



## DAVE'S DAIRY

*The Adelaide Stock and Station Journal, 25 December 1945*

**Christmas Day.** I had to do the Father Christmas act last night. Mary always says that I am about as light-footed as an elephant at play. I don't know about that, but I do know that on Christmas Eve every board in the house squeaked, and as I was hanging up a stocking on the oldest boy's bed, he sat up and said; "What's in it, Dave?" Mary's always trying to stop him calling me Dave.

The kids woke up about four and began blowing trumpets, eating lollies and winding up toys, so Mary and I got up in desperation and opened our stockings. Of course, we don't believe in Father Christmas any more, but we still put one another's presents in stockings. It's so much fun for the kids, and I must admit it seems more exciting getting presents out of stockings than off the breakfast table.

Now, I must admit that I'd had rather a restless night. In the first place, there was my natural anxiety about Mary's presents. Notice the plural. You remember my last week's trouble. Well, we have a very fatherly old storekeeper in our town, and everyone takes all their troubles to him. So I went down and told him all about it -how Mary would react if I didn't give her something which I could say I had bought up in the "Lonjeray department." When I had explained it all to him he said: "They're unreasonable beggars, aren't they, Dave? Still, I think I can help you out." And he fished around and found a red flannel nightgown. At least, that's what he said it was. It looked rather like a cow rug to me. I said it looked rather hot, didn't it? "Oh, no!" he said. "My wife wears nothing else. Not for fifty years." I said that I didn't think anything else would be necessary. But I ended up by buying it: on Christmas Eve I couldn't help worrying about it. Mary hates me giving her things too big for her. She says I'm just being sarcastic. And it did look a bit like a cow rug.

I lay awake worrying lest Mary failed to recognise the "class" of the picture I wrote about last week.

And my third worry was this -and I hardly like to write about it. I know it was silly of me, and I didn't really expect it, but I couldn't help hoping (just hoping) that by some means or other (I wasn't sure how) I would find in the bottom of my stocking a barley quota.

So you can imagine that I was more than usually excited when Mary started to open her stocking. She soon came to the nightgown. She was so relieved to find something of that nature that she didn't mind it being a bit large, and said it would be nice in the winter. Of course, the picture wouldn't go in the stocking, but she soon found it "You nice boy, Dave," she said. "I think it's lovely. It seems different to other pictures." "That is because it has class," I explained and I thought how pleased the old chap who sold it to me would be.

Then I started on my presents. Mary gave me a lovely green helmet -a "pith" helmet, I think it was called. There were a few other odds and ends and right down at the bottom of the stocking was something hard. "Now, don't get excited, Dave," I said to myself. "It's probably only a box of handkerchiefs." All the same, it was the kind of shape you would expect a barley quota to be. But when I got it out it was only handkerchiefs. This afternoon we had a

picnic. It was very hot and dusty. The Clarkson family and several other families were there, too. Clarkson brought his knapsack spray along with him and dumped it down in a prominent position. Of course, I had to wear my new pith helmet and my shorts, and everyone tried to be funny about lions and Dr Livingstone and where did I leave my camel, and so on. But when anyone asked what kind of a hat it really was, I said it was just a helmet.

Wednesday. -It was too cold and wet to reap this morning, which was a good thing, because I didn't feel too sprightly. I thought it was a good chance to catch up with my correspondence. There are some lovely Christmas cards from people I have forgotten all about. Like the one Mary got from Mr Herriot. Mary was telling me I ought to be doing something about that bare paddock. Cripes, in the middle of harvest! And I've been worrying about that letter from Mr Pig Adviser. But Mary is quite firm in the matter so I got her to write the reply. Here it is:

Dear Mr Pig Adviser, David tells me that I ought to answer your letter about him keeping more pigs because he can't get a barley quota, because it is really due to me that he doesn't keep any more sows. I think it was very nice of you to write to David about it, and it is really remarkable how kind people are to him. I don't think he is really quite grateful enough for all the good advice he gets from Clarkson, the bank manager, Grandpa, Mr McLachlan, and his new book, not to mention any poor efforts of mine. People really go to a lot of trouble over him. But all the same, he's not allowed to keep any more sows. I've told him that quite definitely. And you have only to pay a visit to our place to see why. Here I am, nurturing a small patch of lettuces to my bosom (so to speak), and then, over the fence is the red sow, walking patiently up and down the very flimsy fence, just waiting for those lettuces to mature. And I'm about resigned to her getting them in the end -that is what makes me so furious. Well, what would life be like with twenty sows?

I am sorry to have to talk like this, Mr Pig Adviser. I am very keen for David to do what he is told, but not twenty sows! I couldn't bear it!

Yours truly, MARY.