



DAVE'S DAIRY

The Adelaide Stock and Station Journal, 29 October 1945

Monday. We had about two and a half inches of rain all told last week and very nice it was, too. Our wheat crops were just coming out in ear and it suited them fine.

Last night Mary and I had an argument. We don't often have arguments: they are too one-sided to be so called. But on this occasion I felt I ought to at least take a definite stand, even though I realised from the beginning that I might just as well save my voice. This is how the trouble arose. Mary thought it was cold, so she lit a fire. I started to complain that some women thought a chap had nothing to do but cut wood. Mary said it was cold; I said it wasn't. Mary said: "Well if it isn't cold enough for a fire, it isn't too cold for you to wear shorts." I said I didn't have any. She said she had got a pair some time ago for me, and she went and got them. They looked awfully short, too. I said that I wouldn't be seen dead in them. She said that she had hidden my other working trousers, so I didn't have much choice. I said: "All right, you can have your wretched fire." But that didn't do any good and Mary made it quite plain that for some time she had been meaning to get me into shorts and if I was going to be mean enough to grudge my wife a bit of wood, then she was going to see that I wore them tomorrow. "It's either the shorts or your pyjama pants, Dave, and you can take your pick." I tried to imagine myself running around in my pyjama pants, with the children and the Italian grinning in the background and Clarkson popping over to give me some advice, and perhaps a traveller or two. No, I couldn't do it. So I lay awake half the night listening to the wind whistling over the roof and I couldn't help think that it was a definite conspiracy.

This morning dawned positively bleak. I thought Mary might relent at the last minute, but not a bit of it. "Now, don't make a fuss about it, Dave," she said severely. "You'll soon get used to it; and think of the trouble it will save me on washing day." I thought of this for a while, but it didn't make me any warmer. I sat shivering on the side of the bed for a while and then decided to stick to my pyjamas after all. But when I went outside the dogs started to bark and Italian burst out laughing. So I went inside and sat on the edge of the bed again. There seemed to be no way out, so I put the shorts on. By cripes, they were short!! I've often seen chaps who look quite nice and natural in shorts, but they've either worn them all their lives or they must have worn them in strict privacy until their legs browned up a bit. For it isn't the cold that worries me so much (and I'm not denying that that is bad enough) but it's the sight of my dead white legs that worries me most/ I've never realised they were so long. When I looked at myself in the mirror I couldn't help blushing and I watched that blush travel down to my toes.

Anyhow, I didn't think Mary would bring my breakfast in, and I was getting hungry, so I went into the kitchen. When Mary saw me she started to giggle and I think that that was most unkind. I have spent an awful day. I had meant to patch up the fence along the road, but wild horses wouldn't get me there today. I spent the day cutting wood in the back paddock, but it didn't seem very private. If I had brought my rifle I would have shot that laughing jack, but one thing I will say for these shorts: they keep you working. You have to, to keep warm.

Tuesday. I'd meant to do some harrowing today, as it's still too wet to cut silage, but it was too cold. Much too cold. I tried it for a while, then put the Italian on the tractor, and went

hoeing thistles to keep warm. Clarkson rang me up tonight and wanted to know what I'd been doing. "Oh, just hoeing thistles," I said. "But why weren't you driving the tractor and the Italian hoeing thistles?" he wanted to know. "Oh, I just like hoeing thistles," I lied. I suppose he thought I had gone off my nut. I asked him if he was worried about the silage in the pit getting wet. "Not worried about it getting wet, Dave, but worried about not being able to get some more weight on it." He seemed to think it might go mouldy if he didn't soon get some more weight on to exclude the air. But the wet wasn't worrying him at all. I couldn't help thinking I was a bit lucky not having actually made a start. The little bit I have cut won't matter.

Wednesday. We were able to start cutting silage again after dinner today. And everything went fine and I cut almost four balls of string. I still had to use the tractor, but will use the horses next time, now the crop is opened up. I tried to drive the tractor from the binder, so that the Italian could go on carting the stuff into the pit, but it was too hard to manage. There seemed to be ropes and levers as far as the eye could see. I felt like one of those professionals playing a pipe organ -you know, they play with two feet, play three layers of keys at once with their hands and pull stops in and out with their teeth. So after a round I got the Italian back on the tractor again and the afternoon passed pleasantly enough. This ensilage is quite a nice job. All we have to do now is to cart the stuff in tomorrow.

Thursday. Cripes! I think I'll shear some lambs tomorrow for light relaxation. We started off this morning, with the two of us carting with the spring trolley. It was a nice, fresh morning and I had a couple of nice new forks and everything was set for a good day's work. By cripes, those sheaves! There ought to be some other way of getting them up on the trolley besides using a fork. A travelling crane would do fine. One thing, I am quite looking forward to carting hay after carting silage for a while.

Anyhow, we got ten trolley loads into the pit today. It was not a slow job, as two chaps can load the trolley from the ground all right without having anyone up on the top, and that saves a lot of time. And, of course, there's no stooking to be done. And when we were unloading we both pitched off, and that saves time as compared to hay, when you have to have a man building. So it's quite a quick way of handling sheaves; but cripes, they were heavy!

Towards evening I felt I really ought to have a look around the sheep, so I left the Italian to get on by himself. When I came back I found he'd taken the horses out of the trolley and had put leading harness on them and had gone out to the paddock and was dragging the sheaves in, four at a time, with a long chain/ We've carted about two balls of twine today so there's plenty left for tomorrow. Perhaps they will be lighter tomorrow; they might dry out a bit.

Friday. But they didn't -not at all. I would have found it hard to get started because this morning was so nippy, but in shorts I just had to get moving to get the legs warm. We kept at it all day and by this evening had all of what was cut carted in and the pit was filled up to the top. So I rang Clarkson and told him I had finished and what was I to do now? He sneered. He said I had to make it as high above the ground as the pit was deep, to allow for settling and that would take longer than I thought. So it looks like cutting some more tomorrow; but I must take care that I don't cut more than I can cart tomorrow, because it might get too dry over the weekend. So tomorrow afternoon when all the stock agents are at the races and all the tramway chaps are on strike, and most of the people are sunning themselves on their front lawns, and all the social reformers are thinking about 36-hour weeks, do you know what I will be doing? Carting in sheaves of silage to please Clarkson.