



DAVE'S DAIRY

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Monday. Today was the first day of our two week's holiday. We had intended to get away in decent time so that we could get to our boarding-house for the first night. But things didn't go exactly according to plan and we had the usual troubles of all families going for holidays: a flat tyre, straps that couldn't be found and cases that would not lock, and kids whimpering: 'When are we going to the beach, Daddy?' or 'Where did you put my bucket?' And Arthur standing around all the while with a mournful air, as much as to say, "No good will come of this." At last we got as far as the gate, and then Mary remembered her ration books and as we went back for these I told her a few home truths about the forgetfulness of women. But we found them at last, and set off again, and got two miles this time, and then I remembered I had forgotten my wallet. When I turned the car round this time there was a concerted howl from all the kids, "When are we going to the beach?" Mary didn't say much, but her lips shut in the thin line that means trouble ahead.

On my way through the township I made rather a skilful manoeuvre to avoid the bank manager, but ran straight into the carrier, who hadn't been paid for the wheat carting. It was rather a critical moment, but it passed off all right. When we reached Adelaide we found that everybody was having another holiday. It made me quite indignant, especially as I wanted to go straight on to the beach, but Mary flatly refused, because she wanted to buy some bathers. I told her that she could probably get a pair down at the beach; but she went off the handle at that, and said that Mrs Clarkson had got a pair of really fashionable ones and she couldn't see why she couldn't have a pair, too, just because I was too old-fashioned to grow mustard.

So we went and dumped ourselves on Grandpa, and the kids have been whimpering all the evening, "When are we going to the beach?" And it looks as if we will have to sleep on the floor. But that's not the worst. I know I'm going to have a sleepless night, not because of the hard floor, but because I know I will be worrying all night about the kind of bathers Mary will buy. She has a determined look in her eye which I don't like. I will see if I can reason with her during the still watches.

Tuesday. We have got to the boarding-house at the beach, all right, but there's a lot to tell about before we finally got here. I mentioned in last night's diary something about "still watches of the night." That was a mistake -there weren't any! Firstly, I had to undergo a prolonged catechism from Grandpa as to "whether I had taken any definite steps to improve the standard of efficiency of our establishment." Then, when Mary and I did get bedded down on the floor, the kids kept creeping out, wanting to know "When are we going to the beach?"

In between-times I seized the opportunity to gently question Mary about the exact nature of the bathers she intended to buy in the morning. She said she intended to buy something really smart. I broke into a cold sweat at this, because Mary has been very interested in Cynthia Harding's little lectures on bathing costumes; and then she had caught me kind of staring at that pair in the "lingerie department" of that city store before Christmas, so I had an idea what she intended to buy. So I said, "Yes, dear; get something really pretty. Purple, with orange spots and pink stripes would be rather nice." "Oh, it doesn't matter about the colour," she said "The colour doesn't worry me. It probably won't be noticed, anyhow. It's the shape I'm

worrying about."

I didn't tell her it was the shape, or her shape, that was worrying me, too; but in what I thought was rather a tactful manner, I warned her about sunburn, and how one's figure deteriorated with passing years. But I shouldn't have said that; I realise now it was foolish of me. She snapped out that her figure was quite all right (really). I said: "I think it's charming, but -all the same, four children, you know, dear." "That's just like you men, Dave," she replied. "You think because your wife has had four children she hasn't got a figure. I'll show you!" I said that I didn't object to her showing me, but she really shouldn't show everyone else. "Not with four children, you know, dear." "Don't keep harping on those four children," she snapped. "For goodness' sake go to sleep." The boards creaked as she turned over, but I didn't sleep much.

At about four in the morning we were woken by sundry kids wandering about wanting to know when they were going to the beach. So we had an early breakfast and got into the car and drove into the city and waited about an hour for the shops to open. Then Mary marched aggressively in, and soon came out with a tiny parcel hanging from her little finger. "Did you get a nice hanky, love?" I asked. "Don't be silly, Dave," she said. "That's my bathers." "Cripes!" I thought.

Then we set out down to the beach. When we got there the kids wanted to go straight down for a swim. "I'll go down and look after them, Mary," I said. "You have a lie down; you must be tired." But that didn't work, and she said that she was coming for a swim, too. So I hurried the kids and myself into our bathers and we were swimming before Mary came down, wearing her dressing gown. When she took it off I dived to cover my embarrassment, and I stopped under as long as I could, but I had to come up some time. When I did so everyone around me was staring at Mary as she gaily tripped (as she thought) down to the water. So I dived again. When she had floundered about for a while she went out to lie on the sand, and I was just going up to cover her with a towel when I thought that perhaps if she got sunburnt it might end my worries. So I left her lying, and swam about vigorously, diving whenever I had breath. When we went in to lunch I noticed she looked to be glowing a bit, but when she asked me if she looked burnt, I said I thought she was going a very nice brown, and would be lovely by this evening.

So we continued the sunburn treatment all the afternoon. Every now and again Mary would ask me if she was getting burnt, and each time I told her she was going a lovely brown. About five in the afternoon she started to get a bit sore, but again I assured her that she was quite all right. When we started to get changed for tea, I could see that I would have no more trouble. By nine o'clock she was fairly sizzling, and I fussed around, rubbing the old girl with various ointments, and trying not to hurt her – much.

Wednesday. I spent last night on the floor again, and I couldn't help thinking of our nice comfortable bed at home. But it was really more restful on the floor. Every time I moved in bed Mary would squeal and groan. Today the kids and I swam and sun-bathed all day, but Mary spent all day in bed. I was sorry for her in a kind of a way. Every time she turned over she would yelp, and as soon as I came in the front door she would start telling me to be careful.

Thursday. I slept on the floor again last night, as Mary is very touchy indeed. I'm getting used to the floor now, but all the same, I had rather a nasty nightmare about white whales being stranded on the beach, with red ribbon tied round them occasionally.

Today I spent lying on the sand or swimming in the water. When I was lying on the sand I would lie on my tummy, and breathe in and breathe out, breathe in, breathe out; then lie on my back and breathe in, breathe out for a bit; then lie on one side and breathe in, breathe out for a while; then turn over on the other side and breathe in, breathe out. It was very pleasant. Sometimes I would think of Arthur at home working, and I felt better still. Occasionally I would think of what Clarkson would be doing, and this was not so nice, so I didn't think of it much. Every now and again I would rub the sand out of my eyes, and sit up and look around me. But not for long. There were some nice little things on the beach in extra dashing bathers, but I didn't look. I would think of poor old Mary writhing about in bed, and I didn't have the heart. Poor old girl! All the same, some of them did look very pleasant. It's a good job I'm so loyal to Mary.

Friday. Mary was able to wear some clothes today, so she came and sat down and watched us swimming. But there was no mention of her having a swim. Every now and again she would give a twitch when a fly alighted on her shoulder, but she is not suffering extra much. But I don't think there will be any talk of swimming for some time. Poor old girl!