

The Inglenook.

"The Changed Cross."

BY MRS. O. W. SCOTT.

The accommodation train whistled and coughed and stopped at a small country station. The usual fringe of idlers stood on the platform to do it reverence, and at one side was a farm wagon, the sorrel horse attached to it whisking his tail stupidly, much to the disappointment, apparently, of the driver, who held his bridle with a determined hand.

The parties who had been brought to the station—a man and his wife, with three small boys—saw their trunk thrown aboard and climbed the car steps.

"Good-bye, Fuller, just look over once in a while to see the house ain't carried off," said the man waving his hand.

"You see, you didn't need to worry so about getting here, Lottie," he continued, as he edged his way through the aisle with a heavy bag in one hand, a box in the other, and the boys clinging to him promiscuously.

"If I hadn't we'd be over in Stubb's woods this minute," she responded, dropping into a seat and relieving her hands of several half-wrapped packages. It was a warm morning, and she had evidently reached a point of weariness and general demoralization where the passengers were no more to her than so many dummies. "There!" she exclaimed, "I never shut that attic window, and it rains—"

"I shut it, Lottie," replied her husband, looking somewhat embarrassed. "Do you want to make room for Willie in that seat?"

"No, I don't. Do buy 'em some peanuts or candy and set 'em down out the other end of the car. I think I might have a few minutes to get my breath after what I've been through this morning."

The man in the seat just behind her glanced over his newspaper and coughed slightly, as if to remind her of his presence, and her husband's face flushed under its coat of tan.

"Well," he assented, putting the box he carried into the rack above her head and turning away.

The pretty baby face of the youngest boy wore a grieved expression, as if he were choking back his tears and complainings, but he trotted along obediently, holding fast to his father's coat.

The mother took off her jacket which was neither new nor stylish, gave a quick glance around to see what other women wore, pulled down the cuffs of her shirt waist, removed her hat, and after cramming the packages on the seat into her hand bag, she leaned against the window and looked wearily out at the everchanging, sunshine-steeped landscape.

A half-hour later the train stopped again at a small village, and a group of ladies bade gay good-byes to friends and entered the car. There were few vacant seats, and one of the ladies, tall and distinguished in appearance, paused with a "Is this seat engaged?"

"No," replied our friend.

The lady gave her a quick, inquiring glance as she sat down, noting her almost discourteous tone.

"There are not usually many passengers at this point, I imagine, but some of us old Brightwood students have been spending a

week at Professor Gray's fruit farm, and are just returning," she said, half apologetically.

There was a moment's silence, and then the farmer's wife turned toward her eagerly, as she asked, "Did you graduate at Brightwood?"

"Yes, eleven years ago, and for five years I have been there as a teacher. Do you know the school?"

"I graduated there myself ten years ago," was the unexpected answer.

"O! please tell me your name. You must have been one of the juniors when my class left."

"My name was Lottie Granger, but now it's Lottie Smith. I got married right away. My husband and three little boys are out the other end of the car."

"Indeed! and do you recall a senior named Edith Burrows?"

"Why, yes; she was smart and took some of the prizes. Was that your name?"

"And is still. I have Latin classes in the same old rooms. Do you remember?"

"O my! I guess I do, for I didn't have any use for Latin. I liked the sciences first-rate, but, my land! what does it all amount to? It's different with you; you've gone right on and got somewhere, but I married a farmer, and never went ahead. I've forgot 'most all I learnt, and all I've got for it is a discontented spirit."

The voice was tense with feeling—a combination evidently of regret and rebellion.

"But you had your training," replied Miss Burrows's low, clear voice. "I think that is the chief end of education to the individual—that enrichment of the mind which no circumstance or condition can take from you."

"I suppose so"—the answering voice was still querulous—"but I've degenerated; I guess that's the trouble. Anybody would, though, in my place, having to work so hard year in and year out. If a girl's going to marry a farmer, or a mechanic, for that matter, she's better off, I say, without too much education. There you are, out of society, and you must cook, cook, cook, and look after eggs and milk and vegetables and your children play in the dirt, and your clothes get old-fashioned, and you get to feeling as though you didn't belong anywhere."

There was a half smile on the teacher's face, but it disappeared as she saw a tear splash upon Mrs. Smith's tightly twisted fingers. This was not simply the complaint of a nervous, tired woman, but of a fretting soul out of harmony with her environments.

Miss Burrows hesitated, and began, "I know there are women who are unfortunate in their marriage—"

"It ain't—isn't—so with me," interrupted the other. David is better than I am. He thought 'twas wonderful that I'd marry him after I'd got through Brightwood."

"You are a Christian, aren't you?" was the next question in the even, cultured tone.

"Why, yes, I hope so. I've been a church member a number of years."

"Then you believe that God cares for his children; that He does direct their lives?"

"Ye-e-s, I suppose He does."

"Then he gave you the opportunity to secure an education, not accidentally, but that you might be a stronger and more useful woman. Then when you loved a man well

enough to marry him I am sure you did not think that was an accident. God gave you your boys, too. Do you realize what a wonderful privilege it is to have the training of three men-to-be? And on a farm with nature's great text book open before you!"

The mother of "three men-to-be" shook herself impatiently. "I don't see just what you mean," she said. "I could wash 'em and dress 'em and get their meals as well as if I hadn't studied Latin, and not feel half as 'abused' as I do now."

"I suppose so, if you think only of their bodies, but the study and the knowledge you acquired give you such an advantage in starting them mentally and spiritually as well in the right direction. You can teach them about the stars and trees and flowers and birds and insects. Why, Mrs. Smith, if you had been a teacher you might have enjoyed to teach other people's children, but to have your own where they are so pure and sweet—" There was a little catch in the teacher's voice which so astonished Mrs. Smith that she could not rally for an instant.

Finally she said: "Honestly, I hadn't thought of that. I've thought about the club's I've read about, where women get together and discuss things, and wished and wished I could have a chance to sort of rub up my wits that way and make something out of my schooling, but—"

There was a look of perplexity, almost of despair, on the teacher's fine face as she said quickly.

"Clubs are well enough in their place, but the world is just suffering for mothers—mothers who can use what the schools have given in making good homes and training children. Why—" she paused an instant, as if language failed to express her feelings, and then added with a new emphasis—"If you were a teacher you would only have second chance; the mother has the first. Our work is toward the same end, to make better men and women, and so a grander nation. And God has given to you—"

"Ipswich Junction! Ipswich Junction! Change trains going south—Canton, Manchester—" and the brakeman's voice trailed off a list of unintelligible names.

"So soon? I had no idea we were so near the Junction. I must say good bye," and Miss Burrows rose.

"You don't know what you've done for me. I—I guess it was providential, your coming into my eat. I won't forget. Good-bye."

So they parted, and the train rumbled on.

A few moments of silence with her face close to the window, and then Mrs. Smith rose and made her way back to her husband and children. Little Willie was asleep, his dimpled face pressed against the father's breast.

"There's an empty seat next to mine now," she said; "won't you come? I guess the boys want something to eat by this time; we sha'n't reach gran'pa's till after dinner."

"I saw a woman sitting with you, Lottie, and I was awful sorry; I'm afraid she bothered you," said her husband, while the little boys stretched themselves and drew long breaths of relief as they started for the longed for luncheon.

Lottie's face flushed, and she responded: "No, she didn't bother me; she explained things and did me lots of good. You'll see, David."

Then she lifted Willie from his father's arms tenderly, and as she brushed the damp curls from his forehead she murmured, "Mother's little man!"—New York Advocate.