

# The Bloomfield Times.

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(WITHIN THIS COUNTY.)  
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AN INDEPENDENT FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

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## The Bloomfield Times.

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For the Bloomfield Times.

### THE PHANTOMS OF ST. MARK.

A Story with an Excellent Moral.

A HUSBAND and wife were having a violent quarrel and as you passed the door you would have heard the lady's voice in angry tones, saying:

"Do you hear me, Sir?"

No answer.

"I have been talking to you for the last half-hour, sir."

"Bless me, I thought it was much longer!" was the reply.

"I understand you sneer, sir, perfectly; you are getting tired of me. I am properly served! I had no business to marry you—twelve months ago I was my own mistress."

"I know it, my lady, and now you want to be mine."

"Upon my word, Sir Methusalah, you improve!"

"I wish the virtue was infectious; I should be delighted to see my whole family inoculated with the same disposition."

"Sir Methusalah, your innuendos are unpardonable; since our wedding-day you have become a miserably altered man!"

"Couldn't you favor me with an H before the altered?"

"I could indeed if you had your deserts. I am your wife, sir!"

"If that's one of them I willingly dispense with the rest."

"Sir Methusalah! In one word—do you intend to pass the season in London or not?"

"Not!"

"What do you mean by replying in that abrupt and extraordinary manner, sir?"

"You wished an answer in 'one word'; I gave it to oblige, but there's no pleasing you."

"Very good! Very good indeed, sir! I know what you are aiming at; you want to make me lose my temper!"

"I wish you could, and let my worst enemy find it. I'd ask no more terrible revenge!"

"Do you suppose I married you for this, sir?"

"No."

"For what then?"

"To convince me that money could not ensure happiness, and that ten thousand a year very frequently buys ten thousand times more plagues than pleasures. Good morning my lady."

"Good morning, my torment."

The conversation recorded above passed between a gentleman on the shady side of fifty, but still possessed of a hale person and distinguished bearing, and spite of a taste of the vixen in her kindling eye, and rather more than a taste of it in her nimble tongue, a remarkably pretty woman of about five and twenty.

Lady Methusalah Rust exchanged her maiden for her present name more at the instigation of her friends than from the warm promptings of her own heart.

The disparity of years between the parties was in her prudent mother's opinion amply compensated by the very handsome fortune possessed by Sir Methusalah. If he was old, so was his baronetcy; so were the title-deeds of his estate, the timber upon it, and even the very wine in his cellars.

He had it in his power to dower a wife eligibly and provide for scampish younger sons and cousins to the tenth generation.

Besides all this, Sir Methusalah was emphatically a "scholar and a gentleman," possessing the esteem of his equals and the love and respect of his tenants and dependants.

His establishment was an extensive one, kept up after the manner of the "Fine old English gentleman." His domestics, like a good landlord, were "a host in themselves," but those whose interests are connected with the present sketch were only three, viz: John Thomas, the butler; Con Sweeney, the groom; and pretty plump Patty Pride, My lady's own ladies' maid.

John Thomas was a thorough-bred Englishman and most unadulterated cockney. London with John Thomas was the word; those born within the sound of "Bowbells" the selected-silver spoon-month portions of society; those denied that privilege pitiable persons indeed. John Thomas was a very sausage of prejudices; small portions of

every national liking, or antipathy, must have been chopped up, blended together and thrust, even to the risk of bursting it, into the external cuticle of John Thomas.

John believed there was such a place as Hiredland, or as in his loftier moods he termed it *Ibernia*, thereby nullifying by omission the gratuitous expenditure of the misapplied "H;" and he labored under a delusion that the British Government supported the Hixish, who were only fit for "excavators" and scavengers, from motives of the purest philanthropy.

John Thomas father imagined the natural produce of the country was turf, potatoes and poteen; and the pastimes of the people burning barns, murdering landlords and taking an annual title of Protestant parsons with bludgeons and blunderbusses, instead of allowing them to take their scriptural dues.

So much as a general outline of John Thomas's public opinions; as an individual demonstration of his more private feelings we will briefly say John loved pretty, plump Patty Pride, and, as somehow or other "Hirishmen" with him were always interlopers, he fancied Con Sweeney kept up the national character, or rather want of it, by doing the same, and, therefore, as far as he could hate, he hated Con Sweeney.

We say "as far as he could," because, despite his prejudices, John Thomas had a magnificent corner in his heart, which, like a rainbow, that offspring of a shower, still-born if unamiled on by the genial sun, wanted but a seasonable opportunity to develop itself in all its glory.

In person John was a model for a butler. He lived well and his stout proportions, ponderous calves and rebound nose, like honest witnesses as they were, unequivocally testified to the fact.

