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PLAIN AND ORNAMENTAL

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—Mrs. Denison.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

THE OLD MAN ALWAYS RIGHT.

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSON.

I take it for granted that you have been in the country, and seen a very old farm-house with a thatched roof, and mosses and small plants growing wild upon the thatch. There is a stork's nest on the summit of the gable; for we can't do without the stork. The walls of the house are sloping, and the windows are low, and only one of the latter is made so that it will open. The baking-oven sticks out of the wall like a little fat body. The elder-tree hangs over the paling, and beneath its branches, at the foot of the paling, is a pool of water in which a few ducks are disporting themselves. There is a yard-dog, too, who barks at all comers.

Just such a farm-house stood out in the country; and in this house dwelt an old couple—a peasant and his wife. Small as was his property, there was a single article they could do without—a horse, which made a living out of the grass it found by the high road. The old peasant rode into town on this horse; and often his neighbors borrowed it from him, and rendered the old couple some service in return for the loan of it. But they thought it would be best if they sold the horse, or exchanged it for something that might be more useful to them. But what might this something be?

"You'll know the best, old man," said the wife. "It is fair to-day, so ride into town, and get rid of the horse for money, or make a good exchange; whichever you do will be right with me. Ride to the fair."

So she fastened his neckerchief for him, for she could do that better than he could; and she tied it in a double bow, for she could do that very prettily. Then she brushed his hat round and round with the palm of her hand, and gave him a kiss. So he rode away upon the horse that was to be sold or to be bartered for something else. Yes, the old man knew what he was about.

The sun shone hotly down, not a cloud was to be seen in the sky. The road was very dusty, for many people, who were all bound for the fair, were driving, or riding or walking upon it. There was no shelter anywhere from sunbeams.

Among the rest was a man trudging along, and driving a cow to the fair. The animal was as beautiful a creature as any cow could be.

"She gives good milk, I'm sure," said the peasant. "That would be a very good exchange—the cow for the horse."

"Hallo, you there with the cow!" he said. "I'll tell you what—I fancy a horse costs more than a cow, but I don't care for that; a cow would be more useful to me. If you like we'll exchange."

"To be sure I will," said the man; and they exchanged accordingly.

So that was settled, and the peasant might have turned back, for he had done the business he came to do; but as he had once made up his mind to go the fair, he determined to proceed merrily to have a look at it; so on went through the town with his cow.

Leading the animal, he strode sturdily on; and after a time he overtook a man who was driving a sheep. It was a good fat sheep, with a fine fleece on its back.

I should like to have that fellow, said our peasant to himself. "He would find plenty of grass by our paling, and in the winter we could keep him in the room with us. Perhaps it would be more practicable to have a sheep instead of a cow. Shall we exchange?"

The man with the sheep was quite ready, and the bargain was struck. So the peasant went on in the high-road with his sheep.

Soon he overtook another man, who came into the road from a field, carrying a goose under his arm.

"That's a heavy thing you have there. It has plenty of feathers and plenty of fat, and would look well tied to a string and paddling in the water at our place. That would be something for my old woman; she could make all kinds of profit out of it. How often she has said; 'If we only had a goose!' Now, perhaps she can have one; and, if possible, it shall be hers. Shall we exchange? I'll give you my sheep for your goose, and thank you into the bargain."

The other man had not the least objection; and accordingly they exchanged, and our peasant became proprietor of the goose.

By this time he was very near the town. The crowd on the highroad became greater and greater; there was quite a crush of men and cattle. They walked in the road, and close by the palings; and at the barrier they even walked into the toll-man's potato field, where his one fowl was strutting about, with a string to its leg, lest it should take fright at the crowd, and stray away and so be lost. This fowl had short tail feathers, and winked with both eyes and looked very cunning. "Cluck, cluck!" said the fowl. What it thought when it said this I cannot tell you; but as soon as our good man saw it, he thought, "That's the finest fowl I've ever seen in my life! Why, it's finer than our parson's brood hen. On my word, I should like to have that fowl. A fowl can always find a grain or two, and can almost keep itself. I think it would be a good exchange if I could get that for my goose?"

