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## MRS. BADGERY.

Is there any law in England which will protect me from Mrs. Badgery?

I am a bachelor, and Mrs. Badgery is a widow. Let nobody rashly imagine that I am about to relate a common-place grievance, because I have suffered that sentence to escape my pen. My objection to Mrs. Badgery is, not that she is too fond of me, but that she is too fond of the memory of her late husband. She has not attempted to marry me; she would not think of marrying me, even if I asked her. Understand, therefore, if you please, at the outset, that my grievance in relation to this widow lady is a grievance of an entirely new kind.

Let me begin again. I am a bachelor of a certain age. I have a large circle of acquaintance; but I solemnly declare that the late Mr. Badgery was never numbered on the list of my friends. I never heard of him in my life; I never knew that he had a relic; I never set eyes on Mrs. Badgery until one fatal morning when I went to see if the fixtures were all right in my new house.

My new house is in the suburbs of London. I looked at it, liked it, took it. Three times I visited it before I sent my furniture in. Once with a friend, once with a surveyor, once by myself, to throw a sharp eye, as I have already intimated, over the fixtures. The third visit marked the fatal occasion on which I first saw Mrs. Badgery. A deep interest attaches to this event, and I shall go into details in describing it.

I rang at the bell to the garden-door. The old woman appointed to keep the house answered it. I directly saw something strange and confused in her face and manner. Some would have pondered a little and questioned her. I am by nature impetuous and a rusher at conclusions. "Drunk," I said to myself, and walked into the house perfectly satisfied.

I looked into the front parlor. Grate all right, curtain-pole all right, gas chandelier all right. I looked into the back parlor—ditto, ditto, ditto, as we men of business say. I mounted the stairs. Blind on back window right?—Yes; blind on back window right. I opened the door of the front drawing-room—and there, sitting in the middle of the bare floor, was a large woman on a little camp-stool. She was dressed in the deepest mourning, her face was hidden by the thickest crape veil I ever saw, and she was groaning softly to herself in the desolate solitude of my new unfurnished house.

What did I do? Do! I bounced back into the landing as if I had been shot, uttering the national exclamation of terror and astonishment: "Hullo!" (And here I particularly beg, in parenthesis, that the printer will follow my spelling of the word, and not put Hillo, or Halloo, instead, both of which are base compromises which represent no sound that ever yet issued from any Englishman's lips.) I said, "Hullo!" and then I turned round fiercely upon the old woman who kept the house, and said "Hullo!" again.

She understood the irresistible appeal that I had made to her feelings, and curtsied, and looked towards the drawing-room, and humbly hoped that I was not startled or put out. I asked who the crape-covered woman on the camp stool was, and what she wanted there. Before the old woman could answer, the soft groaning in the drawing-room ceased, and a muffled voice, speaking from behind the crape veil, addressed me reproachfully, and said:

"I am the widow of the late Mr. Badgery." "What did I say in answer? Exactly the words which, I flatter myself, any other sensible man in my situation would have said. And what words were they? These two:

"Oh, indeed!" "Mr. Badgery and myself were the last tenants who inhabited this house," continued the muffled voice. "Mr. Badgery died here."—The voice ceased and the soft groans began again.

It was perhaps but necessary to answer this; but I did answer it. How? In one word:

"Our house has been long empty," resumed the voice, choked by sobs. "Our establishment has been broken up. Being left in reduced circumstances, I now live in a cottage near; but it is not home to me. This is home. However long I live, wherever I go, whatever changes may happen to this beloved house, nothing can ever prevent me looking at it as my home. I came here, sir, with Mr. Badgery after my honeymoon. All the brief happiness of my life was once contained in these four walls. Every dear remembrance that I fondly cherish is shut up in these sacred rooms."

Again the voice ceased, and again the soft groans echoed round my empty walls, and oozed out past me down my uncarpeted staircase.

I reflected. Mrs. Badgery's brief happiness and dear remembrances were not included in the list of fixtures. Why could she not take them away with her? Why should she leave them littered about in the way of my furniture? I

was thus thinking how I could put this view of the case strongly to Mrs. Badgery, when she suddenly left off groaning, and addressed me once more.