His Hirish rival, Con Sweeney—Con being a national condensation for Cornelius—was a dare-devil-boy, of some four or five-and-twenty, with dark curling hair, saucy blue eyes, a somewhat wide and laughter-loving mouth, garnished with a row of as white "ivories" as ever furnished the opening in the head of a Galway lad.

Like all his countrymen he was passionately fond of horses; and many were the bright glances and sweet smiles bestowed upon Con Sweeney when mounted on one of the "Master's" thorough-breds, but no smile or glance had half the charm for the good-looking Irishman as the smiles and glances of pretty, plump Patty Pride; in fact to use his own words, "he was bothered intirely by his love for the colleen."

Patty was black-eyed, rosy-cheeked and although plump, marvellously well-shaped: "Briak as a bee and light as a fairy,"

Tripping about on her little feet like a conceited young fawn, and singing as gaily and sweetly at her work as the hazel-eyed robin.

It has been remarked by a gentleman of the name of Shakspeare, that

"The course of true love never did run smooth. Our tale will prove no exception to this rule for it—was Patty Pride's addiction to coquetry.

She knew John Thomas loved her, and she knew Con Sweeney loved her, and she knew, by reason of certain legal restrictions, she could not conveniently marry both of them; therefore, she knew, or ought to have known, the most proper thing she could do was to make her election; and there was the difficulty that puzzled Patty's brains.

The more she argued the matter with herself the more she doubted.

The pros and cons were sorely conflicting.

John Thomas had the best place, while Con Sweeney had the best face.

Con could dance like an angel, but John had money in the bank!

John might be steward, but Con was thirty years the younger.

Con could sing like a lark and make love like an Irishman, but John Thomas hinted at a marriage settlement—a silk gown and public-house.

Under these conflicting circumstances Patty Pride went on doubting, and the arrow of love was converted into the shaft of discord.

Thus precisely similar effects—though from different causes—were visible in the upper and lower portions of the establishment; declining affection in the drawing rooms producing the same uneasiness in Sir Methusalah and Lady Rust, that incipient love in the servant's hall caused John Thomas, Con Sweeney and Patty Pride.

CHAPTER II.

Will our reader be kind enough to call to mind the parting of Sir Methusalah and Lady Rust, described in the conclusion of

our opening chapter? Each the victim of ill temper and each brooding over fancied wrongs and insults.

Sir Methusalah sought his library; my lady the drawing room.

We will leave my lady gazing listlessly out upon the beautiful lawn in a state of metaphysical wonderment as to what on earth she was born for, and follow Sir Methusalah to the library.

Seated in his luxurious easy chair, after having given vent to some vehement mutterings and dissatisfied grumbings, we find him poring over a large black letter volume of ancient legends. By degrees the lines of anger pass from his face and an expression of deep interest invests every feature. See! he has raised his head from the book; an hour has passed, and the legend is concluded. Hark! he speaks!

"Pshaw! stuff! nonsense! it cannot be; I won't believe it! Yet it certainly appears well attested. Strange! This very night! There can be no harm in making the experiment. I am determined—I'll watch!"

And now Sir Methusalah has put on his hat and strolled forth in the direction of the village church.

My Lady Rust, tired of her "own bad company," has entered the library; how listlessly she turns over the splendid volumes. She leaves the cases and approaches the table; her eyes fall on the quaint old black letter tome; in a few seconds they seem rivetted upon its open page, and with difficulty she manages to decipher the obsolete characters and reads aloud

"YE LEGENDE OF SAINTE MARKE;  
which for the benefit of our fair readers we render as follows:

"Then wend your way to the church-yard drear,  
But speed not with dread, and speed not with fear:  
But ye no taper, nor lamp, no torch  
To guide your steps to the mouldering porch.  
For the sheeted ghosts will be watching there,  
And the dead men's lights will flicker and glare  
With pale blue flames through the midnight air.  
Sigh not, weep not, scarce breathe aloud,  
And touch not a cross, and touch not a shroud:  
But solemnly pass by the ghastly crowd.  
Cross thyself thrice, neither less nor more,  
And fix thine eyes on the chancel's door.  
But speak not as thou dost prize thy soul,  
And when the midnight hour shall toll  
The Doom-day shall pass by the self same grave,  
Ere the year be out, they shall surely fall:  
And thus ye may know  
Who will moulder low  
In their earthy home, if ye list and will,  
For such is the power as, all believe,  
Of a vigil kept on SAINT MARKE HIS EVE!"

A few hours previous, the reading of the ghostly old legend would have excited in the mind of Lady Rust no emotion stronger than a smile at its extravagance, or a sneer at its absurdity; now the words sank deeply into her heart.

A few moments were passed in solemn thought; the result was a resolution to test the truth of the saintly legend.

Among the many droppers-in at Rust Hall was grim Master Adam Mould, the village sexton.

