

holds one hundred dollars worth of wheat has as much wealth as one who has one hundred gold dollars—that is he has as much purchasing power. He can turn his wheat into dollars at any moment, and these again into whatever he requires. A man who inherits two thousand dollars in cash is no wealthier than he who inherits fifty acres of land, worth \$40 per acre. How then has coined money come to be regarded as the essence, or highest embodiment, of wealth? Because it is one of the most condensed and effective forms of wealth, one of the forms in which it is most striking to the senses, and the one in which it is most easily used as a purchasing power. It is wealth in motion and in action, displaying publicly its wonderful forces. The possessor of lands or goods may have no realizing sense of his riches till he has turned them into cash. Then he immediately feels his being enlarged. He has “money in his pocket,” and he feels a thrill of power. He has roused the sleeping giant who is his slave, and he rejoices in the exercise of his gigantic strength. He says to himself “This is indeed wealth; all my energies henceforth shall be devoted to obtaining money.”

The delusion is further heightened by the loose application of the word money to what is only money's-worth. We say “he makes money”—“he is worth untold money”—“he will leave a pot of money”—when we only mean wealth or property. The use of this figure of speech arises from the popular idea of money already referred to, and both the idea and the colloquial usage mutually strengthen each other.

It is quite another thing to ask whether wealth in the form of money is more desirable than other wealth. There are many circumstances in which it is, because it is so merchantable, convenient to keep, and steady in value. But it is to be remembered that the holder of money must forego the use he might otherwise make of that much wealth. He cannot keep money and use it, any more than he can eat his cake and have it. We shall consider this more fully when we come to treat of “capital.”

What is a dollar?

A dollar is, by law, when dollars are coined or used as money, a piece of gold of a certain weight and