"While this house has been empty," she said, "I have been in the habit of looking in from time to time, and renewing my tender associations with this place. I have lived, as it were, in the sacred memories of Mr. Badgery and the past, which these dear, these priceless rooms call up, dismantled and dusty as they are at the present moment. It has been my practice to give a remuneration to the attendant for any slight trouble that I might occasion."

"Only sixpence, sir," whispered the old woman, close at my ear.

"And to ask nothing in return," continued Mrs. Badgery, "but the permission to bring my camp-stool with me, and to meditate on Mr. Badgery in the empty rooms, with every one of which some happy thought, or eloquent word, or tender action of his, is so sweetly associated. I came here on my usual errand to-day. I am discovered, I presume, by the new proprietor of the house—discovered, I am quite ready to admit, as an intruder. I am willing to go, if you wish it after hearing my explanation. My heart is full, sir; I am quite incapable of contending with you. You would hardly think it, but I am sitting on the spot once occupied by our ottoman. I am looking towards the window in which my flower-stand once stood. In this very place, Mr. Badgery first sat down and clasped me to his heart, when we came back from our honeymoon trip. "Matilda," he said, "your drawing-room has been expensively papered, carpeted and furnished for a month; but it has only been adorned, love, since you entered it." If you have no sympathy, sir, for such remembrances as these—if you see nothing pitiable in my position, taken in connection with my presence here—if you cannot enter into my feelings, and thoroughly understand that this is not a house, but a shrine—you have only to say so, and I am quite willing to go."

"She spoke with the air of a martyr—a martyr to my insensibility. If she had been the proprietor and I had been the intruder, she could not have been more mournfully magnanimous. All this time, too, she never raised her veil—she never has raised it, in my presence, from that time to this. I have no idea whether she is young or old, dark or fair, handsome or ugly; my impression is, that she is in every respect a finished and perfect Gorgon, but I have no basis of fact on which I can support that dismal idea. A moving mass of crape, and a muffled voice—that, if you drive me to it, is all I know, in a personal point of view, of Mrs. Badgery.

"Ever since my irreparable loss, this has been the shrine of my pilgrimage, and the altar of my worship," proceeded the voice. "One man may call himself a landlord, and say that he will let it; another man may call himself a tenant, and say that he will take it. I don't blame either of those two men; I don't wish to intrude on either of those two men; I only tell them that this is my home; that my heart is still in possession, and that no mortal laws, landlords, or tenants can ever turn it out. If you don't understand this, sir; if the holiest feelings that do honor to our common nature have no particular sanctity in your estimation, pray do not scruple to say so; pray tell me to go."

"I don't wish to do anything uncivil, ma'am," said I. "But I am a single man, and I am not sentimental." (Mrs. Badgery groaned.) "Nobody told me I was coming into a shrine when I took this house; nobody warned me, when I first went over it, that there was a heart in possession. I regret to have disturbed your meditations, and I am sorry to hear that Mr. Badgery is dead. That is all I have to say about it; and now, with your kind permission, I will do myself the honor of wishing you good morning, and will go up stairs to look after the fixtures on the second floor."

Could I have spoken more compassionately to a woman whom I sincerely believe to be old and ugly? Where is the man to be found who can lay his hand on his heart, and honestly say that he ever really pitied the sorrows of a Gorgon? Search through the whole surface of the globe; and you will discover human phenomena of all sorts, but you will not find that man.

To resume. I made her a bow, and left her on the camp-stool, in the middle of the drawing-room floor, exactly as I had found her. I ascended to the second floor, walked into the back room first, and inspected the grate. It appeared to be a little out of repair, so I stooped down to look at it closer. While I was kneeling over the bars, I was violently startled by the fall of one large drop of warm water, from a great height, exactly in the middle of a bald place, which has been widening a great deal of late years on the top of my head. I turned on my knees and looked round. Heaven and earth! the crape-covered woman had followed me up stairs—the source from which the drop of warm

water had fallen was no other than Mrs. Badgery's eye.

