

Three acres, a cow and many songs

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Introduction

Notes and cuttings on "Three Acres and a cow" in late 19th century song and verse – reflecting research undertaken during lockdown when visiting libraries was not possible...

The UK General Election of 1885 took place in late November and early December, it was the first after significant reforms which extended the franchise. For the first time most constituencies returned a single MP and, also for the first time, the majority of adult males could vote (both key Chartist demands). It was the first UK election with openly socialist candidates - the Social Democratic Federation stood three. The main political parties were the Conservatives and the Liberals.

The eventual winners, the Liberals, were divided. The party was led by William Gladstone, but there was a significant faction of Radical Liberals led by Joseph Chamberlain (a manufacturer and former Mayor of Birmingham) and Jesse Collings, campaigning for the so-called Unauthorised Programme (aka The Radical Programme). Chamberlain was frustrated by the intransigence of (small c) conservative Liberals (Whigs) and feared the growth of socialism and its appeal to the newly expanded electorate. The Programme was designed to appeal to newly enfranchised urban and rural workers, it included calls for:

- slum clearance and housing improvements
- the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England,
- free schools to be funded in part by the Church,
- "3 acres and a cow" compulsory purchase powers to buy land for the creation of small holdings.

Chamberlain and radical liberals toured the country making speeches during the 1885 electoral campaign. Conservative politicians worried about losing their seats were vicious in their attacks on Chamberlain, his allies and the unauthorised/radical Programme. Rural and urban workers who backed the demands were dismissed as utopian millenarians. Many saw Chamberlain's involvement in the campaign as insincere, implying that he was attempting to bribe the electorate. This wasn't helped by the fact that Chamberlain seemed to vacillate between radical language when addressing the electorate, and denying that there was anything radical about his campaign when speaking to other members of the establishment. In one speech of January 1886, addressing an audience in a Westminster hotel, he said:

The Tories have universally asserted that we promised to every labourer 3 acres of land and a cow (laughter)..... I don't suppose many of them were fooled by this falsehood.

[Quoted in Hamilton, *Parodies* Vol. III p 136]

The Liberals won the election convincingly, though the role and influence of the Radical Liberal campaign is disputed and the reforms were never implemented. The Liberals fell apart the following summer over the issue of Irish home rule. In July 1886 there was another election and the Conservatives formed a government with the support of Unionist Liberals who opposed Irish Home Rule (including Joseph Chamberlain and John Bright).

The radical campaign led to an outpouring of songs and verse, some directly used as campaigning tools others commenting on the furore. The sheer volume of songs and verse circulating in a 9-month period tends to contradict the opinion of some historians who suggest that the campaign had little impact.

In this period it must have been difficult to get away from the controversy: it was everywhere - and just like today there were those who felt political issues shouldn't be aired on the stage...

THE inappropriateness of political reference in theatrical entertainment at a time of electioneering excitement was strikingly emphasised at the Standard Theatre on Wednesday evening. Mr Sam Wilkinson, who is playing Lay Brother Pelican, in *Falka*, took opportunity in the third act to refer satirically to Mr Chamberlain and his theory of sweet content with **three acres and cow**. Some fervent partisans of the member for Birmingham shouted energetically "Let's hear the other side," while others, more sensible, assailed the comedian with cries of "No Politics." The interruptions ceased as soon as Mr Wilkinson got back to the legitimate lines of his part.

From "THEATRICAL GOSSIP", Saturday, Dec. 5, 1885, The Era (London, England) Issue: 2463

The songs and verses below were almost certainly produced in England, Wales and Scotland, it may well be that other songs were being sung in Ireland – but that would be another project in itself, I suspect. For some songs I have the full details of the words, music, performers, writers and composers. For others I just have titles, so it may be that some of these songs/poems are actually the same. Most of the surviving written songs come from a Whig or Tory point of view, but some radical songs survive – notably from street literature and the oral tradition. It is sometimes difficult to determine whether a piece of verse published was designed to be sung or not, so there are several pieces here which are actually poetry. Where a song has its own page on the website the notes here are brief.

