



DAVE'S DAIRY

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Monday. -Still doesn't even look like rain. I spent a good bit of the day training my new sheep dog. For many years I've had an old dog that was really good with the children, fighting other dogs, chasing rabbits and barking at travellers and saluting their car wheels. But for helping me with the sheep he just wasn't any good at all. He meant well; you could tell that, but he thought he knew much more about things than I did so he just did as he felt inclined. A while back I was over at Clarkson's getting some of my sheep and my dog gave what he thought was a real exhibition. Clarkson watched for a while, till he could bear it no longer. "Look here, Dave, (he said, (I'll give you a good pup if you promise to train him decently, keep the kids from spoiling him and not let him out with that such-and-such dog of yours."

So about a month ago I went and got the pup. It's a well-bred border collie and looks all right. Clarkson gave me a real lecture on training dogs and then I read the subject up in my new book and then Mary told me how her father used to do it, so I had everything all ready for the dog this morning. I thought for a while it would be easier to teach the dog to read and let him read the book.

I only tried to teach him two things today: to "sit," and "come here." It wasn't hard, either. I'd push him down firmly with one hand when I said "sit," and hold the other hand up like Adolf. It didn't take him long to get the idea, and after a few lessons he would sit while I backed away a yard or so/ Then I'd call him "here," and give him a few scraps of meat to encourage him. I didn't keep on long enough for him to get sick of things, but he ended up the day with a very fair idea of what "sit" and "come here" means/ I'll let you know how he gets on with his other lessons. I call him Squatter because he's so good at it.

Wednesday. Gosh, what a life! A cold east wind that never brings rain! There's no doubt that we are getting it in the neck this time. A lot of us are taking a bad knock financially, after climbing laboriously out of the morass for a few years. And that's bad enough. But what really gets on a chap's nerves is seeing the stock going around hungry. Every time I go out in the dray I'm followed by a mob of hungry animals, and, believe me, it knocks the heart of a man. The wheat ration is cut, the chaff ration is cut and I can't buy anything else, even if I had the spare cash. And the paddocks are as bare as a board.

It's in times like these that a chap begins to get bitter. I know it's my fault to some extent, for not having more fodder on hand. And I know, too, that it's no one's fault that the chaff and wheat ration have to be cut. There simply isn't enough for everyone. But there are things that could be helped. There seems to be a lot of race-horses running every Saturday, and they seem to have plenty of strength left. And barley is still being made into beer. Now, I like beer -really like it. All the same, it seems to me that there are better things we could be doing with our barley these times than turning it into beer. And I guess no one who has starving stock on his property would disagree with me. What kind of a people are we if we cannot go without our beer at a time like this, with our stock starving and the produce from our stock wanted so badly?

Thursday. I always seem to do the wrong thing, or sometimes the right thing at the wrong

time. A while back I made a song about the way I got rid of the rabbits, and now here I am without a killable sheep on the place, and hardly any rabbits. To-day Mary said that we were out of meat, and please don't kill another sheep like the last one. So I thought I would try to get a bunny and wandered around all afternoon, and didn't even get a shot. Still, I suppose the rabbits would have been about as lean as the few wethers I have left.

Friday. Mary's parents came up from Adelaide this morning. My father-in-law, usually called "Grandpa," works in a Government office in the city, where everything is done in exactly the right way on every occasion; where every man may expect to be head of the department later on – provided he lives long enough – and where there's no bustle, no hurry and no unforeseen circumstances. I know he tries to be helpful when he comes up on the farm. He knows that things aren't going too well, but he doesn't want to "rouse" at me. I suppose he knows it won't do any good, anyhow. All the same, I suppose he thinks he is only doing his duty by his daughter by giving me (tactfully) the benefit of his experience as a business manager. He always speaks with that dignified diction used by civil servants, and when he is talking to me I unconsciously try to copy him. If he stays up here long this should have a most beneficent effect on the form and style of this daily bulletin (gosh, it's working already!). Anyhow, this afternoon he had a look around the farm, and after tea "felt impelled to make a few observations as to improving the efficiency and output of this small portion of that great industry, primary production." So we all settled down, "Grandma" hopefully knitting small garments, Mary darning socks, and "Grandpa" leaning back in the best chair.

That hurdle over, "Grandpa" let himself go on his favourite subject, efficiency. "You should endeavour," says he, "to draw up at the beginning of every week a set programme of work to be followed for the said week. You will then find," he says, settling deeper into his chair, "that you will be prepared for eventualities as they arise, that the staff (meaning the Italian POW) will be cognisant of the tasks to be assigned to them, and you will find that you will be able to accomplish more work with the expenditure of less effort". I "concurred".

At this moment the Italian rushed in, saying that the red sow was having piglets. So I wandered around with the lantern till I saw that she was comfortable and that Grandpa had retired for the night, or "gone to bed," as we say up here.