

# A Poem of Political Economy

from *Grip*, mid-1887

likely by J. W. Bengough

Capital, Land and Labor  
Were triplets at their birth,  
And started out together  
To cultivate the earth;

Quoth they, "We'll work together,  
And all the WEALTH we make  
Will be divided fairly,  
And each a third will take.

"Capital's share is *Interest*,  
Land's share we'll know as *Rent*,  
While Labor's we'll call *Wages*.  
And each will be content."

The business grew and prospered,  
And wealth was made galore,  
But, lo! while LAND waxed wealthy  
The other two grew poor.

And it was seen, most strangely,  
That with the rise of *Rent*,  
Both *Interest* and *Wages*  
Lower and lower went!

"There's something wrong, dear brother."  
The others said to Land,  
"There's something crooked somewhere  
We'd like to understand.

"While you are fat and jolly,  
And from all care are free.  
We, though we do our portion  
Are pressed by poverty."

Said Land, "My dearest brothers,  
The facts are as you state—  
While *capital* and *wages* fall  
*Rent* grows at inverse rate.

"And why? — the thing is simple,  
And very plain to see: —  
For all your raw material  
You've got to come to me.

"And I (through 'private ownership')  
Am thus empowered to say,  
As much as I see fit to ask  
You both have got to pay.

"We're on a different footing,  
As you may now perceive,  
You've got to have *my* help, you know,  
Or, simply, you can't live.

"And since (through 'private ownership')  
I ask more than my share,  
It follows that my partners  
Are left a little bare!"

"Most excellently reasoned,"  
Said Labor. "clear as day!"  
"The very thing," said Capital,  
"That I was going to say."

"Well, now," said Labor thoughtfully,  
"I think I see the chip  
That spoils our dish of porridge—  
It's 'private ownership.'

"We'll just dissolve this little firm  
And form again with two  
Called Capital & Labor —  
Both workers — that will do.

"And Land (or raw material)  
Since it by Heaven is sent  
We'll treat as common property  
By wiping out all rent.

"Then while the wealth producing  
Will go on as before,  
The workers will enjoy it,  
And neither will be poor."