# Why Ephraim Climbed Down

"And now, if everyone is ready, I'll read Mr. Wiggings' last will and testament."

Lawyer Pope, with an important smile that travelled all round the company, smoothed out a legal-looking parchment with plump fingers, and carefully fixed his spectacles in their place.

The family of Samuel Wiggings, deceased, sat silently awaiting the all-important division of Mr. Wiggings' property.

Mrs. Wiggings, the bereaved widow, white-haired and withered, and pitiably anxious as to her inheritance, sat next to the lawyer. She was Samuel Wiggings' second wife. Beside her was her daughter Binah, a meek little woman of forty years, who looked fifty. On the opposite side of the table, smiling in serene confidence, sat Mr. Ephraim Wiggings, the son of the deceased by his first wife.

He was an aggressive, pompous little man, and his rather round, oily face bore a contented "I-know-what's-coming" expression, which was largely the cause of old Mrs. Wiggings' twitching uneasiness.

"'This is the last will and testament of me, Samuel Wiggings, coal dealer, of Teckham,'" began the lawyer. "'I give and bequeath to my stepdaughter, Binah Porson, absolutely nothing.'"

Poor Binah sat back in her chair, like a candle upon which the snuffer has suddenly dropped. She did her best to look as if she never expected anything better, but the weak tears were smarting beneath her eyelids, and presently splashed into shameful publicity upon her faded cheeks.

"'To my wife, Sally Wiggings (remembering her weakness for cups of tea at all hours of the day), I leave the tea-canister and its contents, and nothing else.'"

A cry broke from the old woman. She flung out her withered arms appealingly to the lawyer.

"But the home—the home!" she quavered. "Lord knows, me and Binah didn't ask no money, but bits and things that mean home to us, sir!"

"Well, you've got the tea-canister!" grunted Ephraim, with a fat chuckle. "That's the 'ub of a woman's 'ome, ain't it? Go on, Mr. Pope! See whether he's left me the doormat! Maybe, 'e ain't forgot dear little me altogether."

"'To my son Ephraim,'" proceeded the lawyer, frowning, "'I leave everything else of which I die possessed absolutely.' That's the complete will, my friends. I wish you good-day!"

As the door closed after him, Ephraim tucked his thumbs into the arm-holes of his waistcoat, walked slowly to the fireplace, and took his straddle-legged stand on the hearthrug in his best "lord-of-all-I-survey" attitude.

"Well, now, wot about the futcher?" he demanded, with a patronizing glance at the homeless and penniless women. "What shall you do, Binah?"

"What can I do?" moaned that unfortunate lady, limping to a chair, and dabbing a very moist handkerchief to her eyes. "My lame leg won't let me get a place in service; and I've no sort of experience for anything else, nor no money."

"Well, well," said Ephraim, waiting with a generous patience for her grief to subside, "there won't be two women needed 'ere, you know, now my father's gone. You can't expect me to keep you—now, can you?"

"I never expected no mercy from you, Ephraim!" exploded poor Binah, with an unexpected show of spirit. "You've come into everything, so be satisfied, and don't try to patronize until you're asked for charity—which you won't never be; not by me, any'ow."

Thus relieved in mind, lame little Binah hobbled upstairs, and, acting on the spur of her indignation, she put on her hat and coat and came downstairs to where Ephraim and his stepmother sat in a brooding silence.

"I'm going, mother. Good-bye!" said Binah bravely. "I'm going to do it now, while my pluck's warm!"

"Going where?" broke from Sally.

"To the workhouse!" announced Binah.

"Oh, no, no!"—from Ephraim, with a gesture of his fat forefinger. "Not before you've 'ad some supper, surely!"

"I'll never take sup nor bite from your bounty, Ephraim!" snapped Binah, suddenly breaking into tears upon her mother's shoulder.

"If you go, I'm coming, too!" mumbled Mrs. Wiggings, weakly.

"No, mother. You'll stop here and keep house for Ephraim. Your keep won't cost much, and that'll suit Eph. No; you're too old to leave the dear old home now, mother. You could never live anywhere but here. I'm younger. Good-bye!"

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Three years passed. Binah was still in the workhouse. Sally still kept house for Ephraim.

Then, one spring day, Ephraim announced to his stepmother that she was about to lose her job.

"Or, in plain English, I'm getting wed," he added.

"You're getting wed!" repeated Sally dazedly. "Then what's to become of me? Shall I—I be able to stop with you in the old home? Oh, Ephraim, please let me stay!"

