

## The Inglenook.

### His New Leaf.

BY EMMA S. ASHEART.

The boys came loitering along from school, toward their homes in the scattered village. Ragged Jim Hanford walked a little apart, and listened to their conversation. His bare feet were red, and he hunched up his shoulders and shivered, for it was the last day of December, and the air was chill even in that sunny Southland.

"What do you mean by turning over a new leaf?" he asked timidly, at last.

"It's to quit doing what you oughtn't, like your pa quit drinking and stealing when they put him in jail," replied one of the larger boys.

Jim drew back as if struck, paling and flushing, but he made no reply; only turned down a side path and hurried away with a motion quite different from his usual lazy saunter. It was true, his father had been a drunkard, a vagabond, and his stealings had landed him in the penitentiary, and would keep him there until Jim should be grown to manhood. Jim's mother was a grim gaunt woman, working hard from morning till night, in the new cotton factory over the hill, her two little girls looking out for themselves most of the time. For her only son she had ambitions, and insisted on him going to school.

"I can't stand it," muttered Jim, as he faced the sharp wind which set his rags fluttering like signals of distress. "I reckon I was born to be a no-count, and folks aren't slow to let me know it. They are all talkin' about their 'new leaves.' I reckon I can turn over a new leaf, too. I'll strike out for myself, I will. Mother's so cross, and the girls do nothing but muss up the house, and fight like wild-cats when she's gone. What can a fellow do there? I'll sneak off this very night."

It was to an illy kept and comfortless home Jim was going, but it stood in a pretty spot on a hillside, with trees about it, and a brook leaping down beside it. The half-dozen valley acres to the right belonged with it. Mrs. Hanford had held it through all her troubles, but the crops were poorly tended, and the broken fences let in wandering cattle and hogs.

As he glanced over the field, Jim remembered, with shame, that his mother had hoed the corn by moonlight last summer, and he had—gone fishing. He was forced upon him that right here at home was a good opportunity to turn a new leaf, but he put aside the suggestion.

"I can't stay at home, that's all there is of it," he growled.

The house was empty and cold, and in its usual disorder. The girls, he knew, were chasing about the hills, unwashed, uncombed, not fit to be seen. Jim thought of the tidy little sisters of other boys, with disgust for his own. He was hungry, but there was nothing but a piece of cold corn bread, and that he threw aside angrily.

"What a way of living!" he snapped. "I don't see how mother stands it." His heart was softened now that he thought of leaving her. "But I'll make money—I'll save up and get rich. Then I'll come back and build her a fine house, and—but father will be out by then. Well, I'll take care of him, too, and may be he will do better. I

reckon I might as well start now as to wait till night. I wonder if I have a clean shirt."

He climbed the shaky ladder to the little loft where he slept, but his eyes opened widely as he stood on the rough upper floor. There, spread out on the shabby bed, draped on the footboard, and arranged on the backless chair, was a complete suit for a boy. Cheap things they were, but Jim never thought of that, for he saw they were new—not somebody's cast-offs; and the coarse underwear from the factory, the jeans coat, vest and trousers, the calico shirt, with its starched collar and front, the stockings, the wool hat, all looked just the size.

He measured the garments up to himself, held them off to admire them, and then tenderly laid them away again. There were tears in his eyes, and a new resolve in his heart, as he went thoughtfully downstairs.

"Mother does care," he said. "She's worked hard to buy the clothes, and sat up nights to make them, for I know that's no ready-made suit. She used to be a tailoress, and she hasn't forgotten how. And what a place to come to when she's tired! No wonder she scolds."

The girls came running in like wild things, and Jim proposed that they should clean up the house before the mother came. It took some coaxing, but, once started, Lima wanted to scrub the floor, and Jessie was determined to turn everything upside down; but Jim vetoed all that.

"We haven't time," said he. "We don't want it all wet and sloppy when she comes. You wash the dishes and pick up things, and I'll sweep and make fires. Then I'll milk old Brindle, and get a lot of wood, and then we'll slick ourselves up a little."