Songs from the oral tradition and street literature

Roy Palmer's *Three acres and a cow* from *The Painful Plough* (undated)

A song found on at least three different 19th century broadsheets – made famous by Roy Palmer in his collection *The Painful Plough*. A relatively well-known song in the folk revival from the 1970s on, based on a well-established song from the Halls *I wish they'd do it now*.

See notes on website <http://folksongandmusichall.com/index.php/three-acres-and-a-cow/>

First Line: *You've heard a lot of talk about*

First line of chorus: *Don't you wish you had it now*

Francis Shergold's *Three Acres and a Cow* (undated)

This song seems to come only from one oral source. It was sung by Francis Shergold of Bampton Morris and released on the Veteran CD *Greeny Up*. The song was collected by John Howson in 1987. On the recording Shergold says he was taught the song by his mother and that he remembered from his grandfather singing it – Shergold was born in 1919, so his grandfather might well have been alive during the election of 1885 (see article on Francis Shergold <https://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/shergold.htm>).

First line: *We've toiled my lads both early and late.*

First line of chorus: *Just think on that my own dear wife*

Not in the Roud Indices at moment.

<https://sounds.bl.uk/World-and-traditional-music/John-Howson-Collection/025M-C1034X0123XX-0500V0>

[Also available on streaming services]

Transcribed by me:

We've toiled my lads both early and late
To earn a few good meals
While Squire and Farmer lived in state
And crushed us 'neath their heel

But brighter days are coming lass
To you and me I'll vow
And those who took us by the hand
Three acres and a cow

*Just think on that my own dear wife
And soothe your careworn brow
Good fortune bring to you and them
Three acres and a cow*

The heavy clouds are forming fast
Though dim the peasant's lot
The bad old days for them are past
And hope shines in our lot

There is a vote within this land
That we shall too soon have known
And those who took us by the hand
Three acres and a cow

*Just think on that my own dear wife
And soothe your careworn brow
Good fortune bring to you that sing
Three acres and a cow*

Songs published as Sheet Music

Evidence for the existence of these songs often comes initially from library catalogues via the WorldCat website, for a minority of songs this is all the evidence I have.

Arthur Lloyd's *A cow and three acres* (Dec 1885)

A Music Hall song written and performed by Arthur Lloyd see website:

<http://folksongandmusichall.com/index.php/cow-and-three-acres-a/>

First line: *I'm only just a labourer*

First line of chorus: *And I've got three acres*

Harry Liston's *Them three acres of land and a cow* (Dec 1885)

A Music Hall song written by Allen/Lee, performed by Harry Liston, see website page: [Them three acres of land and a cow](#)

First line: *My name's Tommy Turnip, I works on a farm*

First line of chorus: *They says, "Sing, mate, your vortune you'll make"*

John Bull and RJ Thompson's *Three acres of land and a cow* (Dec 1885)

According to Worldcat Cambridge University Library holds sheet music for *Three acres & a cow : an idle idyl or pseudo-prophetic pastoral*. By John Bull / Reginald J Thompson. Publisher: London : Wyman & Sons, 1886.

First line: *Good times are coming on apace to every mother's son.*
 First line of chorus: *Three acres and a cow.*

Newspaper cuttings:

On December 18, the Third (and Christmas Greeting) Edition of the immensely popular lay of the day,
THREE ACRES AND A COW for 6d.: A Mere Song.
 Cabinet size, 6d. net. Of all booksellers, stationers, and music-sellers.
 Words by Mr. JOHN BULL. Music by REGINALD J. THOMPSON.
 "A capital song—spirited and melodious."—Morning Post.
 London: Wyman and Sons, 74-76, Great Queen-street, W.C.