Ephraim rubbed his nose, pausing for a kind way of saying a cruel thing.

"Well, I've talked it over with my intended," he murmured, "because I did think at first as we might have found a corner for you 'ere. But my intended—she wouldn't 'ere of it. She's afraid you'd be trying to boss, y'know. And she thinks, and I think, you'd better go along and keep Binah company. It won't be so lonely for you, seeing that Binah's there already. And—and Binah will be glad."

The tears of his stepmother, and her own feeble argument of her rights, failed to move Ephraim. He was glad to get the scene over, and to feel that the thing was settled.

He brought his "intended"—a sour-looking, peevish girl of thirty, who was named Mary, and didn't deserve to be—to see their future home.

"But not this furniture!" cried Miss Mary, with a horrified glance around the time-worn treasures which meant home to the Wiggingses. "Oh, I simply couldn't live with it, Ephraim! My friends would cry shame. No; we must have new furniture—fashionable oak-and-leather things, you know. You'd better sell these antiques, and we'll get some fresh furniture from Tottenham Court Road. You can't expect a young wife to start with an old home, you know."

Ephraim assented, with a very wry face. He arranged with an auctioneer to sell the furniture, either privately or by auction, whilst he and his bride were on honeymoon; then he gently reminded his stepmother one night that she could now "move out" at her convenience.

"Meaning, 'Go to the workhouse?'" demanded Sally of the surly stepson.

"That's what it does mean, I suppose!" he growled, in careless brutality.

The old lady seeing her home of forty years being wrenched from her, and seeing also the cold welcome of a poorhouse before her, broke into a shrill cry for mercy.

"Haven't I kept you 'ere with me for three years since my father died?" demanded Ephraim. He was in a vile temper, having just returned from that disastrous journey to Tottenham Court Road with the expensive Miss Mary.

"And you'd turn your own stepmother out without a penny—your father's wife!" she wailed.

He replied with angry violence. The old lady shrunk from his words, but bravely nerved herself to make a last stand.

"I'll not be drove out! I'll not be packed out of my home like a servant!" she cried.

Ephraim's last shred of good temper snapped. He banged his fist on the table, and half rose, staring at her.

"You're to go now—at once! You hear?" he stormed. "If you stay here any longer, you'll be whining before my wife's people, and upsetting everything! Go at once!"

She pleaded desperately, with her rheumaticky knees bent to him. She told him life would be nothing to her without the house and the wornout old treasures which had made her home for forty years. But Ephraim's spleen rose with every moment of delay.

"You're to go now!" he stormed.

And at last she went. Worn out with her feeble resistance, and by this time eager for what rest and harbor she could find even in a workhouse, she turned from the house and hobbled slowly to the gate.

Suddenly the door behind her opened. She turned just in time to see a square object flying past her into the road, and to see Ephraim shut the door when he had flung the missile after her.

She went to the gutter and stooped to pick up the object.

It was her tea-canister!

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She picked it up.

"This and its contents was all Samuel left me in the will!" she murmured. "It was a cruel jest—cruel as that son of his who's fired the old canister after me! Hello! What's this?"

The fall into the road had damaged the canister. It had struck the stones with a corner that was now twisted. The whole of the bottom piece seemed to be splitting from the sides.

With a wrench, she pulled the bottom piece apart, and, to her amazement, instead of a shower of tea, she saw greyish paper that crackled in her touch.

"Banknotes! These are what Samuel meant when he said 'The canister and contents!' He meant these banknotes!" she gasped. "One, two, three-hundred-and-fifty, four-fifty, seven hundred, eight, nine, ten! Ten hundred pounds! Oh, thank God—thank God!"

With her tears falling upon them, she counted the notes again. Then she looked vainly for some note from the dead man that would explain his last strange joke—the hiding of this legacy to his wife until her wits would discover the secret space between the true and false bottom of the curious old canister.

Sally spent the night with a friend. She stayed with her until after Ephraim's wedding-day; then she went to see the auctioneer.

"You've got the selling of Mr. Ephraim Wiggings' furniture?" she questioned, fingering her new handbag.

"Yes."

"And what's the price for it, as it stands?"

"One hundred pounds. Failing that, it's to be sold by auction tomorrow, to make room for the new furniture."

Sally handed him a banknote for a hundred pounds.

"Give me the receipt. I'll buy it," she said briefly.

