



## DAVE'S DAIRY

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We have spent all this week shearing. The shearers came on Monday in their great, black, shining car and they spent quite a while leaning on the catching pen, criticising the sheep, the shed, the weather, the politicians and everything else they could think of. I gather that they thought my sheep were about the roughest lot of sheep they had seen for many years. ("And they'll probably kick, too" they said. Then they thought it would be a good idea if the shed were to get burnt down so I could build a decent one. Then they thought it was really too hot to work so they talked about how easily politicians got their money. Young Harold got quite worried because he thought they weren't going to start at all, but I told him that these preliminaries were absolutely necessary before a shearer could start in a shed; they simply have to get it off their chest.

I don't know why this always has to be; perhaps it has something to do with having their heads down and their tails up most of the time. Anyhow, eventually they got started and things went quite well. The sheep had a lot of wool on this year and the wool was stronger than usual. There was quite a bit of clover burr on the wool and some barley grass, but generally it was quite satisfactory. I wanted to start the bale numbers at bale number 11 because I thought it would make a good impression on the bank manager if he happened to see bale number 46 (instead of 36) on the truck if I happened to pull up outside the bank. But Harold said that was a bit silly.

Things are always very hectic at shearing time, as you all know. One morning the engine wouldn't start and the shearers were all for me buying a new one. The wool classing is always a worry to me. I started off all right but towards the end of the first day I found that the lines had started "to drift" and Harold became a bit critical and started taking the fleeces out of the bin where I'd placed them, and asking me if I was sure that this one ought to be there. I tried to explain what was trying to do but I didn't convince myself, let alone anyone else.

The second day Harold suggested that perhaps it was a bit difficult for me to see without my glasses and perhaps it might be better if he did it himself and I did the picking up. And so that's what we did, and I went back to dashing up and down the board, and bending down and picking up the fleeces and getting knocked over by the shearers, while Harold did the classing/ I suppose I'll just have to get used to this kind of thing. And it doesn't seem to be very long since I was trying to get my poor old Dad out of the classing because I was sure I could do it better than he could. We finished up on Friday afternoon and the worst part of it was paying the shearers. It's not so much that I grudge them the money. I used to, but not since the year when I decided to do the shearing myself to save money/ I've never quite recovered from that awful experience. What I hate most is having to do all that arithmetic in full view of everyone. It's not so bad if I can lie down but you can't do that with everyone watching. It wouldn't be so bad if people didn't add up over my shoulder, out loud too. I hope we eventually got it right.