

WENTWORTH LANDMARKS

CHAPTER I

AN HISTORIC VILLAGE

"I loved the brimming wave that swam
Thro' quiet meadows round the mill.
The sleepy pool above the dam,
The pool beneath it never still,
The meal sacks on the whiten'd floor.
The dark round of the dripping
wheel,
The very air about the door
Made misty with the floating meal."
—Tennyson.



WHEN heaven, assisted by the powers that be, orders up that electric continuation of the Beckett drive, which is to strike Ancaster amidships, it may prove a Jehemiah to trace up this old Jerusalem, to repair its breaches by pulling down the present ghastly array of spectators in stones, and replacing them with the

smart villa residence and the awe-inspiring summer boarding house; also, perhaps, carrying out the expressed opinion of experts that, as a healthy and desirable location for an idiot or inebriate asylum, old Ancaster stands first on the list, offering unrivalled advantages in the shape of wide horizons, church and water privileges and congenial society.

At any rate the railway is an accomplished fact as far as the survey, against whose pegs we often lately, in the elegant words of a defunct bishop, "stub our toes" when meditating along the Mohawk trail in the dusk. Thus, if the matter ends in pegs, we can at least remember that

we once had a survey, just as the crankiest female who stalks, grimly down the vale of years, an unappropriated blessing, can surely recall the time when she had her one offer of marriage!

* * *

One thing generally leads to another, as the man said when he launched out and bought a paper collar, so who can say that new life may not once more flow to the aged village, now high and dry on old time's sand banks, bringing back her bright meridian bloom and vigor of 70 years ago? Fanned by the breath of electricity to spring like a Phoenix from her bed of ashes—ashes, understand, being principally the matter choking up the old place with a fire record unequaled since the days of Sodom, making her an object of terror to her friends, derision to her foes and a hoo-doo to the gulleless insurance agent.

It is rather melancholy, on a summer's day, to stand on the high bridge and watch the waters slouching by like a gang of crystal dwarfs out of a job, idling and playing, and painting the "beautiful, waving hair of the dead", grass green among the fallen ruins, which a few years ago were instinct with the hum of industry, pouring forth at stated hours, with jangle of bells, a cheerful, clattering stream of bread winners, giving life and animation to the scene, in contrast to the occasional man who now meets, the casual glance up street in the sunny noon hours.

* * *

These mill ruins cannot in themselves be found deeply interesting to lovers of antiquity because of their comparative modernity, though they occupy the sites of the more ancient buildings, the Union mill for example. Fire took a hand in at an early date