Adam was always a welcome guest at the kitchen of Rust Hall; his tales of strange sounds, strange sights, and mysterious tollings of the church bell, were listened to with breathless attention. As if the whole household was under some electric influence, the theme of Adam Mould's conversation was nothing more or less than the identical legend of Saint Mark, which occupied the attention of Sir Methusalah and his Lady.

Now it so happened that the personal dislikes of John Thomas and Con Sweeney had been aggravated to the highest possible pitch. John Thomas having detested Con Sweeney in the very delightful but improper act of ravishing a kiss from the pouting lips of Patty Pride—while Con Sweeney, equally on the alert, discovered John Thomas actually offering a new silk dress to the little maid.

John had mentally anathematized Con's "Hirish himpudence," and indulged in sundry revengeful feelings.

The legend of Saint Mark had settled deeply down into John Thomas's heart, and he resolved to visit the graveyard, hoping that a bountiful Providence might in its mercy indulge him with a view of a certain "Hirish apparition."

Con Sweeney had soliloquized with much bitterness of feeling, and after the following fashion, the delinquencies of John Thomas.

"Bad luck to him! early and late, and all day long! for the most onpleasant thafe of a schamer, that iver tried to put his comether upon a young crater with his blaguard silk gownds! the villian o' the world! Why don't he court her like a man! Sure there's only one thing I'd do wid pleasure for him, and that is to drink success and long life to his corpse at his wake! Musha! but its glad I'd be to attend it this day! sorrow a word but truth in that."

Here a new light seemed to break in on the exasperated groom. He paused for a

moment; then, after a long whistle, continued—

"Be dad! perhaps its truth ould shovel and skulls, was telling! By the vestments! it's myself that will watch at the ould church porch, and if the villian isn't too onpleasantly fat for a sperrit, musha! who knows but may be I'll see John Thomas's dirty ghost."

Now it so happened, by some strange coincidence, that while Patty Pride was dressing my lady's hair, the mistress and maid were involuntarily reflecting, deeply and seriously, upon the same subject, and that subject was the all-engrossing one, "The Legend of St. Mark," learned by my lady in the quaint verses of the rare old volume, and by Patty—with sundry edifying and marvelous additions—from the grim-looking sexton, Adam Mould.

But Patty made up her mind to have ocular demonstrations that very night being incited thereto by the reflection that if either of her lovers was fated, she ought to know it.

It therefore happened that about half past eleven that night that the five persons mentioned in this story, had thoughts as follows:

"Now for my great coat!" thought the baronet, as he left the library.

"I am determined," whispered my lady, as she passed unseen across the terrace.

"Hit his lawful, but that Hirishman drives me to it," stammered John Thomas, swallowing a reeking tumbler of brandy and water and thrusting a flask of the unadulterated fluid into his pocket.

"Be dad! I'll take this with me," ejaculated Con Sweeney, picking up "a darling of a twig;" "who knows—faith! there may be a shindy; if so, I'm convanient."

"I won't wear my thin shoes, and I've got the catechism in my pocket," prudently and piously exclaimed Patty.

Both husband and wife with bated breath had looked upon what each supposed to be the apparition of the other and fled from the scene.

A shriek, like the death-scream of hope, struck upon the ear of poor John Thomas. It was, to his horror, answered by a yell whose Irish accent admitted of no doubt. Struggling with fear and agony, the butler's gaze fell on the excited visage of the "Hirish" rival. The graves shook beneath his ponderous feetness, and the air was loaded with his fat breath, which found vent in the few but emphatic words—

"Booked by a fast coach hat a very hearily hour."

The shout, impregnated with the Galway accent, had scarcely ceased before a voice, rich with the same perfection, exclaimed—

"Come back, you villain! sperrit or no sperrit, I'm your man. Is it gone, he is? by this and by that—that's John Thomas's ghost; and as far as looks and running go, the moral of himself. Hurrah! Ould Ireland forever! and"—here remembering where he was, Con commenced repeating his prayers, and his retreating figure was soon lost in the distance.

"Poor fellows! both doomed," exclaimed Patty, as she came from her hiding place and hurried away.

CHAPTER III.

Twelve months have passed! twelve months! Twelve letters sum them up, but oh! what worlds of hopes and fears, sorrows and joys, are bounded in the words!

Twelve months have passed, and how? The legend of St. Mark seemed strangely, awfully borne out. The "sheeted dead" had, as they each supposed, appeared to the several terrified visitors to the old church-yard, and the thought of the approaching dissolution of the formerly contending parties had the most salutary results. Small acts of kindness, at first performed from the questionable feeling "that it couldn't be for long," became in a short time habitual, positive pleasures.—Oh, how deeply was every past unkind thought, word and look, regretted!

