

The Money Pig

Hans Christian Andersen

There were so many toys in the nursery. On the top of the cabinet stood the penny bank, made of clay in the shape of a little pig. Of course, he had a slit in his back, which had been enlarged with a knife so that silver dollars also could be put in; and two such dollars had been slipped into the box, along with a great number of pennies. The Money Pig was stuffed so full he could no longer rattle, which is the highest honor a Money Pig can attain. There he stood, high up on the shelf, looking down on everything else in the room. He knew very well that with what he had in his stomach he could buy all the other toys, and that's what we call having self-confidence.

The others thought the same, but they didn't speak of it, because there were so many other things to talk about. The cabinet drawer was half open, and a large doll appeared; she was somewhat old, and her neck had been riveted. She peeped out and said, "Now let's play human beings; that's always something!"

Now there was a great commotion, and even the pictures on the walls turned around to show they also had a backside; but that didn't mean they objected.

It was the middle of the night; the moon shone in through the windows and gave free lighting. They were ready to begin the game now, and all of them, even the children's Gocart, which certainly belonged to the coarser, out-of-door-toys, were invited to join the fun.

"Everyone has his own particular value," said the Gocart. "We can't all be noblemen. There must be some to do the work, as they say."

The Money Pig was the only one to receive a written invitation; he stood so high they all thought that he could not hear a verbal message. He didn't answer to say if he would come or not; but if he was to take part they would have to arrange it so that he could enjoy the game from his own home; they would have to make their plans accordingly, and this they did.

The little toy theatre was at once set up in such a way that the Money Pig could look straight into it. They planned to start with a comedy, and afterward have tea and a discussion for mental exercise, and they began with this latter part immediately. The Rocking Horse talked about training and thoroughbreds, and the Gocart spoke about railways and steam power; all of which were subjects belonging to their own professions, so it was proper they should speak on them. The Clock talked about politics-tick, tock!-and knew the time of day, though it was said that it didn't run very well. The Bamboo Cane just stood there, for he was very proud of his brass ferule and his silver top, for he was mounted above and below. And on the sofa lay two embroidered cushions, very pretty and very stupid. And now the play began.

Everybody sat and watched, and the audience had been asked to applaud, crack, and stamp as they were pleased. But the Riding Whip said he never cracked for old folks, only for young ones who weren't yet married.

"I crack for every body," said the Cracker.

"One must, of course, be in the proper place!" thought the Spittoon. And such were their thoughts as the play went on.

The play was worthless, but it was well performed. All of the characters turned their painted sides to the audience, for they were made to be looked at only from that side, not the other. All of them acted splendidly, coming out far beyond the footlights, because the

wires were too long, but this made them all the easier to see. The mended Doll was quite overcome with excitement, so deeply moved that the rivets in her neck got loose. And in his own way, the Money Pig was so enchanted that he resolved to do something for one of the actors, to remember him in his will as the one who should be publicly buried with him when the proper time came.

It was such enjoyment for them that they gave up having tea and went on with their mental exercises. That's what they called playing men and women, and there was no harm in that, because they were only playing. Each one thought of himself and what the Money Pig might think about him, but the Money Pig's thoughts went farthest, for he was thinking about his will and his burial. And when would it be time for this?

Certainly far sooner than you expect. Crash! He fell down from the cabinet, and there he lay on the floor, smashed into bits and pieces, while the pennies hopped and danced about. The smallest spun like tops, and the bigger ones rolled away, particularly one big silver dollar who wanted to go out and see the world. And so he did, and so did all the rest.

The pieces of the Money Pig were swept into the dustbin, but the next day there was a new Money Pig standing on the cabinet. It didn't yet have a penny in it, so it couldn't rattle, and in that much at least it was just like the old one.

But that was a beginning-and it's a good place for us to come to an end.