#### Woodbridge's Investment.

BY HELEN FOREST GRAVES.

THE flery crimson of the stormy November sunset was staining all the hills with its lurid glare-the wind, murmering restlessly among the dead leaves that lay heaped over the wood paths, seemed to mourn, with almost human voice-But the autumnal melancholy without, only served to heighten the cheerfulness of the roaring wood fire, whose ruddy glow danced and quivered over the rough rafters of Farmer Woodbridge's old kitchen, sparkling on the polished surfaces of platters and glimmering brasses, and sending streams of radiance through the uncurtained windows out upon the darkening road.

"Yes,-as I was savin' afore," observed the old farmer, rubbing his toil-hardened hands together, and gazing thoughtfully into the fire, "it's been a capital harvest this year. I would't ask for no better. Eh, wife, you jist pick out some o' them yaller pippin apples, and put 'em in Jessie's basket when she calls arter it."

"Won't the little 'uns do as well? I calculated to keep them pippins for market; Squire Berton says thery're worth-

"I don't keer what they're worth," interrupted the farmer, as his helpmate, a spare, angular woman, with a face ploughed with innumerable little lines of care, fingured the yellow cheeked apples dubiously. "I tell you what it is, Keturyfolks never loose anything by doin' a kind thing. I never could make you believe that, unless the pay come right in, in hard eash! Now here's Jessie Moreton, as like ly a gal as ever breathed, teachin' school day in and day out, and her marm sewin' to hum earnin' a livin' by hard workborn ladies, both on 'em. Don't you suppose these apples 'll be worth more to them, if you give 'em with a kind word, than they would be to that pesky, tight-fisted agent up to Hardwiche Hall, if he gave a a dollar a bushel?

"Charity begins to hum;" said Ketury, jerking out the supper-table, with an odd twist of the face. Not but what Jessie's well enough-but you'd better scratch your pennies together to pay up the mortgage, if you don't want the Hardwiche agent foreclosing on you. And them pippins is just so good as so much money. There they be, anyhow, in the basket-one of your investments, I guess !"

"One of your investments then, if you like to call it so, Ketury," said the farmer. with a good humored laugh, banishing the annoyed expression that had overspread his face when she alluded to the mortgage. "Come 'long Jessie, my gal," he added cheerily, as a light touch sounded on the door latch. "Here's the basket, all right and some of them golden pippins tucked in to't. Maybe they'll tempt your mother's appetite."

Jessie Moreton was a slender, graceful girl of about seventeen, with satin-smooth bands of chestnut hair, parted above a low, sunny forehead, large liquid eyes, and cheeks which Farmer Woodbridge always declared "set him to thinkin' of them velvet lookin' Jarsey peaches that grew on the trees down in the south medder." She took up the little basket with a graceful smile that went even to the flinty heart of Mrs. Ketury.

"O, Mr. Woodbridge, how kind you always are to us! If I were only rich-if I could only make some return-"

"Don't you say a word about that are," said the farmer rubbing his nose very hard. "Jest you run hum as fast as you can put, for it is getting most dark, and the November winds ain't no ways healthy as I ever heerd on. And I say, Jessie, if it rains to-morrow so you can't go to school handy, just stop here and I'll give you a lift in my waggon."

"Dear Mr. Woodbridge," soliloquized Jessie Moreton to herself, as her light footsteps pattered along on the fallen leaves. how many times I have had cause to thank his generous heart. And to think he should be so distressed about the mortgage by the agent at Hardwiche Hall."

She paused for a moment to look up to where the stately roofs and gambles of the Hall rose darkly outlined against the crimson that still burned stormily in the sky. On a commanding height, and nearly hidden in trees, many of whom still retained their brilliant autumn foliage, it seemed

almost like an old baronial castle. "There it stands," she mused, shut up and silent, year after year; its magnificent rooms untenanted; the flowers blossoming ungathered in its conservatories. Since Mr. Hardwiche died-twenty years since, mamma says-the family has been away and now the only surviving heir is traveling, no one knows where. I wonder if he knows how grasping and cruel his agents are? Oh, dear," she added softly, "money does not always come where it is most needed. If I were the mistress of Hard-

She started with a slight scream the next moment, as a tall figure rose up from a mossy border on the roadside, directly in front of her.