From the auctioneer's she went to the landlord of the house which had been the home of the Wiggingses for nearly half a century.

He listened to her story with a twinkling eye. Then he nodded.

"Yes; I'll sell the house to you gladly," he said. "As to Mr. Ephraim Wiggings—he has given me notice, in order to save himself a week's rent while he's away. So he can't grumble. Yes; if you like to buy the place, and move in, there's nothing to prevent you. I'll have the deeds made out right away."

A few days after Sally went on her last errand. This time it was to bring Binah from the workhouse.

Her withered old face was very proud and very happy when she broke the news to Binah that her workhouse days were over, and that the old home was their own again. Poor Binah was crying softly with joy all the way home, and, when she saw the old place just as she had left it, she broke down completely, and sobbed with the exquisite delight of a woman who has known what it is to be forlorn and homeless.

When Ephraim's new furniture arrived the next day, they politely refused delivery, on the grounds that Mr. Ephraim Wiggings had "removed"—which was true enough, although Ephraim himself didn't know it yet.

About a week later a cab rattled up to the gate and stopped. From it stepped Ephraim, looking very important and distinguished in his honeymoon attire, followed by Mrs. Ephraim, who looked even more sour and peevish than usual.

Together they walked up the short path, and Ephraim tried his latchkey. To his astonishment, the door refused to yield. It was bolted on the inside.

He banged the knocker loudly and with furious impatience. This pause upon the doorstep was taking all the dignity from his home-coming!

And then the front bed-room window went up, and the heads of Sally and Binah peeped out.

"We're not at home to-day—to callers!" they said gravely, and shut the window again, carefully bolting it.—London Answers.

WHY NOT ON HER BACK?

"No dear, no more pudding to-night. Don't you know you cannot sleep on a full stomach?"

"Well, auntie, I can sleep on my back!"

### Myrtle's Cleverness.

A mother who loves to boast of the more or less bright sayings of her little daughter was taught a lesson one day this week.

The proud parent had just finished an account of Myrtle's cleverness when the youngster herself piped up:

"Mamma, what was that other cute thing I said?"

## SLAVEYS OF LONG SERVICE.

### An English Servant Kept Her Place For Ninety-seven Years.

They have the servant problem over here in almost, if not quite, as acute a form as you have it in your country, but it would be solved in no time if there were many more domestics like Mary Ann Lancaster, who has just died, writes a London correspondent. Whether this real Mary Ann was a treasure or not you can guess from the fact that she lived as maid and friend (according to her obituary notice) with a family in Stoke Newington for 65 years, or up to the day of her death at the age of 83. It proves, moreover, that besides being a model servant, Mary Ann Lancaster had the welfare of her fellow domestics at heart, and that she contributed in all over $150 to the funds of the Domestic Servants' Benevolent Institution, an organization in this country which befriends servants in time of stress, helps them to get good berths and grants pensions to some of them when past work.

William Sly, the secretary of this society, on being applied to, gave the rather surprising information that Mary Ann Lancaster's period of service, though creditable, was far from being a record-smashing one, in this country anyhow.

"It may interest you to know," said Sly, "that we have recorded on our books the case of one domestic who remained with one family for 97 years, and of another who stayed in one place for 75 years. The first of these was Susan O'Hagan, of Lisburn, near Belfast, who died in June, 1909, at the age of 107 and who for 97 years was in the service of three generations of a family named Hall at Lisburn. Her case is the most extraordinary that has come to our notice. The holder of the next best record, of 75 years, was Hanna Cook, who lived with a family named Norris in Leicestershire for that length of time.

"Other striking records," Sly went on, "are those of Marianne Stammers, who died at 88 after completing her 70th year of service in the family of the late Henry Hoare, the banker, and that of a Mrs. Alexander, who was housekeeper to Lord Ashcombe for 50 years. Viscount Clifden's late butler, too, was in his lordship's service for over half a century."

Sly says that over 2,000,000 women are now employed as servants in the United Kingdom. Quite a number of them, out of their hard-earned savings, contributed to the funds of the benevolent institution, which has received in legacies from servants nearly $2,500 and in trust funds over $12,000. One supporter, a butler, left a sufficient sum to provide for a pension of $115 a year to the oldest female beneficiary, while another servant left $5,000 in trust for two pensions for needy slaveys. One pensioner of the institution who died lately at the age of 101 had received benefits amounting to $1,830.

