



DAVE'S DAIRY

The Adelaide Stock and Station Journal, 27 February 1946

Monday. We arrived home this afternoon, after a very pleasant holiday. Arthur gave us a rather reserved kind of welcome and wanted me to come out hoeing thistles on the fallow before I got changed. I suppose he wanted to get me going before the effect of the holidays wore off, and I got tired again. But I left him carrying cases in from the car, while I slipped out to have a look around the farm.

Everything was in order, although the millet had pretty well died off, and Clarkson's Sudan grass in the next paddock was still flourishing. And I noticed, too, that my Italian rye looks as if it's dead, although we've surely had enough summer rain to keep it alive if it is truly a biennial. But there were no fly-blown sheep, and quite a few of the fences had been strained up, while the house yard was all raked up nice and tidy. I peeped inside the blacksmith shop, and was quite disappointed to find it in its usual state of chaos. Arthur had obviously not been idle, but, all the same, I must admit that I had expected even more than this. Of course, I knew he'd had to give Clarkson a hand topping his stack after I left and perhaps this had taken longer than I thought it would.

After tea we all sat around, recounting our experiences. I was just telling Arthur how I had caught a huge shark on a whiting line, "played him for hours and hours," when the 'phone went, and it was Mrs Clarkson wanting a yarn with Mary. Mary went hammer and tongs for about ten minutes, telling Mrs Clarkson how smart her new bathers were, and what she wore for "dinner," and what she thought of her fellow boarders. Then she went quiet and started to giggle coyly into the phone, and say, "How nice," and "Did he really?" and "What does she think?" in that infuriating way that women have on the phone.

After about ten minutes of this, she hung up, and looked mysteriously at me. Arthur had been wriggling around his chair in an embarrassed manner all the while, and I thought they had both gone a bit queer. At last Arthur crept off to bed, and then Mary started to talk. It appears that Clarkson's niece Emily was staying with them while Arthur was over there helping with the stack, and Mrs Clarkson thinks that Arthur is falling for the girl. "How lovely, Dave," Mary cooed. "We must do what we can to help things along." Really, women are kittle cattle. They spend all their time bemoaning their lot at being married to farmers, and then, when they get a chance to prevent someone else making the same mistake, they do just the opposite and go around making plans, and leave the young couple together and so on. And it isn't as if this is an ordinary case -I mean, the life of a farmer's wife does perhaps have some lousy patches, although I think they do make too much fuss about them. But Arthur's wife! Well, it makes a chap sorry for the poor girl just to think about it. And Mary makes out she is quite fond of Emily, and here she is trying to chain her to Arthur's chariot wheel. As I say, they are kittle cattle.

Tuesday. I found it particularly hard to get out of bed this morning, and you should have seen Arthur's look of disgust when I came out at about half-past seven. But I made out that I'd been dealing with my correspondence. There's a fair bit of this, but I haven't really started on it yet. I noticed several letters telling me how to make a knife bar, for which I am truly thankful.

After breakfast I felt sick at the very thought of work, but Arthur had found another hoe for me, and he led me determinedly to the fallow. Every now and again he would say, "You must be feeling fit," or "I suppose you don't feel a bit tired," and I thought longingly of lying on the warm sand, watching Sydney sprinting up and down the beach, looking handsome; and I couldn't help thinking how nice it would be for Sydney to be cutting thistles.

I couldn't help noticing that Arthur didn't attack the thistles with his usual vigour. Every now and again he would lean on his hoe and gaze absently into space. And sometimes he would even walk over the thistles without seeing them. "Cripes," I thought, "he's in a bad way, all right." And when I suggested lunch, he didn't seem to mind at all. While we were having it he wanted to know if holidays were very expensive, and when I had told him they were very much so, he said, "I suppose honeymoons are expensive, too," I agreed with him, and he sighed heavily. After a few more minutes he wanted to know how long I had for a honeymoon. I told him it was about three weeks.

"I suppose a weekend wouldn't do?" he wanted to know. "Certainly not," I said. After another long silence, I suggested we hoe some more thistles, but he didn't hear me and wanted to know what I thought of married life. This was rather awkward, because -well, after all, a fellow can't be telling everyone all one's trials and tribulations. So I said that it was pretty expensive, and it had its ups and downs, and so on, but if you were married to the right girl it was all right. At the words, "the right girl," Arthur went into another trance, so I went away and left him.

