

FAMILY DEPARTMENT.

ISOLATION.

We walk alone through all life's various ways,
Through light and darkness, sorrow, joy, and change;
And greeting each to each, through passing days,
Still we are strange.

We hold our dear ones with a firm, strong grasp;
We hear their voices, look into their eyes;
And yet, betwixt us in that clinging clasp
A distance lies.

We cannot know their hearts, how'er we may
Mingle thought, aspiration, hope, and prayer;
We cannot reach them, and in vain essay
To enter there.

Still, in each heart of hearts a hidden deep
Lies, never fathomed by its dearest, best;
With closest care our purest thoughts we keep,
And tenderest.

But, blessed thought! we shall not always so
In darkness and in sadness walk alone;
There comes a glorious day when we shall know
As we are known.

—Elinor Gray.

A LUCKY MISTAKE.

CHAPTER III—"PEEPING BACK."

(Continued.)

Leo and Lily were awake and out of bed be-
times the next morning; but Roy had passed a
sleepless, disturbed night; the cold and wet
that had no harmful effect on the little ones
had been too much for his already weakened
strength. His cough was incessant, and his
flushed face and heavy eyes told Rebecca that
mischief had been done.

"You must stay in bed, Master Roy, for
your breakfast, and get rid of that cough."

"But we must go to Whichcote by the first
train."

"There'll be no travelling by rail for you to-
day. The snow has been coming down all
night, and it's not done yet. Dawes—that's
the gardener—says the line is blocked farther
on."

"But we can't trouble Mr. Johnson."

"You just leave that to the master and me.
You don't think we'd let those poor children
go out in this weather? It'd be just murder."

"Are they ill—have they caught cold?"

"Not they; they are as merry as two crick-
ets downstairs, and Master Leo is that helpful!
Why, he's doing the toast this very minute."

Leo and Lily were in their element. As
Leo finished his first slice of toast, he turned
his crimson face to Lily, and, with a grin of
delight, said—

"Now, Lily, look sharp, and put on the but-
ter while it's hot."

"But, Master Leo, Rebecca did not say
nothing about you buttering it," put in Sarah,
with dismay at what Rebecca would say when
she came back.

Lily was seated on the fender, regardless of
scorched face. "Of course, we must do it pro-
perly, Sarah; it's for Mr. Johnson. Don't be
stingy," and she continued her work regard-
less of Sarah.

"Well, you must bear the blame."

"Blame! why she ought to thank us."

"We'll manage all right; you needn't trouble
about us."

"Yes, Sarah, if you don't hurry up with
your work, it will be you who'll catch it. See
how hard we are working!"

Rebecca entered at that moment, and at
sight of the burnt faces exclaimed in dismay;
then her eyes fell on the butter that was fast
melting from the hot place in which Lily had
put it; such a dirty, nasty looking mess it was,
too; for she had been using the same knife to
cut the butter and to scrape off the burnt parts
of the toast.

"Oh, Miss Lily, what a mess!"

"It's all Leo's fault; he will burn it so."

"He was doing it very nicely when I left
it himself, then. I believe
and she rose and marched
for,

"I am sure you are the favorite at home,
Lily, or at any rate they pretend so, because
you are the girl. You might let me be Re-
becca's."

There was some truth in this statement Lily
had to allow, and when Rebecca added—

"I think you are a very nice young lady," she
condescended to return.

To tell the truth, Lily's great weakness was
the love of being first favorite with everybody.
She was not blind to her fault, for her mother
had often pointed it out to her, and conscience
at that moment gave her a good strong prick,
just to remind her of what mother had told
her.

"Are you peeping back?" whispered Leo
mischievously.

"No, I'm not"—decidedly; "I like the new
leaf."

After this passage of arms, they finished
their work in peace; then with a proud air of
satisfaction, carried the toast into the break-
fast-room.

Here they found Mr. Johnson; he was stand-
ing at the window, a grave, anxious look on
his face. He had just paid a visit to Roy, and
thought the boy looking really ill. No wonder
he looked grave. It was a great responsibility
to have the charge of three strange children,
and one of them weak and ill. Even if the
weather had been fine, Roy was not in a fit
state to travel. The matter was settled for
him, however, as all traffic on the line was
stopped by the snow, so the children were
obliged to remain where they were.

If Roy had been well, there would have been
nothing but pleasure in the prospect, for in his
secret heart Mr. Johnson had rejoiced when he
heard that his little visitors were weather-
bound.

Lily greeted him with a kiss, and said, "Leo
and I have made you something so nice. You
must say it's good, won't you—and before
Rebecca, please?"

