

gift of clear utterance, and soon made the little old lady understand that Sallie was very naughty, and hurting herself with fretting over Auntie's troubles.

'Ah, dear, don't blame her for that, if you want to be cared for yourself when you grow old and weak,' said Mrs. Wren. 'It's harder to go off the stage with a grace than it is to come on, Cherry. We want good children and grandchildren to help us do it. And the worst of all is to be left standing on the stage with a part too hard for one. That's poor Auntie, now; and she's been like a mother to Sallie.'

Cherry looked impressed, she walked on, still full of virtuous sentiments which she was going to bring out for her sister's benefit. But when she arrived, and found good, patient Sallie crying in her low chair, she forgot them all, and only came behind and put her arms round her neck, saying, 'Why, Sallie, what's the matter?'

The answer was not quite what she expected. A certain doctor, after investigating a case of nervous breakdown, remarked, 'The bottom of it all is conscience.' Conscience had taken aim at Sallie's overwrought nerves, with her aunt and her husband both in its quiver, and it was hard to say which rankled most. She was distracted to think that John's commands could ever contradict her sense of duty.

'Suppose he knows best?' said Cherry, archly; but she found that she must leave the arguments on that side to her mother. Sallie firmly believed that John was infallible, whenever he had full materials for judgment; but in this case she did not think he had, and persisted, 'He doesn't know. Nobody can that hasn't lived there.'

'Suppose I go and see,' said Cherry. 'Then I could help Auntie a bit, and tell her that mother has gone to see about getting her a girl.'

To do her justice, this was not the first time that Cherry had made a similar proposal, but John had always set his foot upon it.

'No, no,' he said, 'if you once begin that there will be no end. You're not to slave for old Crump for nothing, when he has lots of tin to pay with; and you shan't take his money for it.'

This time, however, Cherry felt that an exception must be made for once; and having set out vigorously determined to preach the subjection of wives, she next found herself marching off to 'Auntie's,' in flat disobedience to the lord of this corner of creation.

As she went in at the gate, Chuckers came out at the front door, and banged it behind him.

'How do you do, Mr. Chuckers,' said Cherry, 'Is Auntie at home?'

'Yes,' in his surly voice, without an offer to show her in.

'Can I go in and see her?'

'No.'

'Is anything the matter?' asked Cherry bravely.

'The matter is, if you want to know, she's up to her eyes in washing, and you'd better keep clear on it,' and Chuckers walked away.

Cherry stood still till he was out of sight, round the house, and then walked round the other side to the back, where Mrs. Chuckers stood in her little wash-house, washing and sighing. Half-past three on a Thursday afternoon, and washing still!

'Why, Auntie, you are busy,' said Cherry, looking in.

'Oh, my dear, I think I must give up!' said Mrs. Chuckers. 'Nineteen cows in milk, and I did them all this morning. I said I would if Jupp might do it all this afternoon, and give me a chance to get through with the

washing. He don't come soon enough to do them all in a morning. And here I'm not done, it'll be dark before I get the things out; and I did want 'em dry to-morrow, to be ironing.'

'Oh, there's time for them to dry a lot, now, this hot day,' said Cherry. 'I'll hang them out.'

