

THE HON. NIEL BLACK'S SHORT-HORNS AT MOUNT NOORAT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE AUSTRALASIAN.

Sir,—As an admirer of the breed of short-horn cattle I was much pleased to see, by an advertisement in *The Australasian*, that the Hon. Niel Black has made up his mind to dispose of a portion of his really fine herd by auction. Having been all my life somewhat of an enthusiast in regard to short-horns, I have never lost an opportunity to make myself thoroughly acquainted with the best herds in the colony, and I flatter myself that I shall do the public some service by tracing a short sketch of the history of the Mount Noorat herd, if you will kindly allow me space for it in your widely circulating paper.

The nucleus of this pure herd had its origin as far back as 1840, when Messrs. Niel Black and Co. bought about 300 head, a pick of the then famed circle and bar brand, and with them two bulls, said to have been pure Durhams. In the following year they imported Snowflake and Martin Luther for the use of this select herd; subsequently Albert, imported by Captain Baxter, was added to the number.

Even at this early stage Mr. Black began a system of selection and classification. When it became known that Mr. Robertson, veterinary surgeon, would undertake the speying of heifers, Mr. Black was the first to adopt this mode of improvement by selection, and ever afterwards continued the same practice, year after year drafting off a percentage of cast animals to undergo similar treatment. Such from the beginning was the foundation of the general herd at Glenormiston. A year afterwards Mr. Black purchased all the late Mr. Joseph Hordern's young stock at Tallarook, got by pure imported bulls, and placed them on the Sisters run. Mr. Black having foreseen the enormous expense to be incurred in importing sires of pure blood from England in sufficient numbers to serve a large herd, had recourse to the plan of having a stud herd of their own, of the purest blood in Great Britain, for the purpose of breeding sires to improve their general herd.

In 1843 he bought Matilda, an imported heifer, from Messrs. Bolden Bros., and soon afterwards made a valuable addition to the herd by the importation of Felicity, Janet, The Doe, and Lady March from England, thereafter and from time to time adding other animals of equal excellence until precluded from doing so by the prohibitory enactment now in force putting an end to the introduction of cattle from Europe; Lady Blyth being the last heifer imported by him. His regular practice from the first was to import a bull of the best blood every second year, and latterly two at a time, for stud purposes, thus continuously imparting fresh blood into the veins of the stud herd until prevented from doing so, as already stated. Mr. Black being fully aware

of the very strong prejudice that exists in England against breeding from pampered or over-fed sires, and being alive to the fact that the practice is avoided by many, if not by all the celebrated breeders of short-horns, has carefully endeavoured to follow their example, making the line of descent, soundness of constitution, and symmetry of form his sole aim and study, regardless of cost in obtaining that end, as may be inferred from the well-known names of the breeders from whom purchases have been made for the grand herd now at Mount Noorat and the Sisters—namely, Right Hon. Earl Spencer, Hon. Noel Hill, Col. Craddock, Messrs. Townley, Lawson, Molyneux, Booth, Carter, and others. Under his own care and judicious management for the last 34 years, Mr. Black has succeeded in breeding cattle very rarely equalled in any colony, not one of which, excepting the imported bulls, ever tasted artificial food of any description; consequently they are healthy, vigorous animals, and for purity of blood, symmetry of form, soundness of constitution, evenness of flesh, fineness of bone, and silkiness of coat are unequalled in the Southern Hemisphere.

In conclusion, I may remark that the owner of Mount Noorat was no less successful as an importer and breeder of horses, both

blood and Clydesdale—I may also add prize-taking Lincoln sheep—and has done much in a quiet, unostentatious way to improve stock and benefit the colony by his successful skill and energy displayed in that direction

—I
 AM, &c.,
 AN ADMIRER OF THE SHORTHORN.
 Ballarat, July 21, 1875