

## JANET MASON'S TROUBLES.

(From the Sunday Magazine.)

## CHAPTER VI.

How hot and heavy the sunshine used to feel to Janet as it poured in at the uncurtained windows all through the long summer days! No fresh sweet breeze seemed ever to come into that dull narrow street; no sweet familiar country sounds ever reached the child's ear. Instead of the songs of birds in the tree-branches, instead of the soft lowing of the cows in their meadows, she only heard now the rattling of carts over the stony streets, the shouting of costermongers' boys, the voices of rough children at play; instead of looking out on grass and trees and flowers, she had nothing to look out on but the opposite unbroken line of dull brick houses.

Ah, if she could go home once more, and see the little house again where she had lived, and play again in the sweet quiet fields, and hear the birds sing as they had been used to sing before her father died, in those happy summer days! Such a longing to return to it all used to come at times to Janet that now and then she would even try to talk about these dear old times to Dick or Jack or Bill. "Oh, I wish I could take you to see our house!" she would sometimes say. "It was such a dear little house. You can't think how pretty it used to be."

"I wonder what you would think of our village, Dick, if you were there?" she said one day.

It was a hot August afternoon, and Dick, extended on the floor, was lying kicking his heels in the coolest place that he could find.

"H'm—I daresay it's a rum place," he replied. "A beggarly old place, father calls it; but if it's cooler there than here, I'd be off to it, if I could, like a shot."

"It is never so hot there as here," said Janet eagerly. "There is a little river, you know; and always down at the river there is a breeze; and there are woods with great trees in them, and you can lie under the trees and be so cool. Oh, you would like it, Dick! There are such lovely things there. Such flowers! Think of having roses growing all round the windows! And squirrels! You would like to see squirrels, wouldn't you?" said the child coaxingly, trying so, in her longing to arouse Dick's in-

terest in what she was talking of, to think of the sort of things in that sweet home of hers that he would be likely to care about. "You would never get tired of watching the squirrels, Dick."

But Dick began to whistle a tune, and would not get interested about the squirrels. He was not an imaginative boy; he did not care to try and picture those delights that were beyond his knowledge and his reach. He began to whistle, and then, when he had done whistling—

"I wish I'd a pocketful o' oranges," he said. "Wouldn't I

when the day came. So it passed without notice from anyone.

There were no lessons for Janet during these months; nobody had time to teach her anything, or cared about teaching her. Her uncle, indeed, soon after she went to live with him, had said something about sending her to school.

"I suppose we shall have to do it," he had said to his wife, "though it's very hard upon us."

But Mrs. Mason had answered quickly—

"I don't see why we need bother our heads about it. She

a dozen other things that would never help you to earn your bread. Mrs. Mason had not learned much history herself in her youth, and had never felt the want of it, and she naturally argued that what had been no loss to her would be no loss to Janet. Let boys go to school, for a good education helps to start them in the world; but what need a girl want to know except to read and write, and add up a line of figures?

Janet could read fairly well, and often still in spare moments she would try to solace herself with poring over the torn pages of her old familiar story-books. How well she knew each little tale! How many a recollection they brought back to her! There were some rough little woodcuts to them that she and her father had colored; on the flyleaf of one ragged volume there was a picture that they had made together. How well she recollected the day when they had done it,—a cold white winter day, with the snow upon the ground. She had sat beside him at his table, and he had drawn it with his arm about her. It was a picture of the little church she knew so well, with the snow upon its roof, and on the graves in the churchyard. Perhaps as he drew it he had known that before another year had gone the snow would be lying upon his grave as it lay on those others there; but Janet at least had not known that. The sun was shining out of doors on the white ground. "Oh, how pretty it is! I wish the snow would come ever so much oftener than it does. Papa, don't you like it?" the child had said.

Had they all passed away for ever—those dear, calm, happy days? Janet would sit sometimes dreaming over her torn books, till in the midst of her dreaming her aunt's sharp voice would come, and make her start up with a guilty feeling. One day when she was reading to herself, Jack, in the innocent playfulness of his nature, came up on tiptoe behind her, armed with the tongs, and, making a rapid plunge with that powerful weapon, seized on the volume as it lay on Janet's lap, and, securing it firmly between the two prongs, lifted it up in the air high above her head.

"Oh!" cried Janet piteously, and sprang to her feet. "Jack, don't! Please don't!"

But at this appeal Jack only retreated, and danced a dance of triumph upon the hearth.

"Make a bonfire of it," said Bill, who was present too.



"I'M MATE IN CHARGE."

go into them if I had!" And the attractions of these oranges whose charms were familiar to him quite outweighed poor Janet's squirrels in her tree-tops.

On one of these hot August days Janet's birthday came. She had said a week or two before to Jack, who had been having a birthday of his own, "You are just five years older than me. You are thirteen to-day, and I shall be eight on the 14th of August"; but neither Jack nor anybody else remembered that

can read and write, and I don't know what she wants with any more learning than that."

"Well, she may wait a little bit, perhaps, at any rate," replied Mr. Mason; and then nothing more was said, and of course Janet did not go to school. She was useful in the house, and it was a great deal better, Mrs. Mason thought, to be making beds and dusting rooms than to be taking money that you had no right to out of other people's pockets that you might learn history and geography, and half-