"Shall we exchange?" he asked the toll-taker.

"Exchange!" repeated the man; "well, that would not be a bad thing."

And so they exchanged; the toll-taker at the barrier kept the goose, and the peasant carried away the fowl.

Now, he had done a good deal of business on his way to the fair, and he was hot and tired. He wanted something to eat, and a glass of brandy to drink; and soon he was in front of the inn. He was just about to step in when the hostler came out, so they met at the door. The hostler was carrying a sack.

"What have you in that sack?" asked the peasant.

"Rotten apples," answered the hostler; "a whole sackful of them—enough to feed the pigs with."

"Why, that's terrible waste! I should like to take them to my old woman at home. Last year the old tree by the turf-hole only bore a single apple, and we kept it on the cupboard till it was quite rotten and spoilt. It was always property, my old woman said; but here she could see a quantity of property—a whole sackful. Yes, I shall be glad to show them to her. What will I give? I will give my fowl in exchange."

And he gave the fowl accordingly, and received the apples which he carried into the guest-room. He leaned the sack carefully by the stove, and then went to the table. But the stove was hot; he had not thought of that. Many guests were present—horse dealers, ox-herds, and two Englishmen—and the two Englishmen were so rich that their pockets bulged out with gold coins, and almost burst; and they could bet too, and you shall hear.

Hiss—s—s! hiss—s—s! What was that by the stove? The apples are beginning to roast?

"What is that?"

"Why, do you know—," said our peasant.

And he told the story of the horse that he had changed for a cow, and all the rest it, down to the apples.

"Well, your old woman will give it to you well when you get home!" said one of the two Englishmen. "There will be a disturbance."

"What—give me what?" said the peasant. "She will kiss me, and say, 'What the old man does is always right?'"

"Shall we wager?" said the Englishmen. "We'll wager coined gold by the ton—a hundred pounds to the hundred weight!"

"A bushel will be enough," replied the peasant. "I can only set the bushel of apples against it; and I'll throw myself and my old woman into the bargain—and I fancy that's piling up the measure."

"Done—taken!"

And the bet was made. The host's carriage came up, and the Englishmen got in, and the peasant got in; away they went, and soon they stopped before the peasant's hut.

"Good-evening, old woman."

"Good-evening, old man."

"I've made the exchange."

"Yes, you understand what you're about," said the old woman.

And she embraced him and paid no attention to the stranger guests, nor did she notice the sack.

"I got a cow in exchange for the horse," said he.

"Heavens be thanked!" said she. "What glorious milk we shall have, and butter and cheese on the table! That was a capital exchange!"

"Yes, but I changed the cow for a sheep."

"Ah, that's better still!" cried the wife. "You always think of everything; we have just pasture enough for a sheep. Ewe's milk and cheese, and woolen jackets and stockings! The cow can not give those, and her hair will only come off. How you think of everything!"

"But I changed away the sheep for a goose."

"Then this year we shall really have roast goose to eat, my dear old man. You are always thinking of giving me pleasure. How charming that is! We can let the goose walk about with a string to her leg, and she'll grow fatter still before we roast her."

"But I gave away the goose for a fowl!" said the man.

"A fowl? That was a good exchange," replied the woman. "The fowl will lay eggs and hatch them and we shall have chickens; we shall have a whole poultry-yard! Oh, that's just what I was wishing for."

"Yes but I exchanged the fowl for a sack of shriveled apples."

"What?—I must positively kiss you for that," exclaimed the wife. "My dear, good husband! Now, I will tell you something. Do you know you had hardly left me this morning, before I began thinking how I could give you something very nice this evening. I thought it should be pancakes with savory herbs. So I went over to the school-master's—they have herbs there, I know—but the school-mistress is a mean woman, though she looks so sweet. I begged her to lend me a handful of herbs. 'Lend?' she answered me, 'nothing at all grows in our garden, not even a shriveled apple. I could not even lend you a shriveled apple, my dear woman.' But now I can lend her ten, or a whole sackful. That I'm very glad of; that makes me laugh!" And with that she gave him a sounding kiss.

