

## SWAPPING.

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HE closed the book and put it on the table. With a sigh he said : Emily, it's of no use ; I can't understand political economy or finance. I believe I haven't got any economic brains. I read book after book, and I accept each one until I read the next. There is Kitson, in "Scientific Solution of the Money Question," showing that Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill were all astray, that Jevons got muddled, that Ricardo's law of rent is faulty, that Henry George is utterly inconsistent, that all the definitions of value by previous economists are wrong, and that a thing cannot possess value : it can only have purchasing power. The only writer he compliments as teaching the truth is Macleod, who wrote so absurdly on the wrong side as to prove the very opposite of what he intended to prove, and, "like Samson Agonistes, in slaying his enemies he has slain himself." I am in despair at trying to decide this currency question,—monometallism, bimetallism, greenbackism, free coinage, free paper money. It is all confusion. Good arguments for each and tremendous objections against them all. It's about as hopeful as the effort of those who, Milton says,

" Reasoned high  
Of Providence, foreknowledge, will and fate,  
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute ;  
And found no end, in wand'ring mazes lost."

Thomas Paine, whose writings were said to be no less powerful than the cannon of Washington in the cause of American Independence, said : " I neither read books nor studied other men's opinions. I thought for myself."

Would it be possible for any one with common-sense logic and the plain sentiments of natural morality to think out these questions, even if he couldn't give definitions of wealth, capital, rent and value ? Suppose we try, and see where we shall come out. Let us use common words, that there can be no dispute about, and go back to a primitive state of society. Then step by step we will see how barter, trade, commerce, exchange might develop if people were sensible and honest. We will use a common word to express the topic that we shall discuss, and call it Swapping.

Suppose we were in the Garden of Eden, and Robert and Emily were the sole occupants. There was no serpent to tempt, no voice of one walking in the garden to terrify, no cherubim or flaming sword to keep the way of the tree of life. There were no laws, and apples were free. Being vegetarians and averse to the destruction of life, our food would be easily secured and prepared ; and, as the climate would be mild and no mosquitoes would be admitted, we should need neither skins nor fig-leaves, and there would be no labor spent in having