



DAVE'S DAIRY

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Monday. I saw a sheep lying down to-day. I thought there must be something wrong with her, but when I got close she got up and ran away. Evidently she was just full of feed. That's the first time I've seen a sheep lying down for a long while, except from weakness. I think I will erect a little monument on the place where she was lying.

I thought I'd better give the bank manager a ring today about my account, before he had time to forget the pleasant time we had together on VP Day. _ut he'd already forgotten -or said he had.

Tuesday. You remember some weeks ago I was telling you how Bill Smith was rearing his pet lambs on his cows. Well, I was down there today and he has thirteen lambs on two cows, all doing well. But the strange thing is that one cow has adopted one big ram lamb just as if it were her calf and if she loses it she goes around bellowing. The lamb sleeps with her and if it wants a drink it paws her till she gets up and obliges. After the big lamb has filled up, the cow lets any of the other lambs have a drink. Today Bill Smith decided he would shift the two cows and the lambs away from the house, so I saw one cow with 12 lambs, and one cow with one lamb, being driven out to the paddock. But the lambs could not remember seeing sheep before, and when they reached the flock they were terrified and ran to the cows for protection. This may sound a bit steep to those who have not seen it, but it's a fact, all the same.

Thursday. Clarkson has a friend from the south-east district staying with him. They must be having a crook time down there. I think they've only had about eighteen or nineteen inches of rain this year, and the feed is only about a foot high and they haven't had any rain for almost a week. This friend of Clarkson's was saying that all their sheep would die if it didn't rain the day after next and things were really serious. There's no doubt that those chaps down there have a lot to put up with.

Friday. Clarkson told me yesterday that he was expecting the Soil Conservator (Mr Herriot) up today, and he'd bring him over after dinner. So I spent part of the morning practising what I would say to him. I was going to point out that the farm belonged to me (or, at least, to the bank manager and me) and I would treat it as I liked. I wasn't going to be rude to the chap, but all the same, I was going to make it pretty plain that I didn't hold with these new-fangled ideas about soil erosion.

After dinner I walked across to meet Clarkson and Mr Herriot as they walked across Clarkson's flat paddock, having a look at the damage that had been done. Mr Herriot gave me the impression that he was real pleased to see me -in fact, had been waiting to meet me for years. And how was the family? And wasn't the weather a cow? And what a fine-looking dog. Before long I found myself thinking that he wasn't a bad kind of a coot. Then we wandered around Clarkson's flat and my bare hill where the water runs from and we talked about this and that, and Mr Herriot was always asking my opinion in the most pleasant way, and before long I was calling him Bob and he was calling me Dave. Then a dreamy look came into his eye and he started talking about whether I thought any of the boys were going

to be farmers. I said I thought they wouldn't have enough brains to be anything else. Then he kind of suggested that we parents (and he's a father too) had a duty to our children, and (I suppose you'd say, Dave, old chap, that your duty to your children would be to leave your farm in good order, so your kids would have a chance." Of course, when he put it like that I had to agree. Then he got talking about how some farmers didn't seem to have my ability to see things in that light, and how some were selfish and others were ignorant. I felt quite indignant with them. After a while I asked him in to lunch and he got talking to Mary about scones and kids and had a cup of tea in the kitchen and played with the kids. Mary was fairly purring. Then he said, "That's rather a bare hill over by Clarkson's, Dave. You ought to be able to grow more on it than you are doing." I said I had been meaning to do something about it for years, but didn't know how to start. So we walked back over it, and scratched around to see how deep the soil was, and then he said he must be going. So I asked him to come back soon and we'd have another yarn about it after he'd had time to have a think over the problem.

All this time Clarkson had been keeping well in the background, which was just as well, because I didn't want him putting his bib in. But he didn't seem at all surprised about how things were going. I have an idea something like this happened to him once.

Anyhow, old Bob is going to come back soon and we are going to draw up a plan (*that* will make Grandpa happy) to stop the water running off that bare hill on to Clarkson's flat.

So I went home fairly oozing virtue and patted the kids' heads, and told them I was going to see that they got a decent chance. And Mary said, "What a nice man, Dave, and so fond of children, too. I hope you're going to do what he says."