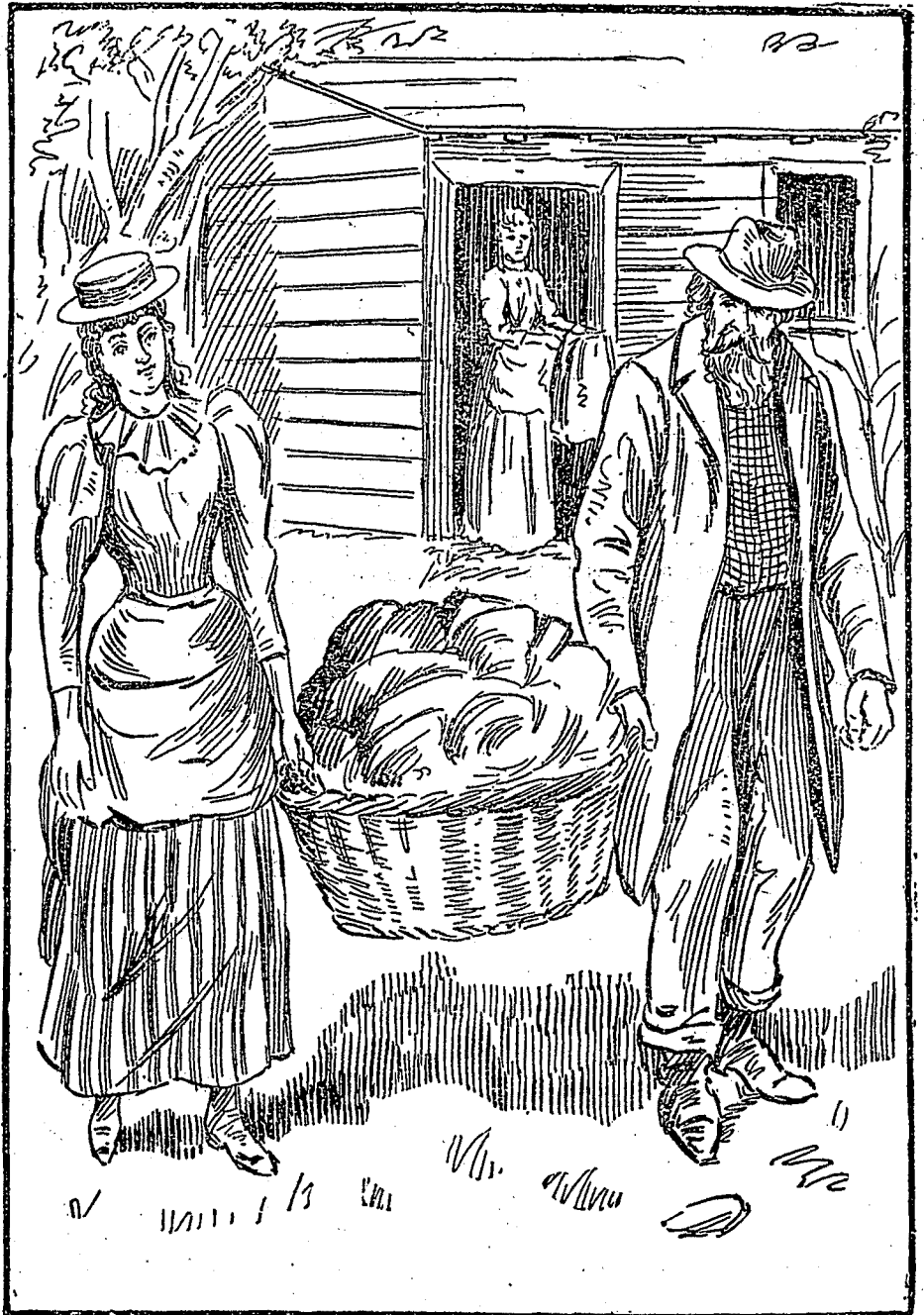
She turned up her sleeves, pinned up her afternoon dress, and seized the basket full of wet clothes. Wet linen weighs heavy. Cherry panted a little as she struggled off with her load. At that moment, Chuckers must needs come by.

'What be you after there?' he said, roughly taking the basket from her and setting it down. He turned towards his wife and called out fiercely,

'Is this what you've come to? Get your washing on to this time o' day, and when a friend comes to see you, set her to carrying

Chuckers stood and stared at her in amazement for a moment; then, not seeing what else to do, deliberately stooped and took a handle. Cherry took another, and off they walked with the basket between them. Mrs. Chuckers left off washing to look, Jupp, the man who worked on the farm, stopped also, and grinned after them through the wire fencing. To see 'old Crump' lend a hand was astonishing.

They reached the drying ground, where the lines were ready. Cherry thanked Mr. Chuckers, and he shambling off to his work in the field hard by. As he grubbed away, clearing a patch where he was going to put in a crop, he stole glances at the young light figure in the pretty pink cotton frock, flitting to and fro between basket and lines. Cherry could not outdo her sister-in-law in energy and deftness at her work, but she had a prettier way of going about it.



OFF THEY WALKED WITH THE BASKET BETWEEN THEM.

out a gurt heap o' clothes like that? What be you thinking on?'

This was very mild language for him, but Cherry's presence was some restraint.

'Oh, Chuckers, you know I've got no help, and I can't get through without,' said his wife piteously.

'Taint help you want, it's sense. If you had the wits of a flea you wouldn't be in this 'ere caddle,' said Chuckers.

He subsided into grunts, and Cherry said, 'It was I ran off with the basket, Mr. Chuckers. I beg your pardon if it was a liberty. But if you wouldn't mind taking the other end, we could carry it easy enough, and I'd like to.'

What pleasant work it was, shaking out the clothes, and hanging them up, under the blue sky, in the sweet warm air of the summer afternoon—a couple of hens with their downy broods clucking around with a vague hope of picking up something to their advantage. The clothes were not pretty at all, but they were all fresh washed and rinsed, and smelt of cleanliness.

By the time the basket was empty, Mrs. Chuckers had rinsed and wrung out the last of her wash. Cherry hung it all out, and helped to get the tea—then slipped off before Chuckers came in, and ran round to Sallie, to report progress. Sallie looked a different creature already, and gave her such a