He was looking so glum when at last he caught up with me that I told him that if you got married, you got a deduction off your income tax, and this cheered him up a bit till he remembered that income tax didn't usually trouble them east of Eudunda. We put in the whole day hoeing, and really I feel that I ought to go away for a bit of a rest. I will think of something else to do tomorrow.

Wednesday. I had a really good look over the farm today. The sheep all looked very well indeed. I really ought to have some more because I have several stubble paddocks untouched, while the few wethers I have to sell are rolling fat, and if I sell them I will have nothing else to eat the feed. The flock ewes are certainly not needing fattening feed because they are fat already. But store sheep are too dear to buy.

There's quite a green shoot in the barley stubble and if we get a good rain soon a lot of it will keep alive, I think, because the barley stubble has such a thick mat of straw on it that it will keep the ground damp. There's plenty of wire weed, too.

The stacks haven't been thatched yet. I suppose we should have started them today, but the thought of sustained work is too much for me. I don't suppose it will rain for a while, anyhow.

Thursday. Clarkson and I had a long talk on the telephone tonight, mainly about super. He was telling me it's about time I got some of my super home, because if I didn't get it now, I mightn't be able to get it later, and so might not get it in time for seeding. I said that if I did get it now, it would rot the bags and have to be re-bagged before seeding. He said that neither of these things would happen if I bought 50-50 super. Then I remembered that he used some of this stuff last year, so I asked him how he got on with it. He told me that he didn't notice any difference between the 50-50 and the ordinary super so far as the crops were concerned, and had a lot less trouble handling the stuff. "And remember, Dave," he said, "the 50% which is rock phosphate doesn't come off your super quota, so you really get a lot more phosphoric

acid, even though a lot of it isn't available for a year or two." This was getting a bit hard for me to follow, so I asked him to go over it all again, slowly, so that I could understand. He did this; and now I think I ought to use 50-50 because it doesn't form such hard lumps; doesn't rot the bags; doesn't affect my super quota, and because, if I use it heavily, I will not affect my crops this year, and will probably leave a residue of super for the following year's crop or pasture. The main disadvantage of it seems to be that there are so many more bags to cart out from the railway, and, later, out into the paddock.

I told him I'd think about it. I don't believe in letting Clarkson stampede me into any of his theatrical ideas. All the same, it's worth thinking about. I don't want any more trouble like we had last year with the super.

Before we finished our conversation on the phone I asked him how Emily was. He said that she was stalking around like a sick fowl, and was either in for a bout of the mumps, or else there was something in Mrs Clarkson's ideas. Before I hung up, Mary said she wanted to speak to Mrs Clarkson, and as Arthur had gone out to look at the moon, she was able to speak freely. She told of all the symptoms that she thought she had seen in Arthur. I might say here that I'd been careful not to tell Mary of any of Arthur's outbursts while we were hoeing: I didn't see why I should help him get his head into a noose. But Mary and Mrs Clarkson didn't need any help. Mary told how she thought Arthur had nearly blushed when she asked about Clarkson's stack, and whether it would be a full moon on Saturday, and so on. She ended up by asking Emily over to tea tomorrow night. Cripes!

Friday. We didn't get much work done today. I'm still finding it difficult to get up in the morning, and that means a late start. And then, shortly after dinner, Arthur started to get himself tidy, even going so far as to put on his best shoes about four o'clock. When undisturbed, he recites poetry to himself. He has a book of poetry in his room, and I think he hopes Emily may ask him for an item. Really, the change in the man is nauseating. Before I left for my holidays he was rushing around doing this and that, and getting quite resentful if I interrupted him. But now he is usually leaning on his hoe or his fork, reciting to himself, or walking into things. Unfortunately, we have a cow called Emily, and Arthur always milks it, and pats it when he has finished, and gives it extra handfuls of oats.

Emily arrived at about five o'clock and started to blush as soon as she got out of the car, and she has been blushing ever since. About every five minutes Mary says something which she thinks is coy, and sits them close together at the table, and so on. Cripes, women give me the creeps! But after tea, when Mary suggested I help her with the washing up, so as to leave them alone together, I struck. I know I'll get my ear well chewed tonight, but I'm not going to lose a good man without a fight. So I've been careful to keep a fatherly eye on the young couple all the evening, and I've just come in from escorting Emily to the car, much to Mary's disgust. I am now writing this before going to bed, where Mary is busy waiting for me. I know she is very cross, but, dash it all, I'm running a farm, not a matrimonial agency. I don't suppose I'll save Arthur permanently, but if I could only stave things off long enough to get my smithy cleaned up it would be something. But I'm not looking forward to tonight.