He felt ashamed, again, for he had the new clothes, and they had little enough to cover them, but with their faces washed, their tangles of curls combed, and clean, patched aprons on, they looked quite pretty to Jim. He had scarcely got himself into his new clothes, and received the admiring comments of his sisters, when Mrs. Hanford came. Her tired eyes lightened at the sight of the bright, orderly room, the tidy children and the lad, half proud, half awkward in his new garments. It was a different picture from what those eyes usually met, and repaid her for days and nights of toil.

"Yes, I sewed on them nights," she said in reply to Jim's questions, "I had to go by guess partly, but they fit pretty well, don't they?"

"Fine," answered Jim.

There were no spoken thanks, no kisses, no demonstrations. They were not of that sort; but Jim's smile thanked her. And to himself he was saying:

"Things must go different after this."

He had not waited for the coming year—he had hardly turned his leaf; and though he made no promises, I think his mother understood when he repaired the door-latch that very night, and fixed a window so it would not rattle. The most of New Year's Day—a holiday for his mother—was spent in planning to mend the fences, and turn their thriftless corn patch into a paying truck garden. Jim has worked steadily to fulfill his plans, and as the New Year comes again, he finds that he gained in more ways

than one, and it is his privilege to give gifts as well as to receive them.—Christian Standard.

### I Wouldn't Fret,

Dear little lad, with flashing eyes,  
And soft cheeks where the swift red flies,  
Some one has grieved you, dear; I know  
Just how it hurts; words can hurt so!  
But listen, laddie—don't you hear  
The old clock ticking loud and clear?  
It says, "Dear heart, let us forget—  
I wouldn't fret, I wouldn't fret!"

Why, little girlie, what's gone wrong?  
My song-bird's drooping, hushed her song.  
The world has used you ill, you say?  
Ah, sweetheart, that is just it's way.  
It doesn't mean to be unkind,  
So, little lassie, never mind!  
The old clock ticks, "Forget, forget,  
I wouldn't fret, I wouldn't fret!"—Success.

### The Seventh Beatitude.

"You may dress Mr. Atkins to-day, nurse, he is leaving the hospital."

"He is going home, I suppose, sir!" said the nurse, apparently very much surprised.

"He's going to my home. He'll do better there than here," answered the doctor shortly. And the nurse wondered still more. Her patient had been operated on for appendicitis, twelve days previously, and she knew that he was not yet out of the wood.

All along she had been wondering at the doctor. He sat up with him himself, the night of the operation, after having had six bad cases in the operating room. This doctor was reckoned the most skillful surgeon in the big city.

"See how he's needlessly wearing himself out!" remarked Nurse Anna to her special chum, Nurse Edna. "Every half hour that he had to spare during all these days, he has spent at that bedside, calling me up over the telephone at odd times to hear how Mr. Atkins was getting on. Many half nights he's cared for him, besides. You see there were complications which made it a very ticklish case!"

The doctor ordered the very best invalid carriage in town to convey the poor man to his home. His wife had given up her boudoir for him. The three younger children had been sent to friends, and husband and wife waited on him night and day. His recovery which looked so doubtful at first, soon became speedy and complete.

"I can satisfy you now, Anna," said Nurse Edna to her friend not long afterwards. "The doctor is a great friend of my father's, you know, and hearing me express so much surprise on the subject, my father asked him about it."

"Why, I had to get even with the man, that's why!" was what the doctor said, with that merry twinkle in his eye that we all know. "I've been 'laying' for him these many years, and my opportunity came at last."

"How's that?" enquired my father. Then he told him this story.

"You remember how I came to the West, a nobody, with no money. Well, I hadn't long opened a practice, when an old Eastern friend of mine over the river begged me to come and see his little boy. I was just in time, for the boy was almost at his last gasp with diphtheritic croup. After making an incision in the windpipe, the child coughed some of the poison in my face. I was soon down with the complaint. My wife sent the children to a friend's. No one came near me but the doctor, and we had hard times. Mr. Atkins happened to