**Scotch Shortbread.** — Chop a pound of butter into two pounds of flour, after you have softened the butter a little by putting it near the fire. Knead in the sugar and make the dough into a sheet about half an inch thick, rolling it out smooth. You can cut it into shapes with a biscuit or cake cutter or make it into squares. Lay buttered paper on a shallow tin and bake the cake until crisp and of a yellowish brown. While it is hot, just before taking from the oven, sprinkle pink and white comfits over the top.

# HOME

### Luncheon Dishes.

**Cases of Nouille Paste with Cheese Souffle.**—The paste is made with flour, about four ounces, the yolks of two eggs, a little milk and a seasoning of salt. Roll this out as thin as a wafer and line some little fluted tins, pressing it well into the tins to prevent air bubbles. Bake for 10 or 15 minutes in a moderate oven, not too long, for they have to again visit the oven. Make a souffle mixture with one ounce of fine flour, one ounce of butter, one gill of milk and the same of cream; three eggs, a very little salt and three ounces of cheese. Melt the butter in a saucepan, stir the flour smoothly in, then the hot milk and seasoning; next add the yolks of the eggs carefully, then the cheese (grated) and lastly, the stiffly beaten whites of the eggs. Fill each little case half-full and bake till well puffed up and lightly brown, removing at once to the table from the oven.

**Potato Cases Filled with Peas.**—Boil about a pound of dry, floury potatoes, beat them until quite smooth and light, season with salt and pepper and a inch of nutmeg, if liked; adding an ounce of butter and the yolks of two eggs, and beat till these ingredients are well blended and smooth. When cool, roll out (using just sufficient flour to make this possible) to the thickness of one and a half inches. Cut out into rounds the size of a tumbler and with a smaller cutter remove a piece from the top of each as though making patties. Egg and breadcrumb neatly, place in a frying basket and fry to light brown. Fill the cavities with cooked peas seasoned with salt and butter and place the piece removed from the centre on top of the peas to form a lid.

**Veal Croquettes with Tomatoes**—Chop two cupfuls of cold roast veal. Make a white sauce with two ounces of butter, cooked till it is quite hot and bubbling, and then stir in smoothly one and a half ounces of cornstarch; cook for several minutes, then add half a pint of white stock, or milk may be used in place of it; season with salt and pepper; add the yolk of one egg and cook gently till smooth and well blended; add the chopped veal and when hot turn out on a dish. When cold, mold into cone shapes and roll in beaten egg and breadcrumbs and fry in hot fat. Serve with baked tomatoes.

**Chicken Livers and Bacon.** — Cleanse and separate each little liver into four pieces; sprinkle with a little pepper and wrap each slice in a thin piece of streaky bacon, fastening the end with a tiny skewer. They may then be fried, broiled or cooked in the oven as may be preferred. Be sure to have the livers cooked through. When done, remove the skewers and serve the rolls on a mound of hot boiled rice.

**Lamb Chops Stuffed.**—Choose loin or rib chops, remove all superfluous fat and skin. Have the chops cut about one and one-half inches thick; with a sharp-pointed knife cut a pocket in chop, inserting the knife from outside edge of chop to the bone. In this pocket place poultry stuffing made with bread, seasoned with salt, pepper, sage and melted butter; be careful not to put in so much it will burst out. Place chops on pan that has been sprinkled with salt and pepper, bits of butter and a few drops of onion juice. Sprinkle the chops with a little salt and pepper, place in a hot oven and bake from 20 to 30 minutes. Do not add any water to the pan. Place chops on hot platter surrounded with tomato sauce.

**Asparagus Loaf with Bechamel Sauce.**—Butter thoroughly a charlotte russe mold, quart size, and line it with cooked tips of asparagus, well drained. Cook two tablespoonfuls of flour and the same amount of butter together, add a teaspoonful of salt, a dash of cayenne and one cupful of cream, gradually. Allow it to boil five minutes, remove from the fire, add one cupful of cooked asparagus tips and four eggs thoroughly beaten. Turn the mixture into the mold, set it in a pan of hot water and cook in a moderate oven about half an hour, or till the centre is firm. Turn the loaf on a hot dish, arrange about it little oblong pieces of bread that have been dipped in beaten eggs and milk and browned. Pour the sauce around it and serve at once.

