

## CHAPTER III

### THE LEEMING PARSONAGE

We may build more splendid habitations,

Fill our rooms with painting and with sculpture;

But we cannot

Buy with gold the old associations!

Ceiling and walls and windows old,

Covered with cobwebs, blackened with mould!

—Anon.



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**H**ANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSON tells a charming tale of the goloshes of fortune, which possessed the power of transporting the wearer at a wish back to any past age of the world. For example, into the dubious delights of those "good old times" familiarised by the very minute and particular pencil of Hogarth!

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It is quite one thing to love and reverence the days gone by, that smoothed the path and carved the way for the feet of posterity with such painstaking labor; but it is a vastly different matter to wish to have been ourselves a part and parcel of those times. Far preferable appears the unprejudiced birdseye view of them which we can still obtain if the glass is rightly focussed through breaks in the rolling vapors of time while seated at our ease in the balloon of tradition.

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For instance, the councillor who, in the fairy tale, was longing for "the good old times" as he unwittingly drew on the goloshes, exclaimed as soon as he stepped out on the street, "Why, this is Horrible (with a capital H)! How dreadfully dirty it is," for the whole pavement had vanished and there were no lamps to be seen.

Ancaster has never had any lamps,

not even tallow dips, and is waiting now for the railway before she gets any, but it is easy to fancy how "horrible" the roads and village streets must have been for many months of the year at the time when the first missionary built the old parsonage, so closely bordering on 80 years ago.

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The reason why a site nearly two miles from the church was selected is hard to account for, except on the supposition that all the land in or around the village was fully appropriated, a very large portion of it being in the hands of the ubiquitous Matthew Crooks. Those two additional miles, over a mud road, must have added a considerable item to the ministerial duties, not to mention the ministerial backache.

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To-day the Ancaster plains, as they have always been called, strike one as being rather hot and dry and comparatively shadeless, and at no time do they appear to have been wooded with heavy timber, like the lands falling north and south on either side of them. In those early days, which saw Rev. Ralph Leeming and his people building the first parsonage, we are told that all the plains were covered with a thick growth of scrub, full of game; and through which the red deer wandered in the summer dawns and passed unchallenged from water course to water course. Bears were then a mere circumstance in the daily round, and wolves, even, lurked and howled through the winter nights, and sometimes, growing bold with hunger, would raid the ill-protected sheep folds.

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Over the fields to the south of the old building to-day there is a damp, woodsey swale, where picturesque trees still grow, and romance still lingers,