"Pardon me," said a voice that instantly reassured her, for it was too gentle to come from any one but a gentleman, "but my way. Is this the Elden road? I was now you see what it's brought ye tew."

wating for some one to come and direct

"This is the Elden road," said Jessie, all unconscious that the last gleams of the fading sunset were lighting up her fair, innocent face with almost angelle beauty, as she stood there among the fallen leaves,

"And can you tell me the shortest footpath to Hardwiche Hall. I have not been in this neighborhood since I was a child, and I am completely at fault."

Jessie hesitated a moment. "I could show you better than tell you, for it is rather a complicated road," she said, "and if you will accept my service as a guide it will not be much out of my way."

"I shall feel very much honored," said the stranger. "Meanwhile let me carry your basket. "

It was a wild lovely walk, winding among moss-garland trees, and hollows, sweet with aromatic incense of dying leaves. Jessie could not help admiring the chivalric manners and polished courtesy of her companion, and he was more pleased with the blooming loveliness and girlish dignity of his young guide. A few adroit questions respecting Hardwiche Hall and its neighborhood sufficed to draw forth a spirited abstract of the character of the Hardwiche agent, and the imposition he was wont to practice upon the tenants and neighbors, as well as an arch description of most of the "characters" thereabouts. Then he continued to learn all about Jessie's little school, and her ailing mother, and he smiled to himself in the the twilight, to observe the pride of her mein, when she alluded to the high position from which unforseen reverses had compelled her mother to descend.

"Then she said suddenly pausing with a feeling as if she had been almost too communicative, "if we could only cross vonder lawn, the gates are close by, but we shall have to go a quarter of a mile around."

"Why?" asked the stranger. "Mr. Talcott will not allow travelers to

cross here—he says it is private property." "I fancy I shall dare Mr. Talcott's wrath." said the gentleman, laughing, as he pushed open the wire gate that defended the forbidden space. "It is perfectly absurd to make people go a quarter of a mile out of their way for a mere whim."

They had scarcely entered the enclosure when they met an unlooked for obstacle, Talcott himself, who was prowling over the grounds on the qui vive for trespassers.

"Hallo, here!" growled he; "just turn back if you please. This isn't the public thoroughfare."

The stranger held Jessie's arm under his own a little tighter, as if to repress her evident inclination to "beat a retreat." He was disposed to maintain his position.

"I don't see any reasonable cause why we shouldn't go ahead, he said pertinaciously. There is a path here, and I suppose it was made to walk on."

"Not for you," said the agent, contemptuously, "so go back as fast as you can."

"Is it possible that people are made to travel a circuitous and unpleasant route for no other earthly reason than your caprices, sir?" asked the gentleman, looking down at the little man, from the altitude of his six feet, with a kind of laughing scorn. "Did it ever occur to you, friend, that others had rights and conveniences as well as yourself?"

"Can't help their rights-nothing to me," snarled the agent, planting himself obstinately in the path. "I forbid all passing here."

"But I suppose Everard Hardwiche may have the privilege of crossing his own land?" persisted the stranger, still presenting the half contemptuous smile that had from the beginning made the agent so uncomfortable.

Talcott grew, not exactly pale, but yellow with consternation.

"Mr. Hardwiche-sir, I did not knowwe did not expect---'

"No-I know you didn't, my good man. Be so kind as to step aside, and allow me to pass with the lady. Miss Jessie, don't forget that I need your services a few minutes yet. When we reach the house, I will prolong my walk to your cottage. Nay, don't shrink away from me, are we not to be very good friends?"

"The prettiest girl I ever saw in my life," was his internal comment, as he at length parted from her at the little gate, where "burning blushes" and dark green ivy were trained together with all a woman's taste.

The Christmas snows lay white and deep on the farm house eaves-the Christmas logs crackled on the hearth, where Mr. Woodbridge still gazed dreamily into the glowing cinders, and Mrs. Ketury's knitting needles clicked with electric speed.

"That mortgage it bothers me-it bothers me," he murmured, almost plaintively. "Well, I'spose it ain't no use frettin'; but I had thought to live and die in the old place where my father did afore me. The Lord's will be done, though. Somehow things haint prospered with me-I don't seem to get along."

