



DAVE'S DAIRY

The Adelaide Stock and Station Journal, 23 January 1946

Monday. Arthur, the chap who is to help me with the hay, arrived last night. He put his buckboard away, and then had a look around the farm by moonlight, tidied up a few things, and then went to bed. About four o'clock this morning I heard him moving around in the back yard, so went out to see what was wrong. "Can't you sleep?" I said. "Sleep!" he said. "Fair go! I came over here to work. I think I'll put the horses in, and we can start on the hay as soon as you have had breakfast." So I went back and broke the news gently to Mary that Arthur was waiting for breakfast, and she'd better look snappy because he didn't look too pleased at being kept waiting. "But it's only four o'clock, Dave," she protested. "It doesn't matter. You get breakfast while I have a bit of a lie down. I can see I am in for a busy day!" By five o'clock we'd had breakfast and the horses were waiting in the trolley, so there really wasn't any help for it but to start carting hay. On the way out to the paddock Arthur remarked on how we ought to strain up the fences, and if it became too windy for hay, we could go on cutting thistles on the fallow, and how the harness wanted oiling, and the bolts on the trolley could do with tightening up.

When we reached the hay paddock I eagerly suggested that I would pitch and he could load. But he wouldn't hear of it. He jumped off, and had half the stook up before I had the frames up. He pitched two sheaves at a time. He said they always did that back home. Before long I was reduced to hurriedly poking sheaves to the outside, and floundering up and down in the middle of the load, trying to tread the rest out of sight. And still the sheaves came up in a bewildering shower. I put my head over the side once to tell him to go a bit slower if he liked, but he threw a couple of sheaves in my face, so I didn't try again. After a while I started pushing a few odd ones over the other side, so that Arthur would have to walk around to get them, and so give me some breathing space.

Anyhow, the load didn't fall off on the way in, much to my surprise. When we got to the stack yard, Arthur wanted to know where I was going to build the stack. "Oh, about here somewhere," I told him that I wasn't going to worry about it. "But you can't waste good hay by putting it straight on the ground," he said. (We'll have to have straw." "But what will we get it in? The trolley's full of hay, and we can't throw that off, and then get straw in, and then throw the hay on again." "Why not?" says Arthur. I hummed and haa'd for a while, and then said it would take too long. "Fiddlesticks," said he. "We'll get up a bit earlier tomorrow to make up for it. You throw the load off in a heap while I go and rake up some straw."

So I did as I was told. Arthur took one of the horses out of the lead and put it in the rake. He didn't think much of the rake, but thought it would do. "What about some oil for the wheels?" he said. "Oh, it doesn't matter," I said. "But it's got to be oiled," he said. I explained that I didn't worry about oiling it, because it was really Clarkson's, but he didn't take any notice of me, so I climbed down and found the oil-can.

Then he went on raking, and I threw off the rest of the load, and went inside to get some sympathy from Mary. I didn't get much. "You are really lucky, Dave," she said, "getting a good man like that." I said that I would be an invalid inside a week, and then she'd be sorry. "Nonsense, Dave," she said. "He's just what you want. He will show you how things really

should be done."

Just then I heard the trolley moving off, and rushed outside in time to get a ride out to the paddock. We put on a load of straw, and brought it in, and made a bed for the stack. "Now, what about some lunch?" I said. "Lunch?" says Arthur. "Lunch? What do you mean, lunch?" I explained that we usually lunch in the middle of the morning. "What for?" says Arthur. I told him I like it. "Seems a waste of time to me," he says. But he came inside; but after he had swallowed a few mouthfuls he got up from the table and said: "Well, we must be going. We've got a lot to do today." So I got wearily to my feet and followed him out. I thought I heard Mary snigger as I walked past her, but she denies this.

I tried to get him to build the stack, but he said he would see how I got on, and if I wasn't much good he would build the second one. So I had to build this one. I hate building stacks. I'm all right for the first two layers, but after that my mind starts to wander and so do the sides of the stacks. It's bad enough at other times, with Mary sniffing around, muttering that she could do better herself. But today it was awful. If I put a sheaf in what Arthur thought was the wrong place, he would stop pitching till I had shifted it. If I couldn't see which one it was, he would point it out to me. And he would say: "Don't you keep the centre up higher?" Or "That side's going out." Or, "My uncle can build as quickly as two men can pitch."

When we went out for the second load, I said quietly and firmly that I was going to pitch, and he could load. I got on the shady side of the load, and believe me, I took my time. Arthur spent half his time peering over the side to see what I was doing. Every now and again he would ask me if I was feeling all right.

We had fully half an hour for dinner. At half-past six I suggested we knock off. "What for?" says Arthur. "It's still light." I told him that I wanted the horses to have a good rest but I could see he didn't believe me. As I was writing the first part of this I could hear him pottering around in the blacksmith shop. I went up and asked him what he was doing. "Oh, just clearing up a bit. Gosh! What a mess!" I'm going to bed now.

Tuesday. Arthur called me up at four o'clock again, but I tricked him. After dinner I told him I had to go around the sheep. "What for?" he says. I told him I had to see if they were all right for flies. I knew he didn't believe me, but I got away, all the same, and had a good sit down behind a tree. When I got back I found that Arthur had cut up all the wood, and Mary was fairly beaming on him. "What a nice chap, Dave," she said. "Fancy having someone around who cuts wood without being asked. He's so willing." "By cripes! 'Willing' is not the word I'd have used. The man's a slave driver," I said. Towards evening Arthur was starting to mutter about props for the stack.

Wednesday. It became painfully obvious today that my stack was going into a decline. Mary suggested that Arthur should finish it, but he said that, although he could see he would have to build the next one, he didn't think it was safe for him to get up on mine. So we decided to put the roof on while it was still there. I'm afraid it's going to look a bit queer.

Thursday. We finished my stack today and it does look queer/ We've got it well propped up though, and it may stay there. And then Arthur started building his stack. He has got a queer way of building his stack, with the butts out all the time. I asked him why he did it that way, and he said it was to save walking on the heads of the sheaves and breaking them off. I suppose it's all right. Tonight he is out there by moonlight patting in the rough sheaves, and Mary is saying how nice it will be to have a nice-looking stack near the house for once and I'm just about to crawl into bed.

Friday. Hay-carting again. I happened to mention to Arthur that I hoped to go away for a holiday this year. "What for?" he wanted to know. "Oh, just for a rest," I said. "What do you want a rest for? Don't you think you ought to stop home and hoe some thistles, and strain up some fences, and oil the harness, and tighten up the nuts on the trolley? Goodness knows, there's enough work to be done. What do you want a holiday for?" I tried to explain that the children needed a change. "What for?" he asked. I was too busy trying to keep the load from falling off to have time to explain.

At tea time I told Mary to explain to Arthur that we needed a holiday. "But why?" he said when she had finished. "My mother never had any holidays, only when she went into hospital to have a baby."

That finished Mary. I've often told her she gets a holiday every few years.