[Dec. 18, 1885; Morning Post]

"Hush thee my baby."
 "THREE ACRES AND A COW."—A song, described as an "Idyl or Pseudo-prophetic Pastoral," called "Three Acres and a Cow," has just been published by Messrs. Wyman and Sons, of Great Queen-street. The words are by "Mr. John Bull," and the music by Reginald J. Thompson. Both are spirited and melodious, and the authors, despising the exaction of any royalty, state that both music and words "may be sung by anybody, anywhere, wife willing and vocal powers permitting, and the oftener the better, provided the singer has a voice in the matter."

[Dec. 15, 1885 Bury and Norwich Post]

Messrs. WYMAN & SONS, Great Queen Street, London, have just issued, in a very neat and handy form, a clever election song, under the title of "Three Acres and a Cow." The music, by Mr. Reginald J. Thompson, is of a popular type, and is highly effective, without making any undue demands upon the powers of a vocalist. The compass is small, the range being from B to A only, consequently it may be sung with good effect by a chorus of mixed voices. The words form a particularly happy satire upon Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's bribe to the people, "Three acres and a cow." The following are a few of the stanzas:—

I.
 Good times are coming on apace to every mother's son;
 The Brummagem millennium is now all but begun,
 We're all to have a bit of land, and learn to speed the plough,
 And live for ever happy on three acres and a cow.
 Three acres and a cow! three acres and a cow!
 I cannot tell you when, nor where, nor yet exactly how,
 But everyone is sure to have three acres and a cow!

II.
 Each Wilts and Dorset labourer will be a country squire,
 And never work again no more, for nobody, on hire;
 But live at ease and keep his ducks, and chickens, a row,
 With lots of little piggies, on three acres and a cow.
 Three acres, &c.

III.
 The working man will leave his work, his tools, and his machines;
 Our soldiers and our sailors, and our gallant horse marines,
 Will all throw up the services, and candidly avow
 They think they can do better with three acres and a cow.
 Three acres, &c.

IV.
 Good luck to Liberal Chamberlain! 'tis he, we must allow,
 Who gives each honest Englishman those acres and that cow.
 Although self-made, he's not a screw; and he shall have, I vow,
 In the Black Country's fertile soil three acres and a cow.
 Three acres, &c.

[NEW ELECTION SONG Belfast News-Letter Dec. 2, 1885 Issue 21980]

Temperance song: *Three acres and a cow* (Feb 1886)

According to the Worldcat site, Cambridge University Library and Oxford University Library hold sheet music for *Three acres and a cow: temperance song and chorus*. By A.J. Foxwell / T. Mee Pattison. London : J. Curwen & Sons, [approximately 1886]

First line: *As I wur gwain across the green* [sic].

First line of chorus: *Three acres and a cow*.

A contemporary advert:

THE NEW TEMPERANCE SONG AND CHORUS.
THREE ACRES & A COW.
Words by **A. J. FOXWELL.** Music by **T. MEE PATTISON.**
This amusing Song, in the broad country dialect, relates how by a life of Total Abstinence and thrift, aided by compound interest, a labourer may save enough to buy **three acres and a cow** for himself. Should be sung at all Temperance Entertainment during the next few months.
J. CURWEN & SONS, 8, Warwick Lane, London, E.C.
PRICE THREEPENCE, Post Free, 3½d.

[Feb. 1, 1886; British Women's Temperance Journal]

HW Hopkin's *Three Acres and a Cow* (1890)

The British library holds sheet music for *Three Acres and a Cow*, *humorous song*. Written and composed by HW Hopkins, London : Hart & Co, [c. 1890]

The records do not give an indication of the first line - I have no further information at this time.

