war, there has been evident a keener interest in the breed in North America than has been the case for over forty years, and private transactions at very high figures have taken place for the sale of cattle of the breed for that country. The result of this widening out of the prospects of export trade may be found in the fact that, whereas the average in 1911 for public sales held throughout Scotland was £24, 1s. 6d., last year (1920) the average for 2073 animals of the breed publicly disposed of was £82, 16s. 9d. It is the case, of course, that national economic conditions have also had the effect of raising prices all round, but it is unquestionably the fact that to a very considerable extent the improvement in values of cattle of the Aberdeen-Angus breed can be traced to a growing appreciation of the breed in other countries, and notably in North and South America, Africa, and New Zealand.

As a matter of interest, it may be noted that the record price for an animal of the Aberdeen-Angus breed stands at £10,000, which was paid for a bull at Mr Kershaw's sale in Ohio in May of last year. So far as the public sales of this country are concerned, the record price is 3000 guineas, made both last year and this year for yearling bulls. Indeed—and just to show the long road along which the followers of the pioneer breeders have successfully guided the breed—it may be stated that the three highest priced animals at the spring sales of pedigree cattle in 1921 were of the Aberdeen-Angus breed. The record for a heifer calf of the breed, £315, still remains with the Cortachy sale of 1882, and for the other classes of the breed the records at public sale at present are: bulls, £3150; cows, £609 (or £756 for cow with young calf at foot); two-year-old heifers, £1050; and yearling heifers, £1365.