



## DAVE'S DAIRY

*The Adelaide Stock and Station Journal, 28 November 1945*

**Monday.** I've been wondering about selling my lambs. There are about a hundred of them and they look pretty good. I don't like to unload them in one lot for fear of flooding the market. I was telling the local stock agent about this, so he said he'd bring a buyer out. So they rang up last night, and came out today. I rang Clarkson last night when I knew they were coming, to find out how much I ought to put on my lambs and he said 23/-. "And don't take any less, Dave," he said. "They are sure to try to beat you down." Then I suggested to Mary that she might sell her red calf. She said she would, but she wanted £4.

Well, this morning I drafted off the lambs and they looked pretty good. Then the agent and the buyer arrived in a lovely car. I said to myself when I saw them coming, "Now, Dave, twentythree bob, and don't let them stampede you." Then I walked across and shook hands. The buyer's name was Mr Fred Cane. He looked such a nice man, with such a cherubic expression and a look of innocent surprise. A bit like a startled faun. But his looks belied him. We talked about the crops and Clarkson's mustard and the weather and everything else but lambs for half an hour. The buyer was very nice about things. "Nice place you've got here, Dave," he said. "And a good crop, too. You must be a good farmer. Not like that bloke Clarkson, mucking around with flax and mustard." I was inclined to agree with him. Then we sort of wandered over to the sheep yards, and Mr Cane started to complain about how the lambs were not dressing out well this year, and how many rejections there were for grass seeds and so on, and how the market had slipped lately. I kept saying to myself, "twenty-three bob." Then he went as far as to look at the lambs. "What makes the shorn ones look so moth-eaten?" he asked, "has the dog been at them?" I indignantly denied the imputation levelled at Squatter and explained that the shearer was a bit rough. I didn't bother to explain who the shearer was. "Bit small, Dave," he said then. I started to argue but he didn't listen. "Bit thin too, Dave," he said. I started to argue again, but again he didn't listen. "Twenty-one bob, Dave, really I don't know how I'll get rid of them." "Twenty-three," I said.

Then we started to argue, at least he did most of the talking, and by the time he had finished I felt as if I really ought to give them to him, but I fortunately remembered what Clarkson said about them trying to beat me down. So I sat hard on twenty-three bob, and suggested that he really oughtn't to jeopardise the future of his wife and kids by paying too much for my lambs, and perhaps we ought to turn them out. This rather knocked him, so he said "All right, 22 shillings." So I said we had better go up and have a cup of tea and have a look at Mary's calf because it would be a pity if he went away without buying anything. So I took them up to the house and I said to Mary, "What about a cup of tea?" She said, "See if Mr Cane is going to buy the calf first." So Mary came out dusting the flour off her hands on her apron. I introduced her to Mr Cane and left them to it and walked along behind with the agent to enjoy the fun.

Mr Cane reminded me of another friend of mine the way he stroked the kids' heads, and I could see Mary watching him out of the corner of her eye. When we got down to the calf pen, Mary couldn't get Mr Cane to look at the calf for a while; he was so busy admiring the fowls. But after a while he noticed it. "What a fine calf, Mrs Dave," he drawled, (What's its name?" So Mary told him the calf's name was Elsie, and she (the calf) had such a sweet disposition.

So Mr Cane (you could see him thinking about those scones) said the calf was worth £5. This rather knocked Mary, because she thought he would say £3, but she took it well. She just snorted. "Five pounds, Mr Cane? I thought she was worth seven." You could see the old girl thinking that she was being robbed.

Mr Cane expressed his pious surprise with this statement and said that he supposed he'd better not keep Mary any longer from her scones and had better be getting along, and he was glad to have called and the children were really a credit to their mother. So Mary said that perhaps she would sell Elsie for £6, and before we knew what had happened we were sitting down drinking tea, and the agent was making out a contract of sale for the calf at £5-10/-and Mr Cane was trying to eat ten shillings-worth of scones.

Of course, no mention was made of my lambs. After lunch we sauntered out to the car, carefully avoiding any mention of such things. Mr Cane expressed his pleasure on being on such a well cared-for property, and passed a few scathing comments on Clarkson and how he didn't know the value of sheep. Then they got in and I opened the gate, and as they were driving out Mr Cane popped his head out the window and shouted, "I'll give you twenty-two and six." "Twenty-two and nine," I shouted as the car disappeared over the hill. The car stopped and backed down the lane again, and before I knew what had happened I was signing on the dotted line, and the car was going up the hill again. A good time was had by all.