From contemporary advertisements

Tom Vine's song *Three Acres and a Cow* (Dec 1885)

An advert refers to an otherwise unknown song by Tom Vine:

MR. TOM VINE,
Author and Composer of the following Original Songs:—
"The Grand Young Man and the Old," "Lottery of Life,"
"We welcome '85," "The Forward Little Peasant and the
Peer," "Drifting from Poverty to Crime," "**Three Acres and
a Cow**," &c. Titles not to be pirated, or the Songs sung with-
out the written permission of the Author. C.M.H.A.A.

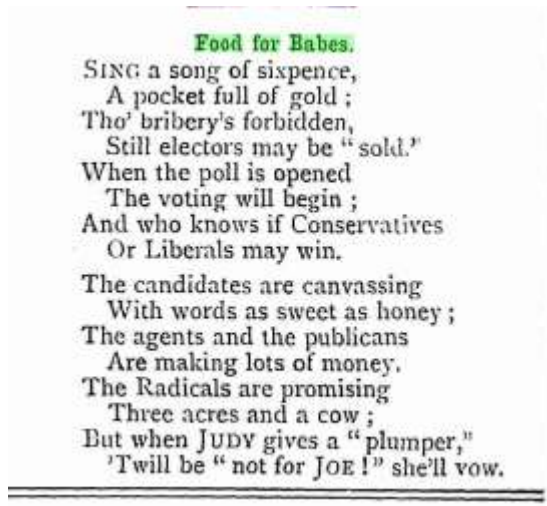
Dec. 5, 1885; *The Era*

Tom Vine was a comic who specialised in topical songs and extemporising on the events of the day – newspaper notices suggest he was active between the 1860s and 1890s. Letters and ads in *The Era* indicate that he also wrote songs and sold them to other artists, though his name does not appear as a writer or composer on any surviving sheet music that I can find so far. Perhaps his songs were too topical to be published officially, or perhaps he was one of the many less successful, unpublished song writers active around the Halls. (He may have written under other names?)

Songs/poems from newspapers and periodicals

Food for Babes (Nov 1885)

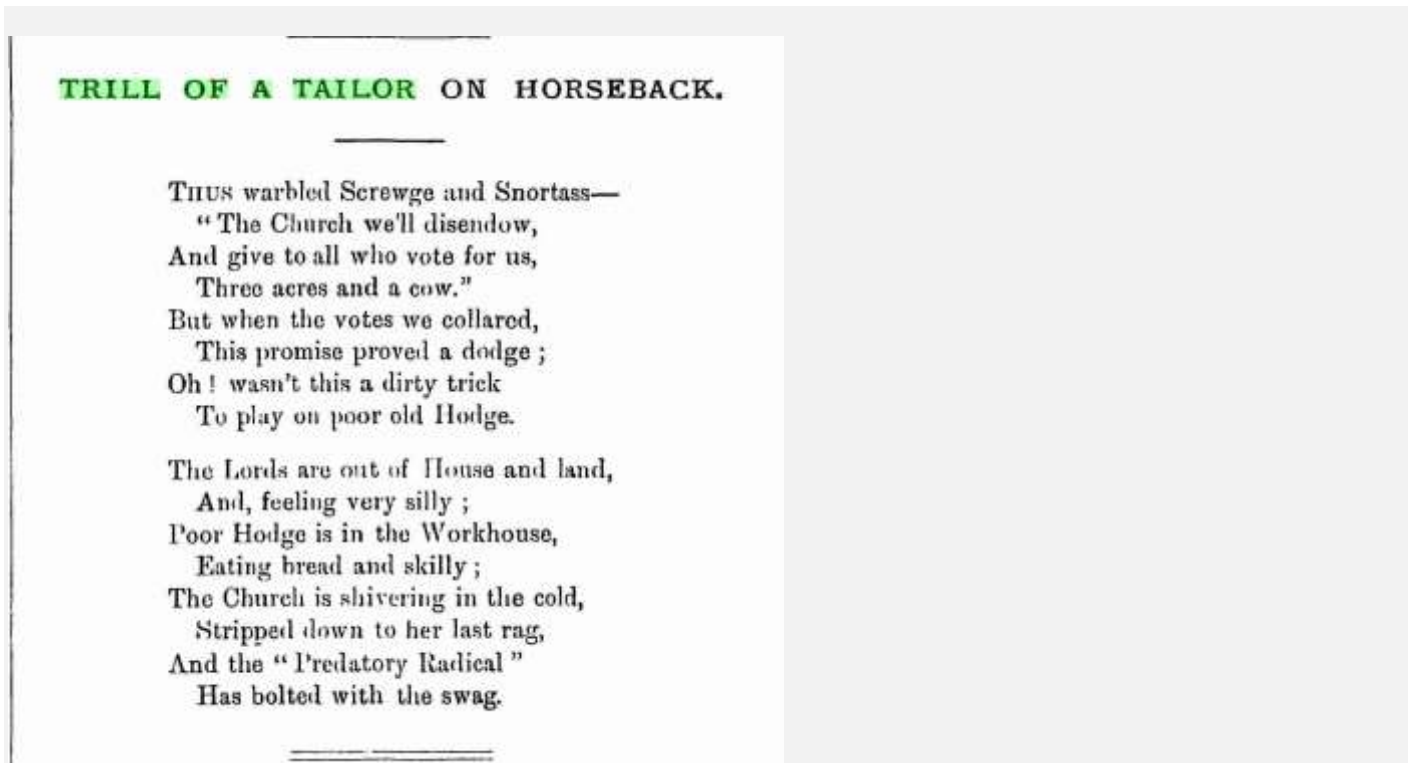
From the satirical periodical *Judy* (1867-1907), a verse based on a nursery rhyme/song reflecting the view that the Radicals were engaged in bribery of the newly enfranchised working men. Passing reference is made to the famous Music Hall song by Arthur Lloyd *Not for Joe* which was not about Chamberlain, see <http://folksongandmusichall.com/index.php/not-for-joseph/>