"I wish you could contrive not to cry over the top of my head, ma'am," said I. My patience was becoming exhausted, and I spoke with considerable asperity. The curly-headed youth of the present age may not be able to sympathise with my feelings on this occasion;—but my bald brethren know, as well as I do, that the most unpardonable of all liberties is a liberty taken with the unguarded top of the human head.

Mrs. Badgery did not seem to hear me.—When she had dropped the tear, she was standing exactly over me, looking down at the grate; and she never stirred an inch after I had spoken. "Don't cry over my head, ma'am," I repeated, more irritably than before.

"This was his dressing-room," said Mrs. Badgery, indulging in muffled soliloquy. "He was singularly particular about his shaving water.—He always liked to have it in a little tin pot, and he invariably desired that it might be placed on this hob." She groaned again, and tapped one side of the grate with the leg of her camp-stool.

If I had been a woman, or if Mrs. Badgery had been a man, I should now have proceeded to extremities, and should have vindicated my right to my own house by an appeal to physical force. Under existing circumstances, all that I could do was to express my indignation by a glance. The glance produced not the slightest result—and no wonder. Who can look at a woman with any effect, through a crape veil?

I retreated into the second floor front room, and instantly shut the door after me. The next moment I heard the rustling of the crape garments outside, and the muffled voice of Mrs. Badgery poured lamentably through the keyhole.

"Do you mean to make that your bed-room?" asked the voice on the other side of the door.—"Oh, don't, don't make that your bedroom. I am going away directly—but, oh pray, pray that that one room be sacred! Don't sleep there! If you can possibly help it, don't sleep there!"

I opened the window, and looked up and down the road. If I had seen a policeman within hail I should certainly have called him in. No such person was visible. I shut the window again, and warned Mrs. Badgery through the door, in my sternest tones, not to interfere with my domestic arrangements. "I mean to have my bedstead put up here," I said. "And what is more I mean to sleep here. And what is more, I mean to snore here!" Severe, I think, that last sentence? It completely crushed Mrs. Badgery for the moment. I heard the crape garments rustling away from the door; I heard the muffled groans going slowly and solemnly down the stairs again.

In due course of time, I also descended to the ground-floor. Had Mrs. Badgery really left the premises? I looked into the front parlor—empty. Back parlor—empty. Any other room on the ground-floor? Yes; a long room at the end of the passage. The door was closed. I opened it cautiously, and peeped in. A faint scream, and a smack of two distractedly-clasped hands saluted my appearance. There she was, again on the camp-stool, again sitting exactly in the middle of the floor.

"Don't, don't look in, in that way!" cried Mrs. Badgery, wringing her hands. "I could bear it in any other room, but I can't bear it in this. Every Monday morning I looked out the things for the wash in this room. He was difficult to please about his linen; and the washer-woman never put starch enough into his collars to satisfy him. Oh, how often and often, has he popped his head in here, as you popped yours just now, and said, in his amusing way, 'More starch!'—Oh, how droll he always was—how very, very droll in this dear little back room!"

I said nothing. The situation had now got beyond words. I stood with the door, in my hand, looking down the passage towards the garden, and waiting doggedly for Mrs. Badgery to go out. My plan succeeded. She rose, sighed, and pushed the camp-stool, stalked along the passage, paused on the hall mat, said to herself, "Sweet, sweet spot!" descended the steps, groaned along the gravel-walk, and disappeared from view at last through the garden-door.

"Let her in again at your peril," said I to the woman who kept the house. She curtsied and trembled. I left the premises, satisfied with my own conduct under very trying circumstances, delusively convinced also that I had done with Mrs. Badgery.

The next day I sent in the furniture. The most unprotected object on the face of this earth is a house when the furniture is going in. The doors must be kept open; and employ as many servants as you may, nobody can be depended on as a domestic sentry as long as the van is at the gate. The confusion of "moving in" demoralises the steadiest disposition, and there is no such thing as a properly-guarded post from the top of the house to the bottom. How the invasion was managed, how the surprise was effected, I know not; but it is certainly the fact, that

when my furniture went in, the inevitable Mrs. Badgery went in along with it.