He at once promised this; and Lily said,
"You may have one peep, and then we'll put
it down to the fire to keep warm until after
prayers."

Mr. Johnson pushed up his spectacles and
rubbed his chin thoughtfully. His usual habit
was to have a book to read while he break-
fasted, and that book was not a book of prayer,
as a rule. He was a shy, reserved man, and it
was a difficult thing for him to make any alter-
ation in his ways.

"We could not learn our verses this morning,
because our Bibles are in the trunks at the
station," said Lily.

"Yes, and lots of other things, too. It was
such fun dressing this morning."

At last Mr. Johnson said, "We don't read
out prayers: Rebecca is always busy at this
hour."

"We always do at home. Can't we have it
without Rebecca—only Sarah?"

Without another word he turned and
brought from a shelf near a Bible and Prayer
Book.

"Then Sarah may be busy too," he said.

"May we choose the chapter?" The two lit-
tle heads were bent together over the book,
and after a little discussion they decided on the
one they wanted, the tenth of St. John.

"I do like that about the good Shepherd so,"
explained Lily, as she drew up a chair beside
him. "Mother says, we children are His lambs;
so it's meant for us just as much as for grown
up people."

When he had ended reading the chapter he
read out some prayers from the Church Service,
and as the children's bright young voices joined
in the Lord's Prayer, a strange dimness came
over his eyes, and he had to rub his spectacles
well before he was able to see as distinctly as
usual.

The children heard with great glee, that
they would have to remain on in their present
quarters until the weather improved. They

were perfectly happy, and in no hurry to go;
in fact, they thought they would prefer remain-
ing here instead of going on at all to the other
Mr. Johnson's. He was a stranger to them
now; this Mr. Johnson was their own friend.

To their host's relief they were not in the
least alarmed about Roy's cold. If it had been
any other member of the family it would have
been different, for none of them were ever ill,
except Roy; he was the delicate one of the
family.

"The doctor said Roy only wanted rest and
change," Lily informed Mr. Johnson and Re-
becca; that Leo repeated the words as glibly
as a parrot, and with as little understanding
of what they meant. Lily remembered her
promise "to take care of Roy; so she went
and sat in his room, and tried her best to amuse
him.

Roy did not want to be amused; he only
wanted to be left quiet, his head ached, and so
he turned his back on his little sister, and,
shutting his eyes, said, "I want to go asleep."

Poor little Lily found it very dull all alone,
with no one to speak to and nothing to do.
She could not go down and play with Leo, for
Rebecca had trusted her to remain with Roy
until she came back.

Mr. Johnson had gone out to see about
having their boxes brought from the station,
and also to send for the doctor to come and
see Roy; but this latter fact the children were
not told.

Lily's patience was nearly worn out by the
time Rebecca made her appearance.

"Master Leo is playing in the yard. Wrap
up warm, and you may join him. Hurry, dear,"
she added.

No need to tell her that. She was off in a
moment, delighted to join her brother.

Rebecca felt quite proud of the way she had
got her out before the doctor's arrival, and
actually took herself to task for having had
such a dislike for children's company.

"Lily, I am going to ask for some string,"
announced Leo, in a pause of their game.

Together they went to the house. Peeping
in, they saw Rebecca busy at the table. Before
her was a saucepan full of something savory
and boiling, to judge from the appetizing smell
and clouds of smoke. She bent so earnestly
over it that she did not observe the children.

"She'll touch it with her nose," whispered
Lily.

Leo giggled. And they crept up behind her
softly. She was intent on her work, and did
not hear them. Lily put up her hand to the
back of her head, but drew it back; then up it
went again.

"Don't be a coward," whispered Leo; and
he gave her arm a nudge. Down went Rebecca's
head, and in went her long nose into the boil-
ing soap.

With a scream of pain and anger she dropped
the spoon and turned round. "Oh dear, oh
dear! my nose is scalded."

The little culprits tried hard to smother
their laughter, and as they were behind her she
did not at first see them; but Sarah, who had
come forward to her assistance, did, and the
sight of the three upset her gravity. She
burst out laughing.

"You wicked, unfeeling wretch!" exclaimed
Rebecca, indignantly. But before she could
say more, Lily had darted to the flour-bin, and,
seizing a handful of flour, dabbed it full on to
Rebecca's nose. In her hurry she flung it into
eyes and mouth as well, half choking the un-
fortunate Rebecca.

"It's the best thing for a burn I know," ex-
claimed Lily; then as the victim of their mis-
chief sank into a chair and began to softly rub
her poor burnt nose, they both went off into
peals of laughter.

(To be Continued.)