Sir Methusalah would gaze for hours on his young and beautiful wife, and brood over the slightest tone which had formerly thrilled upon his heart; and as the bitter conviction that he must lose her rushed to his mind, the hot tears would gather in his eyes and a foretaste of his coming desolation make him quiver with exquisite agony; and Lady Rust would rivet her sweet blue eyes upon his face, and as busy memory recalled his nobleness to herself, his generosity to her family, his forbearance at her unworthy petulance, and the justness of his kind remonstrances, a withering shudder would rush through her heart, as she thought on the fatal omen she had seen, and she would throw her-

self, sobbing, into his arms, and in the deep recesses of her soul, implore Heaven to spare,

"So good, so noble and so kind a man."

John Thomas's revulsion of feeling was nothing short of marvellous. He patronized his quondam rival to an unheard of extent—never made the slightest allusion to "White boys, ribbon men or the hallican huet," and desisted entirely from reading aloud—as had been his custom and glory—all paragraphs headed "Another barbarous murder in Hiredland," and tirades against Daniel O'Connell.

Con Sweeney was touched to the soul by this very handsome conduct in what he believed to be a corpse on short leave of absence. He nursed John Thomas with the gentlest assiduity through a long and severe fit of the gout, and John Thomas returned the compliment, if possible with interest, when the vicious Chestnut jammed Con against the park-wall and broke his arm, as John Thomas believed merely by way of practice to perform the same operation on his neck.

If it was, and who doubts it? a pleasant sight to see the generous affection of Sir Methusalah and deep and beautiful devotion of my lady, it was no less delightful to mark the honest and friendly exchange of kindness between fat John Thomas and daring Con Sweeney.

As for Patty Pride, still plump and provokingly pretty as ever, thinking both her beaux doomed to become occupants of premises only suited for the reception of single gentlemen, she so subdued her coquetry, and divided her attentions, that they more added to the happiness than disquietude of her admirers.

Thus had matters stood for twelve months; each dreading but fully expecting the death of the other.

On the fatal anniversary all felt convinced the prediction would be fulfilled, and determined to show their respect for those about to depart

"To another and a better world."

Sir Methusalah appeared at the breakfast-table with a white face, sable suit, and sad heart.

Lady Rust was in the deepest widow's weeds.

They started on seeing each other's costume; they were speechless, but the tears burst from my lady's eyes as she thought, "this is a confirming presentment."

Sir Methusalah was well nigh choked as the same idea flashed across his mind.

"You are in black, Patty! darling!"

"So are you, Mr. Sweeney, and, bless my heart, so is Mr. Thomas."

"Who for?" inquired one of the other servants.

"Ha hexcellent hindividoal," blubbered out John Thomas; "I'd give my right and to save him," and as he spoke he shook Con Sweeney's list with a degree of vigor that could only be exceeded by the vice-like grasp of the warm-hearted Irishman, who sobbed out:

"Whatever may happen, long life to you, John Thomas, darling; may the blessed angel make your bed asy! it's myself that feels more mourning in my heart than a king's funeral could put on my back!"

Here pretty, plump but pale Patty Pride dashed the fast falling tears from her swollen eyes, and taking a hand of each almost whispered:

"Grief and truth are twins; speak, in the name of both, if I have ever offended you, and oh! I know I have often and often, do you both forgive me?"

"From my soul I do by this," said Con Sweeney, smacking her right cheek.

"And I by that," gurgled John Thomas after saluting her left.

"He kisses strong for a dying man," thought the butler.

"Bless his ould heart; he's game to the last," soliloquized the groom.

"They ought neither of them to die for twenty years at least," mentally sighed the lady's maid.

But the time was fast drawing to a close!

Sir Methusalah and Lady Rust sat in sad silence, their hands firmly locked together, and their hearts so rivetted that certain death to both would have been happiness to their dread of losing each other.

Con Sweeney looked with a wondering and watery eye at John Thomas, and blubbered: "Appoplexy!"

John Thomas shook his head dubiously and despondingly as he gazed on Con Sweeney's apparently healthy countenance and whispered with intense feeling, "It will be sudden."

And pretty Patty, glancing from the one to the other and thence for a moment at the looking-glass, sighed, "Love!"

"Twelve! and all alive!"

What can be the meaning of it?

"That's the truth, my own dear wife."

"Thank God! my own loved husband it was yourself."

"The Heavens look down wid smiles upon you this blessed night, you fat old angel! It was meself in the flesh! Give me another hug, good luck to you!" said Con.

"An undred, my Ibernian friend, and that's not all I'll give you—take Patty's hand—no words! I'm the holdest, and ought to take the first warning, and John Thomas can pay with his honest savings if he is called upon as god-father."

Musha thir!

But the story's done and a happier family never breathed.

Is there not a slight moral in this lightness? Would not the thought that the day must come when the grave will be the home of all, soften down our antipathies, humanize our tempers, and, by its wholesome remembrance, effect in all our lives great good.