"You'd ha' got along well enough, I guess," responded Ketury, who belonged super emineutly to that class of people known as "Job's comforters," "if you'd only looked after your p's and q's as I told I am not certain but I believe I have lost you. You always was too free handed; and

"Well, well, Ketury, who ever did think alike on some things," returned the old man. "Let's talk about a pleasanter subject. What do you think about our school ma'am's marrying young Mr. Hardwich to-morrow? Didn't I always tell you that Jessie Moreton was born to be a lady? I may be unlucky myself, but anyhow, I'm giad to hear a little of Jessie's luck."

"You'd a great deal better keep your sympathy for yourself," growled Ketury. "What's other folk's luck to you, I'd like to know? There, some one's knocking at the door ; see who 'tis."

It was a little note, brought by one of the school-boys under Jessie's care.

"Where's my glasses? I can't see as well as I could once. Shove the candle this way, will you, Ketury?" And fitting his brass-bowed spectacles upon his nose, the old man unfolded the note and read, in Jessie's delicate chirography:

"Do not let that mortgage disturb your Christmas Day, to-morrow, dear father Woodbridge. It will never haunt your hearthstone again. Mr. Hardwiche will send you the papers to-morrow, to destroy. This is Jessie's Christmas present. I have not forgotten those 'golden pippins' nor all the other kindness.

"Aha, wife !" said the old man smiling and trying to brush away, unseen, the big tears that would come, "what do you think of my investment, now?"

Ketury's reply was neither elegant nor, strictly speaking, grammatical, but it was significant. She said simply:

" Well, I never, !"

#### Among the Big Trees.

Grace Greenwood, in a letter from California says: We had a day of pure enjoyment in the woods. We drove for five or six miles up the beautiful canyon of San Lorenzo, a shadowed, winding, mountain road, such as we find no where but on this coast, and picniced among the "big trees." These are gigantic redwoods, not quite equal to those of Calaveras or Mariposa, but wait a few hundred years and you will see. The largest, named for Fremont, is two hundred and ten feet in height, and eighteen feet in diameter. In the hollow trunk he had his quarters for a while. A man can ride into this and stable his horse. I was told that a devoted wife once spent several months with her husband, a lumberman, and kept a couple of boarders. I felt for her. I know what it is to live in a trunk. By the way, a young fellow passenger on the coach told us several astonishing stories about some big trees near Visalia. One, he said, parted into three about six feet above the ground, and at the point of separation there was a hollow, which was always filled with water-was, in fact, a little lake thirty feet wide and seventeen feet deep. So you could boat or bathe in it, if you wished to, or bob for eels. He described the monstrous hollow trunk of a tree into which he rode on horseback, and after tring in vain to reach the concave ceiling with his cane, galloped on for a distance, and then calmly rodes out through a knot-hole-a providential opening for the young man. But I have found that the only safe way in this country is to doubt nothing that you hear. I have an impression that I shall at some time come upon the tree with its remarkable water privileges; perhaps find it utilized into a railroad tank or a babtistry. I half expec to ride into the same trunk proceeded by my young fellow-traveler and to emerge at the same knot-hole.

## Why We Should Wear Beards.

There are more solid inducements for wearing the beard than the mere improvement of a man's personal appearance and the cultivation of such an aid to the everyday diplomacy of life. The hair of the moustache not only absorbs the moisture and miasma of the fogs, but it strains the air from dust and the soot of our great smoky cities. It acts also in the most scientific manner, by taking heat from the warm breath as it leaves the chest, and supplying it to the cold air taken in. It is not only a respirator, but with a beard entire we are supplied with a comforter as well, and these are never left at home like the umbrellas and all such appliances when they are wan-

Moffat and Livingstone, the explorers, and many other travellers say that at night no wrapper can equal the beard. A remarkable fact is, too, that the beard, like the hair of the head, protects against the heat of the sun; it acts as the thatch does to the icehouse; but, more than this, it becomes moist with the perspiration, and then, by evaporation, cools the skin.

A man who accepts this protection of Nature, may face the rudest storm and the hardest winter. He may go from the hottest room into the coldest air without dread; and we verily believe that he might sleep in a morass with impunity; at least his chance of escaping the terrible fever would be better than his beardless companions.