"I like that!" exclaimed both the Englishmen together. "Always going down hill, and always merry; that's worth the money." So they paid a hundred weight of gold to the peasant, who was not scolded, but kissed.

Yes, it always pays when the wife sees and always asserts that her husband knows best, and that whatever he does is right.

How Resumption Worked in England.

[Cincinnati Gazette.]

The situation of this country has features so like those in England, before the resumption of specie payments in 1821, that analogy may enable us to predicate an opinion of the working of the resumption which is to take place here January 1. In England resumption revived trade. Things began to move. Confidence was restored. Credit was renewed. This ran, in the course of three or four years, to a great expansion of credit, and to wild speculative undertakings. We hope this is not to follow in our country. No sound man wants another depreciation of money, that confidence in the future should be restored, and that the country should throw off this paralysis. And it is certain that it will.

The Bank of England suspended specie payments in February, 1797. As in the Chase financiering, this had forced it to contract its issues. From 1770 to 1797 the annual average of circulation was about £4,000,000. The drain made by Pitt, which was almost a forced loan, made the bank increase its issues to six millions 1794, and to fourteen millions in 1795. At the time of suspension it had reduced its circulation to £8,640,250, which caused great distress. In August of the same year they were £11,114,150; in February 1798, £13,095,320; February, 1799, £12,959,800; in 1814 and the next three years it was twenty-four millions; in the next three years it was twenty-seven millions, which was the highest point reached before resumption was accomplished.

In the meantime there was a great increase in the number and circulation of country banks. The number rose from 353 in 1797 to 940 in 1814. There are no accurate returns of their circulation in that period, but in 1814 it has risen to twenty-two millions. As in our currency inflation the expansion of credit was several fold greater than of currency, as is shown by the increase in the amount of bills discounted by the banks. The depreciation, as shown by the specie standard, was nothing for the first four years after suspension. The highest premium on gold was twenty-nine per cent. in 1813. All are aware that the gold premium in this country did not actually measure the depreciation of the currency. The situation of England, making specie flow there naturally, made this still less accurate as a measure of the depreciation of the currency in its general purchasing power.

There was a much greater inflation of currency and prices than was shown by this premium on gold. The general inflation of prices and credit and new enterprises was like that in our country when our 400 million of greenbacks and 300 million of bank notes got fairly working, after the first scare of the war a reaction began. Prices declined. Failures from this cause broke many of the banks, and so reduced the currency. The fall in prices broke down confidence in the future, and a paralysis came on like that which our country experienced. Soon after the final overthrow of Napoleon gold fell so that in October, 1816, it was only 16d. in the pound higher than before suspension.

Specie accumulated in the banks, and in April, 1817, it began to pay its £1 and £2 notes and in 1819 it attempted to resume on all. But there had not yet been a sufficient adjustment of the enormous debts created by the gigantic struggle, and Parliament ordered a suspension the same year. And then it passed a resumption act, providing a resumption on a sliding scale, beginning with a discount on the notes in 1820 and reaching par in 1823. Then the bank began to contract its issues, and continued to do so until the close of 1822, in which year it averaged £18,165,000 against 25 millions in 1819. The aggregate circulation of the bank and the country banks had been reduced from, in round numbers, 47 millions in 1814 to 31 millions in 1821.

In May, 1821, the condition of the bank was such that it waived the further time, and the privilege of redeeming only in gold bars at a premium, and resumed fully in gold at par. This had an immediate reviving effect on the whole country. Resumption having taken place without any shock, it relieved the people from apprehension, and from all the restraints which this had imposed. In the rebound from the long prostration they rose to an extreme of confidence which caused a tide of speculation to set in. The country banks fed this by increasing their circulation. In the general confidence the call for bank redemption was merely nominal.

The public finances of England have never been distinguished by skill. The Government at this time added to the fuel of inflation by resolving to reduce £80,000,000 of 4 per cents. to 3s, paying off those who refused to convert. This threw a large amount of money into circulation, seeking higher interest. The working of all this was a rage of inflation of credit and of speculation such as England never saw before, and which compares with our speculative era of 1835 to '37. This culminated in 1825, and in 1826 the revulsion brought terrible distress upon the country, all of which finally brought about a reconstruction of the English banking and note issuing systems.