**Yellow Bechamel Sauce.**—Mix 2 tablespoonfuls of flour and two of butter, cook till it begins to bubble, add gradually half a cupful of hot stock and the same amount of milk. When the sauce boils set it in a dish of hot water and stir in the beaten yolks of two eggs, half a cupful of cooked asparagus tips, a teaspoonful of salt, dash of cayenne and tablespoonful of lemon juice. Instead of stock you may use water asparagus was cooked in.

### Miscellaneous Dishes.

**Duchess Potato Balls.**—Prepare a quart of fluffy mashed potatoes (this necessitates the use of about ten potatoes). Beat in an egg, then form into balls; while still hot, roll lightly in an egg beaten with one-half cup of water and set on a buttered sheet in a hot oven till browned. Remove with a pancake turner.

**Veal Steak, Italian.**—Slice veal steak thin and cut into individual servings. Boil for five minutes in water to cover containing one teaspoon sugar, bit of bay leaf, one clove and one slice onion to each pint. Then drain, dust with salt and pepper and dip egg and crumbs and cook for six minutes in deep fat hot enough to brown a bit of bread in three minutes. Serve with sliced lemons.

**Lemon Pie.**—Grate rind of one lemon, pull off the white skin, and after rolling out your crust and putting it on the plate, slice the peel lemon very thin and lay on the crust. Crumble one large slice of bread, strew the crumbs over the lemon. Beat the yolks of two eggs in a bowl with a cup of sugar and one of water and the grated rind of the lemon. Pour this slowly over the crumbs in the pie plate and bake. When cold, make a meringue of the whites of the eggs and four tablespoons of powdered sugar, spread on the pie, brown lightly, and eat very cold.

**Orange Dumplings, Baked.** — Make a good short biscuit dough with a quart of flour, two tablespoonfuls of shortening—half butter—a couple of teaspoonfuls of baking powder, and two cupfuls of milk, or enough to make a soft dough. Roll out into a sheet not more than half an inch thick, handling your dough as little and as lightly as possible. Cut into squares about five inches each way and lay on this lobes of orange which you have freed from the yellow and white skin and seeded carefully. Add sugar at discretion, being more generous with it if the oranges are tart. Fold over the paste, pinch the edges together, and lay the dumplings in a pan, the pinched side down, cover, and bake for twenty minutes in a steady oven. Serve with a good hard sauce, flavored with lemon juice.

### Home Hints.

To remove water spots on a dress, dampen it in lukewarm water. Place over water spots on right side and take a piece of the same fabric and press with warm iron till both pieces of material are dry.

To make boys' rubber boots last long have the cobbler put one thickness of leather inside the heel and another outside, and then fasten on the regular heel plate.

A teaspoonful of camphor added to a quart of soft water will kill earthworms in house plants. The plants should be quite ready for water when it is applied.

A sewing screen with top handles is a handy thing to carry from room to room. It should be covered with cretonne, should stand strongly on its feet and be hung on one side with sewing needfuls.

A good furniture polish may be made of one-half pint linseed oil, one-half pint turpentine, one-quarter pint vinegar, one-quarter pint mentholated spirit. Shake together thoroughly in a bottle.

Round centrepieces may be dried by laying them when wet on a sheet of clean glass, kept for the purpose. See that the linen is placed smoothly and then set the glass in the sun.

Plaster casts which have hard, polished surfaces can be washed with a nailbrush and white soapsuds. The suds should be rinsed off and the casts well dried.

Painted woodwork can be made to look like new by rubbing it with a cloth dipped in whiting. When the whiting is dry, remove with soft cloth.

## AS GOOD AS A GOLD MINE.

### World Consumes Much Thorium in Its Gas Mantels.

Professor White estimates that no fewer than 400,000,000 gas-mantles are used every year, and as these gas-mantles cannot be manufactured without a substance named thorium, the necessity for obtaining a large supply is obvious. Some time ago the manufacturers were, indeed, at a loss to discover sufficient for their purpose. Their anxiety was removed quite unexpectedly when a stranger walked into the office of one of the great incandescent companies and offered to show where an unlimited supply could be obtained. He demanded $500,000 for the information, and this sum the company readily undertook to pay. The directors were, however, doubtful of his ability to carry out his promise, but after obtaining a contract he took a representative of the company to Brazil, where huge deposits of thorium were discovered. From this place most of the thorium now in use is obtained. The stranger had discovered the find quite accidentally.

Grace—"You'd never dream the number of proposals I've had this winter." Helen—"No, dear, but I'm sure you dreamed most of them."