



DAVE'S DAIRY

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Monday. We were supposed to start shearing today, but the showery weather has held the shearer up and it seems it'll be a few days yet before he gets here. So I started fallowing. Cuss Clarkson! Everyone's been ploughing away merrily for a month or so and I can't wait any longer. But the paddock I started on is fairly soft and pliable, so I didn't plough it, but went straight in with the cultivator and it worked very well.

It's always a bit of a job to know what to do with the Italian when I'm tied to a job that only takes one, like cultivating. He isn't so bad when you are with him all the time, but when you leave him to work by himself he either gets the sulks because he's doing two men's' work, or he plays around and does nothing. So I put him scraping the paths in Mary's garden. He'll be all right there: I know from experience it won't do him any good getting the sulks with Mary and if he can escape doing a good day's work in the garden under Mary's eagle eye - well, I'd like to know how it's done.

Wednesday. I had to go into town today to get Mary's sister, Ellen. Rather a nice girl, Ellen, but whenever she comes to stay at our place Mary always gets dissatisfied. The trouble is that Ellen is married to a clerk in a stock agent's office, who works from 9 till 5. And they have a nice home with all the extras. You know -a washing machine, refrigerator, electric sweeper, and all that. And Ellen always looks nice and fresh (you know what I mean), with her nails painted and hair permed. I must admit she doesn't try to put on any dog, but all the same, she and Mary are soon whispering in corners and Mary starts to get irritable and when I take Ellen away in a week's time I know what will happen. It has happened before and I can see it's going to happen again: Mary will start a campaign. I'll find her quietly crying into her apron and when I try to comfort her she will say, "Go away! You don't care what happens to me. You don't mind if I have to slave away all day and night. You don't mind if I wear my fingers to the bone washing, sweeping and cooking. You're not like Ellen's husband, who gives her everything. I don't have any conveniences, any comforts, or any consideration. No wonder I look worn out/ I suppose everyone's saying, 'Poor Mary, married to a brute like Dave.' I don't know why I married you, you brute!"

So I will go and think things over in the grain room. She'll get over it before long, so I don't worry over much. But all the same there is a fair bit in what she says. She doesn't have much fun compared to Ellen. Still, she gets plenty of cream.

Thursday. Bob Herriot called in again today and he had another look at my bare hill. You remember that I said it was too stony to cultivate. It's not stony all over, but has ridges of stone too close together for easy working. Well, we decided that I would sow with grasses the country that I could get a combine over properly, which would be some time next year. We would run a series of contour furrows around the hill to stop the water running off. I wasn't quite sure what contour furrows were, but didn't like to tell Mr Herriot this, so waited till this evening and rang Clarkson and he said that they were just single plough furrows ploughed around the hill on the level. Then Mr Herriot said that I ought to be prepared to top-dress the pasture every year and that he thought he could help me to get an allotment of super for this. I started to tell him that I didn't hold with putting super on top of the ground; it should

be put in the ground. But just as I was getting my argument going Mr Herriot said. (Yes, it's funny the ideas some of those old-fashioned farmers had." That rather knocked me, so I just gave in quietly. Then we started talking about what kind of pasture we ought to plant. He kept asking me what I thought, which was rather awkward because the only grass I know well is barley grass, because its seeds stick in my socks in the late spring. I said, after a bit of pressing, that I always thought that lucerne would do well in the district. That isn't quite true, because Clarkson has been trying to get me to sow lucerne for years, but I've always said that mine was a wheat farm. But I couldn't very well say, "What about sowing some barley grass?" to Mr Herriot, could I? He thought that we could try some lucerne, but it ought to be sown in the spring, because of the lucerne flea, and it was too late to prepare the ground for lucerne this year. Anyhow, we decided to cultivate up the arable portions to be ready to sow some grasses next autumn, and in the meantime he will do some more thinking. He's a terrible bloke for "thinking." I don't hold with too much of it myself.

Then we went in and had some afternoon tea. He'd remembered the names of the kids, so Mary fairly plied him with hot scones. Then he told Mary all about what we were going to do. Mary tried to look intelligent and said that we ought to ask her cousin, young Fred, who's studying agricultural science at the University, to come up for his holidays and he might be able to teach me a bit about grasses. That's the last straw. Young Freddie! Cripes, he's only about 19, and now he's coming up to help me run the farm! At present I've got Mary, Clarkson, the bank manager, my new book, Mr McLachlan, Bob Herriot and Grandpa all helping me and now I'm going to have young Freddie. Cripes!