



DAVE'S DAIRY

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Monday. Arthur and I went on carting hay today. His stack is looking very promising, too. After tea every night he puts in an hour or so patting the butts in. When he starts to pitch too fast, I find the only way I can get him to steady down is by getting him talking. He has got very queer ideas about farm life and the dignity of labor, and so on, and when he has got me buried in a heap of hay on the top of the hay, I work my neck out and say, "Arthur, don't you wish you were a stock agent or a school teacher, so that you could have holidays half the year?" That starts him! He leans on his fork and tells me how man was born to work, as the sparks fly upward; how work never hurt anyone and that holidays are immoral. Meanwhile, I'm stealthily straightening up the mess, but I'm careful not to look over the side, because this always infuriates him, and he ends up throwing sheaves up two at a time. One day I got bunged up worse than ever, and I couldn't get him to swallow the usual bait. It was no good asking him to pitch slower; that only encourages him. Eventually I shouted: "Arthur, do you believe what the philosopher said that farming is suffering reduced to a science?" That floored him. He took a bit of time working out what it meant, and turning it over to how it fitted with his philosophy of farming. After he'd viewed the matter from all angles, while I managed to restore some semblance of order up above, he came to the conclusion that the philosopher was trying to be funny, and that's something Arthur simply can't stand. So he bunged me up again.

Tuesday. It was our local sale day today, and it was hot, too, so I suggested that we knock off hay-carting and go in and "kept in touch with the markets." But Arthur wouldn't hear of it, so we went on with the hay. The stack is getting up: about 14 feet. I suggested it was about time we put the eaves on, but Arthur only snorted. He gets right over the other side of the stack, and then says, "Just pitch them over this way, Dave." And then, a bit later, "A bit further, Dave." And whenever I see Mary she tells me how lucky I am to have such a good man.

Wednesday. Of course, the brisk way I've been getting the hay in has been too much for Clarkson. He is so used to doing things faster than I do that he has got quite jealous, and also curious to meet Arthur. So he came across this evening to have a yarn. As soon as he found out that Arthur came from what he calls the "marginal areas," he got quite excited. I was too tired to take a very lively interest in the discussion. To be candid, I seized the opportunity to have a light doze. But they managed all right without me. Clarkson opened the attack by saying that all those marginal areas ought to be closed up, and no farming done at all. He said that the holdings should all be about 10,000 acres, and sheep should be the main source of livelihood, and that people should not be allowed to do any cropping. I saw the light of battle coming into Arthur's eyes, so I made a desperate effort to keep awake, because I wanted to see Clarkson get a real telling off. Arthur told Clarkson that, in a lot of that light sandy country, occasional cropping was the only really effective way of controlling erosion.

At the word "erosion" Clarkson gave a hitch to his mental trousers, and entered the fray in earnest. At this stage I dropped off, because I'm sick of hearing Clarkson talk about erosion. In the background I could hear words like "soil texture," "scrub regeneration," and "ground cover" being bandied about. When I awoke, about an hour later, they had both arrived at the

table-thumping stage. Arthur had almost convinced Clarkson that he (Arthur) was quite right, and that is something we in this district have not known before. They were both agreed that the holdings should be bigger, but Arthur has half-convinced Clarkson that it was essential to crop lightly the more erodable soils to prevent them drifting. Clarkson then said that if they did crop this country, they shouldn't sell wheat, but should keep the grain as a fodder reserve. Having guided this conversation into a familiar channel, he again girded up his loins and embarked on the Clarkson Plan. I dropped off again here. When I woke up they were both chatting quite amicably together about the state of the improvements on my farm. So I went to bed.

Thursday. It started to rain last night, which was a pity, because Arthur's stack would have been finished in another day or two and now it will get fairly wet. We were lucky not to get big storms, as they did in some places.

When I heard it raining in the morning I thought I would be able to lie in bed, because we couldn't do any hay. But I was wrong. Arthur was soon stomping about impatiently, so I went out and told him that, as we couldn't do any hay, he could have a bit of a holiday. I shouldn't have mentioned it. "Holiday!" he snorted. "Holiday! With all the bolts loose on the trolley, and the smithy in the mess it is and the barn needing a clean out, and more wood to get, and pig feed to crush, and the tractor to get ready for getting over the fallow to kill those thistles? Holiday! Whatever next?"

So we've had a terribly busy day. Mary came out several times to watch with admiration what we were doing. I didn't like the look in her eye. We put wide shears on the cultivator, greased the tractor and changed the oil, and generally got things ready for a flying start tomorrow.

I must admit I didn't enjoy it much at the time, but all the same, I can't help feeling that I would like to see Clarkson's face tomorrow, when we start about an hour before he does. Then we tried to screw up the bolts on the trolley. This made Arthur very cross. They haven't been screwed up for many years, and Arthur kept muttering about "laziness" and "neglect." He seemed to think I ought to do it each year! We had a lot of trouble with the round-headed bolts turning in the wood. We put kerosene, vinegar and eucalyptus on the nuts to soften the rust, but still a lot of the bolts turned. There's no doubt that these round-headed bolts are a curse. People shouldn't be allowed to sell them. They may be all right when the timber is new and the bolts are new, but in timber that has got a bit old they are a great nuisance. However, we got quite a lot of them tight by holding a screw wrench on the heads, at the expense of a good deal of skin off my knuckles.

Then we had a look inside the smithy, but Arthur said we wanted a wet week not a wet day. So we mended harness, and oiled it till the sun went down. I've never had such a busy wet day before. This chap will be the death of me!

Friday. We certainly got away to a flying start today, and had done two rounds before Clarkson appeared. I can see I'm going to make an enemy for life if Arthur stops here much longer.

My fallow is really in rather a mess. Of course, it's mostly Clarkson's fault. He would insist that I leave my fallow till late, and then the silage had to be done, and then hay cutting, and before I knew it, the fallow was covered with thistles; not many saffrons, which are easy to kill by cultivation, but what we called Scotchies -those dark green fellows with the blue flower. The sheep will eat the flowers, but that doesn't stop them growing on the fallow.

There are a lot of the big ones, which are too big for the cultivator to pull out, but there were a lot of small ones, too, and young melons and some Bathurst burr, so there were plenty to make it worth cultivating.

Every year I think that I'll try to find out something about scrapers. I've heard that some farmers use scrapers or knife bars for cutting melons and turnips and thistles, but I have never seen one, and would like to know if they are effective, and if so, how they're made. You can kill most weeds with a cultivator if you go deep enough, but going deep usually ruins the seed-bed, and so does more harm than good. So I want to know if you can kill big weeds with a scraper without going deep. Will someone please oblige?