



DAVE'S DAIRY

The Adelaide Stock and Station Journal, 20 December 1945

I think I ought to tell you about our trip to town. Mary has been trying to bully me into taking her and the family down in the car to do the Christmas shopping, so I gave in at last. I got through the town without the bank manager noticing. I don't think he was up. On the way down a chap tried to cadge a ride and Mary was quite surprised when I didn't stop. "We could have got him in somewhere, Dave," she said. But I couldn't help thinking it looked like old Ben, so I went on.

And then we started to shop. Cripes! I would rather be home stooking. There were dashing-looking shop walkers wandering around; fat old ladies plodding up stairs; hot-looking Father Christmases squatting forlornly in dark caves. And we couldn't get a cup of tea. I wanted to buy a billy and light a bit of a fire on the shady side of North Terrace, but Mary wouldn't hear of it. "Don't think I'm going to behave like a bushwhacker on the few times I come to town, Dave," she said. So we drank warm water.

After that I left Mary to mind the kids on her own. After all, it was her idea, coming down. And I had to buy her a Christmas present. After about July every year I start to worry about Mary's Christmas present. Early in our married life I concentrated on giving her something useful, like a new milk bucket or wash-up pan. Then I found that the poor old girl was fretting for something more decorative and frivolous. Funny things, women. Anyhow, this year I thought I would get her something really natty.

So I started out. The first big shop I went into was fairly crawling with people and I wandered around for a while trying to find the right department. I didn't like to ask. At last I saw the notice "Ladies' Lingerie, fourth floor". So I clambered up the steps.

When I got to the fourth floor I asked a very superior-looking coot where was the "Ladies' Lingerie" department. "The what," he says, very surprised. I started to get a bit embarrassed, so told him I wanted to buy Mary a present and I wanted the Lingerie Department. "Oh," he said, "you mean 'Lonjeray,' don't you?" So he called out, "Ladies' Underwear waiting" in a very loud voice, and people looked round at me and I started to sweat and go red. And then a very superior young woman came up and said, "Yes, sir, what can we do for you?" I told her I wanted a present for Mary. "And what did you have in mind, sir?" she said. I started to stutter that I didn't quite know. And if I did know, how could I tell the young lady? But she told me to come along and she would show me something nice. Cripes! She did too, and it was awful.

We marched down a long room and there were no men there at all, and I could feel all the women staring at me. I got redder and redder. The young lady stopped at last and said, "Don't you think that's nice." I looked up and saw another young lady who was evidently just getting up. I looked hurriedly away and said, "Yes, she is nice, isn't she?" Then I realised it was only a model. And then I saw that there were a lot of other models, and they all seemed awfully scantily clad. Of course, I didn't stare at them, but I couldn't help noticing them.

And the young lady would persist in drawing my attention to them. "What about the nice

pink, or this nice blue," and what size does your young lady take?" I said I wanted something for my wife, not my young lady. "Oh," she said, "in that case you'll be wanting something more serviceable. Would this be big enough?" She held up something an elephant would have been comfortable in.

And then I saw some of the French bathers Cynthia Harding is talking about. You can see them if you look carefully. I was just looking carefully when I heard those well known steps padding down the carpet. "Dave," said a well known voice, 'Just what are you doing here?' "Oh, I just got lost," I said. (I'll meet you at the car," and I bolted down the stairs.

Then I tried several other shops but was careful not to ask for the "Lonjeray." But I couldn't find anything till I ended up at a picture shop. I was pretty desperate by this time. There was a friendly old fellow selling the things. I rather liked a picture of a mountain with a river running by. "That's a lovely picture," he said. "Water colours, all done by hand." "Cripes!" I said. "Yes," he said, "that picture's got class. I said so when I first saw it. It's got class." I said I thought it looked rather nice, but I couldn't judge its "class." "Ah," he said, "you can always tell when a things got class." Some pictures have it and some haven't, and you can always tell. So I had another look at it and it did seem to have class. "And all done by hand, too," he said. So I bought it and as he was wrapping it up he said, "You know, I'm real sorry to part with that picture. It's got such class." I hope Mary notices it.

When I got back to the car Mary was there waiting, and all the kids were grizzling. Things were a bit sticky for a while. Mary didn't say much till we were out of the traffic because she didn't want me to have an accident. When I'm driving in town she always sits poised over the hand-brake, ready for all eventualities.

But once we got outside the city she wanted to know exactly what I was doing up in that ladies' underwear department. I said I was buying a present. "That's obvious, Dave," she said. "I didn't think for one moment you were buying anything for yourself." And then (under her breath): "Not but what you wouldn't look a bit slimmer if you did." I said I was buying something for her. "Well," she said, "if I don't get something from that department on Christmas morning, you look out, Dave, my boy."

So there it is. I don't know what I'm going to do. And Christmas will be here any morning. Cripes!