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“PROPUTTY.” A LECTURETTE IN RHYME.

By J. W. Bengough

I took up my Tennyson lately and read his dialect verse
Of the sturdy old “Northern Farmer,” whose soul was in
his purse;
How he berated Sam, his son, who wanted to marry for
“loove,”
And the folly of such a notion sought earnestly to prove.

“ ‘Ear my ‘erse’s legs,” says he, “as they canters and
canters awaay,
Proputty, proputty, proputty—that’s wot I ‘ears ‘em saay!”
“Proputty, proputty, proputty”—that was the only thing
That to him was of real importance concerning a wedding
ring.

Gentleness, truth and sweetness; a pretty figure and face,
These, and a passionate love, are all very well in their
place;
But to be of any account in blushing, prospective brides,
“Proputty, proputty, proputty”—that must be there,
besides!

Now, to many who read the poem this Northern Farmer
seems
A sordid old grasping wretch, who only of riches dreams;
“Proputty, proputty, proputty.”—so runs his one refrain,
“Proputty, proputty, proputty”—hoarding, profit and gain.

But isn’t this rather unjust? he may have had too much
greed;
We get that impression, somehow, undoubtedly, as we
read;
But to hold it a sacred thing, to be fought for with main
and might,
“Proputty, proputty, proputty”—there the old man was
right!

“Proputty,” what does it mean? It means what *belongs* to
you;
The things that you really own by sanctions both just and
true;

What you *own* because you own yourself and all your powers;
What with those powers you have made,— that's Property; that is yours.

You work and fashion a coat or hat, a picture, a book, or a cart,
And this result of your labor you take to the public mart,
Exchanging it there for what it's worth in money or barter-trade,—
That's Property—what you fairly get for the honest thing you've made.

And the Northern Farmer was right when he said it o'er and o'er:

"Proputty, proputty, proputty,"—it ought to be safe and sure;
What belong! to a man is *his*, yea, every tittle and jot.
That's what Property means, that is its central thought.

And what is true of a man, is equally true of the State;
There's Property just as real that *public* we must rate;
What belongs to me is mine; what belongs to the mass—to all,
Is theirs; and betwixt these rights there is, so to speak, a wall.

The Northern Farmer spoke true—Property *does* exist,
And that it's a sacred thing I with him would insist;
And I call it equally theft, in what form soever it's done,
For one to take from all, or for all to take from one.

If this is the rule of Justice, then we may assuredly say
That Property rights are set at naught, they're null and void today;
For what the private worker makes is subject to a tax,
And communities have monopolists a-riding on their backs.

Who makes the coat or table? The toiler at his trade;
Then whose should be the Property but his who the same has made?
And who creates the rent of land? the people as a whole;
Whose Property, then, is rent? Who rightly should control?

The Government must be kept alive, and taxes are its

food,
And so each man must pay, we're told— which is all very
well and good;
But private, personal property rights are none the less
divine;
Let the Government feed on what's its own, not on what's
your's or mine!

If a thief comes into my house, demanding some share of
my wealth,
He knows he is breaking the law, and he generally does it
by stealth;
But why is there such a law ? Because 'tis a truth of God,
That what I have earned is mine, and is sacred from force
or fraud.

But isn't it still my own tho' the visitor wears no mask.
And comes in the light of day, as a tax-collector, I ask?
When he takes in the name of the State a portion of what
I've made,
Isn't the net result to *me* like a burglar's raid?

"Proputty, proputty, proputty,"—my wages belong to me
Against either thief or State, and wages are what you see
When you look at the things I own, house, books, stable
and cow,
I've earned them every one by the honest sweat of my
brow.

The Government, as you say, must live, and must be fed.
And taxes, truly enough, are simply Government bread;
But why not feed on its own—the values itself creates?
What I make belongs to *me*; what the State makes is the
State's.

The State, as such, doesn't work; it doesn't make visible
things;
But the Public exists as a fact, and that fact infallibly
brings
Into existence a fund—a value attaching to land—
A natural source of supply by a wise Creator planned.

"Proputty, proputty, proputty," that is Property, too,
And it clearly belongs to the State, and neither to me nor
you;
So if the State must live, let it feed on its own resource,
And leave our belongings to us—that's clearly the honest

course.

Ah! there's the snag, you see! Yes, certainly that's the rub;"
This logic's without a flaw, but 'twill raise a precious hub-bub;
For our laws have given away what belongs to the Government,
And allow the land-owning class to feed on its bread—the rent.

And not without a great kick will these rent-consumers quit;
Do you think they would rather work for their fortunes?
Not a bit!
They flourish their parchment deeds and prate of "Property." too,
Tho' Property-in-Rent belongs to All, not the few.

Now, having given away the natural revenue spring.
The State turns to private rights and pounces on everything,
Robbing by charges direct and charges crooked, as well,
Every form of wealth you can see, taste, feel or smell!

"Proputty, proputty, proputty," there's no such thing today
That the State does not invade, despoil or take away;
And land-rent, springing up by a heaven-made, natural law,
Is not true property in private monopoly's maw.

Well, what's to be done about it? Nothing at all, say you,
'Twas a sad mistake, no doubt, but it's made and it must go through.
No! render to Cesar what's his, and to me what belongs to me.
"Proputty, proputty, proputty—let us do righteously!