



## DAVE'S DAIRY

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I don't think I'll do a proper diary this week, because one day is too much like another to make it interesting-so I thought I'd just write about the week as a whole, and describe to you our boarding-house, fellow guests, and so on.

Living in a boarding-house I find to be quite hard work. To begin with, the kids usually wake up at about six o'clock, and start doing the place over. Angry heads poke out into the corridor asking me to "please keep the little devils quiet." The only way to do this is to get them out on the beach, so they eventually clatter downstairs and all is quiet for about five minutes. Then the morning tea bell goes. Mary turns wearily over in bed and murmurs, "Dave, dear, I would like some tea." So I proudly don my dressing-gown, which is purple and black, and join the happy throng milling around the teapot in the hall. Very prompt action is required to arrive in time to snaffle one of the few pieces of bread and butter. Lately I've adopted the technique of getting up five minutes ahead of the gong, and sitting on the stairs waiting. By doing this I get some bread and butter, a chance to let others really appreciate my dressing-gown, and also very black looks from those too late to get bread and butter.

Then I join the bath queue, and make scathing remarks about how long the fellow takes who is occupying it at present. Mary insists that I shave daily, because of "What would people think?" This is only one of the concessions I make to "what people think." Another is changing for what is politely termed "dinner". Wearing clean shirts, washing the kids' knees and doing their hair, are others, and Mary keeps talking about our "station."

Before I've finished shaving I'm joined by all the kids, demanding breakfast. This is supposed to start at 8.30, but never does. The whole family ends up sitting on the stairs gnawing their nails, waiting for the gong to go, and when it does, there's an unholy rush to our table. By the time Mary makes a dignified entry we've usually nearly finished.

We usually walk up the jetty after breakfast to see how the fishing is going. People start fishing about daylight, and keep going till well after dark/ I've never seen them catch a fish yet. There is a rumour current that somebody one caught a very small leather-jacket, but this was not confirmed.

The rest of the day I usually spend in rescuing the youngest child, who has been seen by Mary going as close as ten yards to a pool of water fully two inches deep (truly, women are kittle cattle), or lying on the sand, keeping the flies off Mary's back, or trying to persuade the children that I cannot buy ice cream for them all, or some toffee, or some cool drinks or a ride on the hurdy-gurdy. At about half-past five I meet some friends and adjourn for some refreshment till six, and then come back to the boarding-house to find Mary nearly in tears because she has been left to contend with the kids for "most of the day." Cripes!

After "dinner" we sit in a very small room in small groups, discussing other guests. We have the usual mixture. Firstly, there's the married couple. The wife spends most of her time snorting at the attire of the younger fry, and the husband agrees with her and steals stealthy glances whenever he gets a chance. Then there's the usual assortment of parents with

children, the mothers of whom have long consultations about how much Elsie weighed when she was born, and how little Alfie has rather a weak chest, and what a cute little thing Norah is, really. The fathers usually congregate together after a while, but they are a subdued lot.

Then there are a few honeymoon couples, who gaze soulfully at one another and make Mary all sentimental. And then there's the fisherman and his wife. The fisherman spends his time overhauling his gear, or fishing, or telling you long (and very improbable) stories about his luck, or his last visit, or last week, or yesterday. His wife either knits on the beach or knits on the lounge. They have no children.

But easily the most exasperating person is Sydney. I don't know what his surname is. He gets up at about 5.30 and does physical jerks, and expands his chest, and then has a swim. After breakfast he suggests a brisk walk. "Why?" I say. "To look at the view," he says. I tell him we can see it from the jetty. "But it's not the same," he explains. "What you need, Dave, old man, is more fresh air and exercise." "Cripes," I think "that's about all I get at home." Eventually I succeed in convincing Sydney that the doctor said I wasn't to take any violent exercise, and soon Sydney may be seen running along the beach with long, springy strides with his chest stuck out awkwardly in front, taking long, deep breaths of ozone. Keeping fit, he calls it. I wonder how he'd go stooking hay.

Well, that's about enough about our holiday. It has been pleasant enough, but every now and again I can feel Arthur thinking about me, and the iniquity of taking holidays, or Clarkson home straining up his fences like mad, or the poor old bank manager sitting there behind his grille, fretting. Sometimes I think of Mr Chifley, or old Ben, as I call him now, fuming around Canberra wanting to know when I'm going to start working for him again. It won't be long now.