[Nov. 25, 1885; *Judy*, or the London Serio-Comic Journal]

Trill of a Tailor on horseback (Nov 1885)

Verse published in the Birmingham-based satirical magazine *The Dart* - apparently attacking Chamberlain and Collings as "Screwge and Snortass". "Hodge" was a derogatory term used in the late 19th-century for agricultural labourers, it was associated with laziness and stupidity.



[Nov. 20, 1885; [The Dart: A Journal of Sense and Satire](#)]

Song of the British Labourer (Nov 1885)

A song published in a newspaper published in Ipswich, a part of the world where the Radical Programme had a particularly strong impact. The song combines cynicism about the supposed utopianism of the Programme, with some unpleasant anti-Semitism in its references to the "tribe of Joseph". It is set to the tune of the comic song *He was a careful man* written/composed by George Grossmith (1877), <http://folksongandmusichall.com/index.php/he-was-a-careful-man/>

First line: *Now listen friends and comrades and all ye sons of toil*

First line of chorus: *Three acres and a cow*

SONG OF THE BRITISH LABOURER.
Air, "He was a careful man."

Now listen, friends and comrades, and all ye sons of toil,
Down trodden serfs and helots, fellow tillers of the soil;
I sing of the thrice glorious things in store for you and me—
The fruits, as I may call them, of the noble Carpent trees.

Chorus—Three acres and a cow,
Three acres and a cow,
Oh! that's the bribe of Joseph's tribe—
Three acres and a cow.

The people's will and pleasure is now, far woe or woe,
The arbiter of everything—at least they tell us so:
We're only got to say the word, and presto! if we please,
The moon will straight convert herself into a Cheshire cheese!

Chorus—Three acres and a cow,
Three acres and a cow,
Oh! that's the bribe of Joseph's tribe—
Three acres and a cow.

They tell us—and I see no cause to question what they say—
There soon will be no landlords, nor any rent to pay;
And as for rates and taxes and such like hateful wording
We'll vote them all a nuisance, and abolish them accordingly.

