



DAVE'S DAIRY

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Monday. I was lucky, in a way, not to get any cold wet weather after shearing, because the ewes are not any too fat. All the same, we could do with rain now. The feed and crops have grown really well but they seem to be slipping a bit now.

I have to go to town tomorrow for the Bureau congress, so I've been giving the Italian a list of jobs to do while I'm away. I don't suppose he will do many of them. Mary's sister Ellen is going to stay up and look after the kids and Mary is going with me. She's now trying to pansy herself up, with Ellen's assistance. She's trying to make Mary's fingernails red. It looks rather weird to me. I told her it looks as if she had just finished skinning some beetroot, but you know what women are.

I have just finished jollyng up my moustache. I must admit that growing a decent moustache isn't as easy as you might think. It grew all right for a week or two, then it seemed to stop and then, as I was afraid it would, it began to droop at the ends. I tried rubbing super in and it seemed better. On Sunday I was comparing it with Clarkson's and I must admit that his has a much more robust appearance. So tonight I pruned mine back hard, and really it looks quite smart. Mary and I ought to be quite a handsome couple tomorrow. We're staying at an hotel right in the city, so we want to look at our best.

Tuesday. We caught the train all right, but it was a bit of a bustle. We had to go round the back way because I didn't want to run into the bank manager. The station-master seemed rather suspicious when I handed him my rail warrant. He examined it very carefully and then said: "I suppose it's all right." He didn't seem at all impressed with my importance. Of course, I had to pay for Mary because she wasn't a delegate. It was a bit awkward. You see I, being a delegate, had a first-class train ticket given me, but I didn't feel like paying for a first class ticket for Mary; but when I boarded we ended up both going second, which seemed a pity because I have never travelled first class and now here I was travelling second class on a first class ticket. Anyhow, we both got seats. But after a while I noticed Mary was getting red in the face and sitting up very straight, in a most uncomfortable looking way. I said to her, "Why don't you sit back, dear and be comfortable?" She just glared at me. I could see she was upset about something, so I tried to humour the old girl and told her she seemed to be losing weight. She smiled at that, in a crooked kind of way. But when I asked her if she had a stomach-ache or something she said, "For goodness sake keep quiet, Dave, and look out the window."

Anyhow, we got down all right, and found the hotel and had tea and then went round to the Bonython Hall for the Congress. It was quite interesting. The only trouble was Clarkson sitting up on the platform with the snobs, fingering his moustache. The seats began to get hard later on, and Mary was creaking about all the evening.

Wednesday. Mary made me leave my boots outside in the passage last night. I thought it was pretty risky, but I suppose the room was rather stuffy. But this morning, when I was getting dressed, I heard footsteps outside, so looked out just in time to see a laddie just picking up my boots. I said to him, "Eh, you can't do that to me, my lad. You leave my blinking boots alone." I suppose he thought I was a bit soft just because I come from the country, but he

knows better now.

Then I finished dressing and went downstairs, but there didn't seem to be anybody about, only a chap sweeping the floor. I asked him if everyone was at breakfast. "Cripes," he said, "breakfast won't be for two hours yet/(I said, "Well, do you want a hand with the cows?" But he didn't seem to know which cows I meant.

On my way back to the room to tell Mary she needn't get up for a while yet I noticed that everyone had their shoes outside in the passage; then I saw the same fellow trying to pinch another pair. I yelled out at him and must have woken the occupant of the room, a pretty little thing who peeped out and wanted to know what the trouble was. I told her that a chap was trying to steal her boots. She seemed rather puzzled. Then I told her how I had come down to hear Clarkson and how they hadn't even milked yet and I was just going to say that she had better go back to bed before she got cold, because she wasn't very warmly clad, when I heard well-known footsteps padding down the passage. I explained things to Mary as well as I could, but I could tell she didn't believe me.

Anyhow, after breakfast I did some shopping and then went up to the Congress again to hear Clarkson. Of course, I've told you all about the Clarkson Plan before, so won't go through it all again. Clarkson has a really admirable habit, when he's talking, of taking his glasses off and putting them on and taking them off again that is really most impressive. That and his moustache carried him through. But I have an uneasy feeling that a lot of the delegates were not sure what they were voting for.

Thursday. The hall where they hold the Congress is evidently very bad for acoustics, which means it is hard to hear. So they had loudspeakers and there were microphones installed; one up on the platform and another in the body of the hall. Of course, a lot of us aren't used to speaking into these things. Some of the chaps were really intrigued with them and used to come and speak into them every chance they could get. I tried once. I was supposed to be seconding a resolution, but the sound of my voice coming out so loud upset me, so instead of seconding the resolution I found myself saying, "It gives me very much pleasure to second the vote of thanks." I didn't try again. A chap called Angove gave a very interesting talk on "Weeds," and he seemed to know what he was talking about. He compared the Noxious Weeds Acts of Victoria and South Australia, but he didn't say what I thought he was going to say: that the Victorian Act is much better than ours. I always think it's ridiculous to expect our district council to get rid of weeds, especially since a lot of the councillors seem to be the worst offenders. The trouble is the Act cannot be enforced as it stands, because it would cost more to get rid of the weeds on a lot of farms than the land is worth.

Friday. All the delegates went out to the Waite Institute today. This is where young Freddie, Mary's cousin, studies agricultural science. He took me under his wing today and really, he's not a bad little fellow, although he has a rather patronising manner. He said such a lot of things that I cannot remember them all, but what I remember best is how good a crop of wheat they grow after peas. Freddie seemed to think there was a moral in this for me, and we saw those pasture plots where they are testing out the effect of rotational grazing. It sounded most impressive, but I have an uneasy feeling that it can't be true, somehow. But we saw such a lot of things so quickly that my mind got in a whirl. I'm going to go back there one day by myself and have a quiet look round. I had to leave in rather a hurry to catch our train.

We had quite a good trip home. Mary seemed much more comfortable going home. When I remarked on this she said she'd got a new pair, and they were much more comfortable.