I have some very choice engravings; after the old masters; and I was first awakened to a consciousness of Mrs. Badgery's presence in the house while I was hanging up my proof impression of Titan's Venus over the front parlor fireplace. "Not there!" cried the muffled voice imploringly. "His portrait used to hang there. Oh, what a print—what a dreadful, dreadful print to put where his dear portrait used to be!" I turned round in a fury. There she was, still muffled up in crape, still carrying her abominable camp-stool. Before I could say a word in remonstrance, six men in green baize aprons staggered in with my side-board, and Mrs. Badgery suddenly disappeared. Had they trampled her under foot, or crushed her in the doorway? Though not an inhuman man by nature, I asked myself those questions quite composedly.

No very long time elapsed before they were practically answered in the negative by the reappearance of Mrs. Badgery herself, in a perfectly unruined condition of chronic grief. In the course of the day I had my toes trodden on, I was knocked about by my own furniture, the six men in baize aprons dropped all sorts of small articles over me in going up and down stairs; but Mrs. Badgery escaped unscathed.—Every time I thought she had been turned out of the house she proved, on the contrary, to be groaning close behind me. She wept over Mr. Badgery's memory in every room, perfectly undisturbed to the last, by the chaotic confusion of moving in. I am not sure, but I think she brought a tin box of sandwiches with her, and celebrated a tearful picnic of her own in the groves of my front garden. I say I am not sure of this; but I am positively certain that I never entirely got rid of her all day; and I know to my cost that she insisted on making me as well acquainted with Mrs. Badgery's favorite notions and habits as I am with my own. It may interest the reader if I report that my taste in carpets is not equal to Mr. Badgery's; that my ideas on the subject of servants' wages are not so generous as Mr. Badgery's; and that I ignorantly persisted in placing a sofa in the position which Mr. Badgery in his time, considered to be particularly fitted for an arm-chair I could go nowhere, look nowhere, do nothing, say nothing, all that day, without bringing the widowed incubus in the crape garments down upon me immediately. I tried civil remonstrances, I tried rude speeches, I tried sulkily silence—nothing had the least effect on her.—The memory of Mr. Badgery was the shield of proof with which she warded off my fiercest attacks. Not till the last article of furniture had been moved in, did I lose sight of her; and even then she had not really left the house.—One of my six men in green baize aprons routed her out of the back garden area, where she was telling my servants, with floods of tears, of Mr. Badgery's virtuous strictness with his housemaid in the matter of followers. My admirable man in green baize courageously saw her not, and shut the garden-door after her. I gave him half-a-crown on the spot; and if anything happens to him, I am ready to make the future prosperity of his fatherless family my own peculiar care.

The next day was Sunday. I attended morning service at my new parish church. A popular preacher had been announced, and the building was crowded. I advanced a little way up the nave, and looked to my right, and saw no room. Before I could look to my left, I felt a hand laid persuasively on my arm. I turned round and there was Mrs. Badgery, with her pew-door open, solemnly beckoning me in. The crowd had closed up behind me; the eyes of a dozen members of the congregation, at least, were fixed on me. I had no choice but to save appearances, and accept the dreadful invitation. There was a vacant place next the door of the pew. I tried to drop into it, but Mrs. Badgery stopped me. "His seat," she whispered, and signed me to me to place myself on the other side of her. It is unnecessary to say that I had to climb over a hassock, and that I knocked down all Mrs. Badgery's devotional books before I succeeded in passing between her and the front of the pew. She cried uninterruptedly through the service; composed herself when it was over; and began to tell me what Mr. Badgery's opinions had been on points of abstract theology. Fortunately there was great confusion and crowding at the door of the church; and I escaped at the hazard of my life, by running round the back of the carriages. I passed the interval between the services alone in the fields, being deferred from going home by the fear that Mrs. Badgery might have got there before me.

