



## DAVE'S DAIRY

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It was a queer feeling, getting back here again. Everything looked very dry after the Eastern States but still, S.A. will do me. Harold seemed very glad to see Mary again as I think he hadn't much time for cooking. But I'm not sure about me; he kept asking if I had enjoyed myself and he hoped I would be able to go away again before long. When I had a look around next morning I could see what he had in mind. The oaten straw was all stacked up, and there's just about the right amount of straw cover left on the paddock to allow the clover to grow, when it rains. The blacksmith's shop had been cleared out, and shelves made for everything, and a big notice printed on the wall, "Please be tidy". I was very glad to see the "please" there. Everything around the place had been tidied up, and Harold was going around with the smug look of a dog that has just buried a bone. I know I should be glad the boy is taking an interest in things, and I know too, that I would not like him to turn out like me. But all the same it's not very pleasant to feel that Harold disapproves of so much of what I do, or rather, what I don't do.

I have been going around quite nervously during the week, trying to find where things are now kept without having to ask him, and desperately trying not to leave things lying around. But the habits of years are not easy to break. And I can see that Mary is quite definitely on Harold's side, and that hurts. If only they wouldn't whisper together.

I rang the bank manager on Monday morning at 9 sharp and reported back. Then I waded through the two weeks' mail, and put all the accounts firmly away in a drawer to let them mature. There wasn't much else except right in the bottom of the pile I came across a statistical form. This is an annual inquisition which comes at this time every year, and on which I am supposed to tell the statistician chappie how many fowls I have; how many lb of butter I made; how many cwt of super I used and how many lb of wool the lambs cut, and so on. All kinds of searching, intimate questions; the answer to which I just haven't the faintest idea. I really hate that form. If I were to fill it in properly it would leave me no time to fit the year's crop in, and yet Clarkson says that I should fill it in carefully because the whole economy of Australia depends on having accurate statistics, and anyhow, he says if I were to keep a proper set of books it would be no trouble. Anyhow, I shoved the form away underneath the accounts and hoped that eventually it would get done, and went sorrowfully forth to face the week feeling as if I really needed a fortnight's holiday to give me strength to carry on.

Harold has been on to me to let him start feeding the sheep, particularly the Merino weaners. He's read an article in the *Journal of Agriculture* about how much better weaners grow if they get some oats during the autumn, and he carries this article about in his pocket and at almost every meal he smooths it out and reads it to me. I suppose he's right. I know I always start to feed the sheep about a month too late, and once they get down in condition, it takes a lot of feed to pick them up. So eventually I gave in and he is giving the weaners one pound of oats every second day to start with and soon will be giving them two pounds of oats twice a week, once they get used to it.

I rang Clarkson and told him what I had done and he was very pleased with me and told me

I had made a very wise decision. This made me feel very pleased with myself, so I rang the bank manager and told him, too, because I wanted to feel even better. The rest of the time I've been trying to get everything ready for shearing, which will start next Monday.

Clarkson has had the week at home as Parliament is not sitting this week and, as he knew that his shearing would start last Monday, he'd organised everything so it would go smoothly without him. Then he found he was home for the week, and he was very pleased because he loves messing about with wool. But he soon found that he was only in the way in the shed, and that his men felt that they could manage quite well without him. So he has to sit around and read articles about wool marketing and the banking bills. They let him bring the lunches down but even then he has to listen to speeches by the shearers about parliamentary salaries. I must admit I sympathise with the poor old coot.