

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers* 2, 1886 – 1887 June 5, '86 to May 21, '87)

## My Sweetheart

He was my chum: when he married his house was my home: when baby came, I immediately appropriated her and installed myself her chief protector. T'was strange how passionately fond baby and I grew of each other. Then he died. He had been provident; the insurance purchased a cozy little house on a quiet street partly hidden from view by the houses on each side thus furnishing a home for baby and widow; the rent of the two rooms added to the income, and I felt they were rich. I had settled all of these matters and was comfortably installed when Mrs. Grundy said I must leave baby and house. I damned Mrs. Grundy but left in obedience to her. My new bachelor quarters were very, very handsome so I sought the boys and we would sit swapping lies around the table in the café until long past – but never mind a few days later I called to see my little sweetheart. She was sick – not serious, the doctor said. When I was leaving she made me promise to bring her some pictures the next day. The mother followed me to the door saying, “Don't forget your promise; she will fret so if you do not come and it will make her so much worse.” The sign put up when I vacated was still over the doorbell so that when I went out I read “unfurnished room for rent – inquire within.” That evening I college friend from Boston came. I entertained him; introduced him to the Owl Club and under his direction we tested the pleasures of a German recipe. The dignified strut with which he mingled with the workmen in the early morning was to me so comical that to save my life I could not walk steadily. When we arose in the afternoon – the bath and coffee helped some – we went to the opera, dodged the Owl Club, retired early, were up betimes, he away, I to my office before 9. About 11 a thought of baby sent a cold creeping over me. I rushed out, secured some pictures, purchased a large quantity of candy and toys by way of penance then made my way to the house. As I turned the corner I saw an ugly, beetle-backed undertaker's wagon looking like a big, black, long-legged roach hunting for some one's little piece of sugar, and on the seat was a healthy, happy, heartless Irishman with a grin on his face and on the curb was a neatly dressed simpering house-maid in full sympathy and accord with the funeral characters.

Here a dead wagon after a corpse the love-making of these people under such circumstances was to me coarse and brutal and I swore aloud. I paused in the midst of an oath. My God how close they are to baby's house she was sick and I oh no and I ran a little nearer and I recognize their house girl in the flirting girl and this made me hopeful. But how can I tell it; the house came into view; and there on the bell handle was the piece of white crape. I stared at it stupidly then saw the sign above it which in the mother's great grief and the servant's indifference had ignored. And I laughed yes actually I laughed at the horrible pun: yes surely there was unfurnished room for rent within.

I wondered if I could whip the fellow on the dead wagon. Why do people put out crape to advertise their grief; why do undertakers have such devilishly shiny wagons for; what business had my friend in town the day before; who put that crape up so carelessly – the

bow had slipped up over the bell handle – she must have been far more sick than the doctor knew – they are all fools at best; maybe she died soon after I saw her, my broken promise had not to do with it. God would not let a little child die because a besotted fool forgot his promise. I vow those yelping dogs out on the street are laughing at me and bang, bang go candies, toys and pictures at them. Well, I will be brave. I will see my dead sweetheart and walking up to the door with a firm step I was about to put my hand on the doorbell when a strong red arm was passed up in front of me and a voice said “I axes your pardon that's me aprin.” I saw it all as I turned and reeled against the door – frame and away went the dead wagon with its laughing heartless driver throwing kisses to the unthinking housemaid while in the near foreground the neighbor's dogs are fighting over and feasting on the candies. As an answer to the faint ring given by the removal of the apron the little toddler came to the door and seeing me thus asked me, is oo sick?

Editor

Budget Carr Editor

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