

THE CURRENCY.

MONEY: ITS USES AND ITS FORM.

THERE are few things with which people are more familiar than the ordinary dealings with money ; yet there is nothing in common use the true nature and functions of which are so little understood. It is, perhaps, a somewhat startling predicate which affirms that nine-tenths of those who daily and hourly handle money in their avocations, or in the usual transactions of domestic life, are entirely ignorant of what money really is, or the definite purpose it subserves. This large proportion of the community look upon a dollar bill or a metal coin as so much actual value. Nothing can be more erroneous. Money is wealth only in the degree that it has the power of producing wealth. A man might be shut up with countless millions, yet die from want of the necessities of life. Wealth consists alone in that which is useful, as contributing to the comfort and pleasure of mankind. A great deal has been said, and quite as much written, to prove that the characteristics of money are involved in some special mystery. But this is not so.

The functions of money are of the simplest character ; it is not until they are applied to the complications of international commerce and the labyrinthian theories of the money-dealers that any mystification appears ; left to its legitimate use, money is the simplest of simple agents.

It is unnecessary to revert to a very early period of the world's history to prove that all trade is barter, or to produce examples of the inconvenience and impracticability of a direct exchange of