TT A Kansas paper has the following advertisement: "Engaged-Miss Anna Gould to John Candall, City Marshal of Leavenworth, Kansas. From this time henceforth and forever-until Miss Anna Gould becomes a widow-young men are requested to withdraw their particular attentions."

#### A TALE OF PANTALOONS.

A Fair Exchange in the Dark.

DAVENPORT legal gentleman went A out one evening last week to have a quiet game of billiards. He stuck to the one for several faithful hours, convivalized with his friend still longer, and then went home. On retiring to rest he was most singularly uneasy, and tossed about for some time without dropping into that peaceful slumber we usually derive from a clear conscience. His lady was annoyed, and complained kindly. It was no use, however; something drove sleep from his eyelids. At this juncture his lady was taken suddenly ill (how fortunate that he was awake!) and he was appealed to hasten off to the nearest drug store in quest of a restorative. He hastily attired himself, double-quicked down the street, rushed into the store, obtained the article so urgently required, and produced his pocketbook. Great Casar! what had transpired! He had never seen that wallet before; and the pants they were not his own. Could it be possible he was in his right mind? Was it not rather all a distempered dream? He resolved to see and without stopping to take the remedy with him, he rushed back to the wife of his bosom. He did not flourish a revolver, he did not smash furniture, he did not strike attitudes like a gladiator-he simply took part in the following conversation.

"Jane ?"

"Yes, dear." "How are you feeling?"

"Better. Much better. I think a good sleep is all that I now need. How kind of you to go to so much trouble,"

"Very kind, wasn't it?" "Very kind, honey."

"Jane, shall I turn on the gas."

"If you like, dear." The gas was turned on.

"Jane?" "Yes, dear."

"Do these look like my pantaloons?"

"Why, what you mean, dear?"

"I mean, do those resemble the trousers were home this evening?"

"Why, how can I tell, dear?" and Jane raised up with some surprise and reluctance, gave a quick glance, and screamed

outright.

"Husband," said she, with embarrassment, "you've made a ridiculous mistake while out with your friends. What in the world have you been doing to-night?"

"That's rather thin, Jane. We don't usually take off our pants to play billiards. When I went to bed to-night I laid my proper pantaloons on that chair. When I dressed to go out, the pair I had on first fell in my way. I put them on. I discovered at the store they were not mine. I returned at once, and now I find the pair I left on the chair are missing."

Jane began to sob, weep, and protest her innocence, while the husband paced the floor in deen reflection.

"Jane," at last he said, "I guess you can go home to your parents to-morrow. You and I have gotten along very well for a year or two, but the things, played."

And down stairs he went with a deaf ear to the frenzied appeal and prayers she showered after him. An investigation on the morrow disclosed the fact that the mysteriously procured pataloons contained just \$300 more than the pair that had so mysteriously walked off. Jane left on the first train for her Illinois home. A bill of divorce had been filed, and no one has exchanged pantaloons and pocket-books.

Tar An interesting story is told of Mr. Harper, the owner of Longfellow, and his white rider, before the race at Long Branch, The old man observed something mysterious but said nothing. He telegraphed to Kentucky for the colored boy who had driven Longfellow before, to be sent immediately to Long Branch. He arrived, but not a word was said, and the white rider was dressed for the contest with Harry Bassett. Then the old man told him that he thought the colored boy could ride better that day than he. The colored boy was dressed in a moment, mounted upon Longfellow and won the race. And now comes the conclusion; The white boy was seen by Mr. Harper to have a roll of money showing that he had been tampered with.

What is the most desirable age of life? We put this question to a few friends lately and received the following replies, but dq not consider any of them satisfactory; A banker thought coin-age the best age; a tailor, cabb-age ; a soldier, pill-age ; a toper, vint-age; a hungry man, saus-age; an ambitious lady, carri-age; a brave man, courage ; a dram-drinker, drain-age ; a joker, badin-age; a musician, band-age; a slaveowner, bond-age; a laborer, cott-age; a Scotchman, porr-age, and two silly fools, marriage.

"I never go to church," said an irreverent man to a pious lady: "I always spend Sunday in settling accounts." "There is another day," said the lady, "that will be spent in the same way." "What day?" asked the man. "The day of judgment," was the solemn reply.

Slander is more accumulative than a snowball. It is like a salad, which every one will season to his own taste or the taste of those to whom he offers it.

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