We hope that no such inflation is to come upon this country, nor do we think it can come, but the lesson which can be drawn from this is that here, as in England, all the distress and distrust of resumption have preceded the day of resumption, and that instead of making a shock, or a contraction, or a run for redemption, it will release the country from apprehension and from its long paralysis, and that confidence will rise with a bound and all things will begin to move. Our banks can not increase their issues without putting up security bonds, but they can circulate the notes they have got, and we predict that the conditions will bring an increase of national bank circulation. In all probability the call upon the Treasury for redemption of greenbacks will be small, and, furthermore, the Secretary is required by law to first pay out greenbacks when he has them.

The money is all in existence, but it does not circulate. It stagnates in hoards and banks. All things are waiting. Every one thinks something is going to happen. They know not exactly what, but the fear of the unknowable has no bonds. But the something has happened. We have traveled over the hard road of appreciating money until it has reached par not only in gold, but in its purchasing power in general commodities. The very beginning of resumption will show to all that the bottom is reached. This is a foundation for confidence. The paper dollar is now as good as gold. No sane man wants that it should fall below gold again. But when resumption shall have assured the people that we have reached firm ground, it is inevitable that release from the long apprehension will give a bound to confidence and to all kinds of enterprise.

TRICHINA.

Some Valuable Information Imparted by Two Eminent Microscopists of Chicago.

Two eminent microscopists of Chicago, (H. F. Atwood, President of the State Microscopical Society, and Dr. W. T. Belfield, Demonstrator of Physiology at the Rush Medical College), on the 10th submitted to the Health Commissioner the result of their examination of the flesh of one hundred hogs, in response to the following questions:

"To what extent is the pork of Chicago affected with trichina?"

"To what extent are these parasites dangerous to health or life?"

"Are trichinous animals generally out of health?"

"Can reliance be placed upon thorough salting or smoking of meat as destructive to trichina?"

"Are there any practical means by which our Meat Inspectors can detect parasites in a carcass of meat?"

The scientists report that they took two pieces from each hog—one from the tenderloin and one from the ham—cutting the pieces into thin longitudinal sections, which we placed under a Bullock binocular instrument with an amplification of about seventy-five diameters. Eight of the hundred hogs were found to be infected, some badly, while in others comparatively few parasites were found. In all cases the hams were apparently free from trichina, those found always being contained in the tenderloin. In one specimen there were 13,000 to the cubic inch, the smallest number being thirty-five. To the question as to whether trichinous hogs are generally out of health, the microscopists answered in the negative, citing their experiment with a white rat three weeks old, to which they fed trichinous pork till it was nearly three months old. The rat thrived amazingly on the food, and when it was killed was found to be literally alive with trichina from the tip of its nose to the end of its tail. As to the means by which inspectors can detect trichina in the carcass of meat, they reply that a microscope is the only infallible means. It is found, however, that sulphurous acid not only kills worms instantly, but readily permeates the entire ham, and is as readily expelled. They recommend the use of a small quantity of this acid in the pickle for curing hams. Ordinary salting and smoking does not destroy the parasite, but a thorough cooking of the pork is a safe precaution.

WEATHER SIGNS.—Wild grapes beat goose bone, corn husks and all the signs. Last year, when the latter were predicting an unusually cold winter, the wild grapes foretold an exceedingly mild winter. When the one cold snap came on we felt that the grape sign was a failure, but our Nicholas County reporter told us not to give up, that during his long life he had never seen a cold winter when there were few wild grapes for the birds to live on. Now, as the grapes are abundant, look out for cold.—[Kentuckian.

FOR the first time since 1861 gold was sold at par last week in Wall street. Over $1,720,000 in gold was sold at 100, although in the early part of the day a Broad street firm tried, but without success, to get a premium of one-sixteenth.

THE New York Mail thinks Talmage has missed his vocation. He should be writing blood and thunder stories for the New York Weekly or the Police Gazette.