Monday came. I positively ordered my servants to let no body in deep mourning pass inside the garden-door, without first consulting me. After that, feeling tolerably secure, I occupied myself in arranging my books and prints. I had not pursued this employment much more than an hour, when one of the servants burst excitedly

into the room, and informed me that a lady in deep mourning had been taken faint, just outside my door, and had requested leave to come in and sit down for a few moments. I ran down the garden-path to bolt the door, and arrived just in time to see it violently pushed open by an officious and sympathising crowd: They drew away on either side as they saw me. There she was leaning on the grocer's shoulder, with the butcher's boy in attendance, carrying her camp stool! Leaving my servants to do what they liked with her, I ran back and locked myself up in my bedroom. When she evacuated the premises, some hours afterwards, I received a message of apology, informing me that this particular Monday was the sad anniversary of her wedding-day, and that she had been taken faint, in consequence, at the sight of her lost husband's house.

Tuesday forenoon passed away happily, without any new invasion. After lunch, I thought I would go out and take a walk. My garden-door has a sort of peep-hole in it, covered with a wire grating. As I got close to this wire grating, I thought I saw something mysteriously dark on the outer side of it. I bent my head down to look through, and instantly found myself face to face with the crape veil. "Sweet, sweet spot!" said the muffled voice, speaking straight into my eyes through the grating. The usual groans followed, and the name of Mr. Badgery was plaintively pronounced before I could recover myself sufficiently to retreat to the house.

Wednesday is the day on which I am writing this narrative. It is not twelve o'clock yet, and there is every probability that some new form of sentimental persecution is in store for me before the evening. Thus far, these lines contain a perfectly true statement of Mrs. Badgery's conduct towards me since I entered on the possession of my house and her shrine. What am I to do?—that is the point I wish to insist on—what am I to do? How am I to get away from the memory of Mr. Badgery, and the unappeasable grief of his disconsolate widow? Any other species of invasion it is possible to resist; but how is a man placed in my unhappy and unparalleled circumstances to defend himself? I can't keep a dog ready to fly at Mrs. Badgery. I can't charge her at the police-court of being oppressively fond of the house in which her husband died. I can't set mantraps for a woman, or prosecute a weeping widow as a trespasser and a nuisance. I am helplessly involved in the unrelaxing folds of Mrs. Badgery's crape veil. Surely there was no exaggeration in my language when I said that I was a sufferer under a perfectly new grievance! Can anybody advise me? Has any body had even the faintest and remotest experience of the peculiar form of persecution under which I am now suffering? If nobody has, is there any legal gentleman in the United Kingdom who can answer the all-important question which appears at the head of this narrative? I began by asking that question because it was uppermost in my mind. It is uppermost in my mind still, and I therefore beg leave to conclude appropriately by asking it again:

Is there any law in England which will protect me from Mrs. Badgery.

REV. DR. CAHILL

ON EXETER HALL AND THE BIBLICAL AMBASSADORS OF ENGLAND.

(From the Dublin Catholic Telegraph.)

If history did not supply us with the admitted statements of the facts, mankind could have never believed that trivial or accidental circumstances should have so often ended in the overthrow of governments, the dethronement of Kings, and even the subversion of empires. A personal discourtesy to Washington in London, while presenting a legal remonstrance against an oppressive tax, led to the proclamation of the American Republic. Three arbitrary regulations, published in France in July, 1830, banished Charles X. from the throne of his ancestors: indiscreet opposition to a public dinner in Paris, in April, 1847, expelled Louis Philippe, from France; and within the last twelve months, in May, 1857, a dispute on parade about a greased cartridge has up to the present time (within nine months) cost England nearly twenty millions of money, has sacrificed tens of thousands of valuable lives, has reddened the waters of the Ganges with the blood of women and children, has evoked demoniacal atrocities in cruel crime, unheard of through all past antiquity, and will, perhaps, end in the loss of the Indian empire. When nations are a long time suffering from open tyranny, or from silent exclusion, their angry passions become accumulated, are slowly but certainly warmed into irrepressible revenge, represent, under a given moral comparison, a full naked magazine, which only requires one spark to produce a sudden and terrific explosion. Ancient and modern history present instances of the most disastrous results, or, perhaps, of the most unexpected national advantages, arising from incidents growing out of