Chorus—Three acres and a cow,
Three acres and a cow,
Oh! that's the bribe of Joseph's tribe—
Three acres and a cow.

Then there's the spacious Work'us, which no doubt
we're truly told
Is a happy place of refuge for the destitute and old—
Well, we'll vote its preservation, just in pity to afford
A home and friendly shelter for the disestablished Board.

Chorus—Three acres and a cow,
Three acres and a cow,
Oh! that's the bribe of Joseph's tribe—
Three acres and a cow.

We're promised at our neighbour's cost free gentils education,
But here's a plan will save no end of trouble to the nation;—
We'll pass a resolution that no baby born shall be
Till it's able to talk Latin and to work the Rule of Three.

Chorus—Three acres and a cow,
Three acres and a cow,
Oh! that's the bribe of Joseph's tribe—
Three acres and a cow.

Oh! we'll soon put all things right, now we've got the
sweet franchise
At the Horticultural Show we'll vote to every man a prize;
And we'll brew the best of beer from the best of malt
and hops,
For we'll vote that there shall be no more bad seasons
or bad crops.

Chorus—Three acres and a cow,
Three acres and a cow,
Oh! that's the bribe of Joseph's tribe—
Three acres and a cow.

There's many a native industry now languishing or dead,
And many an honest artisan without a piece of bread;
But we'll pass an Act instantler that on fair and equal terms
The goods of foreign nations shall compete with British
Arms.

Chorus—Three acres and a cow,
Three acres and a cow,
Oh! that's the bribe of Joseph's tribe—
Three acres and a cow.

Then trade will soon revive again, and plenty's golden store
Into the nation's coffers will freely glow once more;
And we'll furnish up the navy, and take care that none
shall drag
Through dirt and through dishonour our glorious British
flag.

Chorus—Three acres and a cow,
Three acres and a cow,
Oh! that's the bribe of Joseph's tribe—
Three acres and a cow.

Yes, that shall be our study, and whatever else is right,
We're not such precious noodles but we all know black
from white;
And we mean to use our franchise so as always to promote
The good of all around us—that's how we mean to vote.

Chorus—Three acres and a cow,
Three acres and a cow,
We scorn the bribe of Joseph's tribe—
Three acres and a cow!

C.

Edwards Walford's *Three Acres and a cow* (Dec 1885)

Another poem/song mocking the supposed utopianism of the Programme. It was first published in the periodical *Life* and later collected in *Parodies of the Works of English and American Authors Vol III*, edited by Walter Hamilton (1886, p136). It is one of a number of parodies of Felicia Hemans' poem *The better land* in Hamilton's collection.

THREE ACRES AND A COW.

I HAVE heard you speak of "three acres of land,"
With "a cow" to belong to each peasant band ;
Tell me, oh ! where are those acres found,
That promised spot of domestic ground ?
Tell me, oh ! where is that happy shore
Where we all shall settle, and starve no more ;
Not here, not here, my man !

Where father shall sit 'neath his sheltering vine,
And smoke his own pipe, and drink his wine,
And mother and sisters, at tea in the shade,
Bless the rosy bowers their hands have made ;
While the cow untethered, and ranging free,
Crops the summer wealth of our acres three ?
Not here, not here, my man !

Say, are they then where rich travellers roam
O'er the heathery hills of the "Scot at home" ?
Or are they where Erin's gay sons abide,
By the Liffey's stream or the Shannon's tide ?
Or are they in Northern or Southern Wales,
Where St. David's cliffs woo the Western gales ?
Not there, not there, my man !

Eye hath not seen them, my gentle Will ;
Ear hath not heard of them ; valley or hill,
Pasture, or moorland, or woodland fair,
John Hodge and his brats may not settle there ;
Not there, not there, my man !

Trust not, oh trust not, to statesmen's smiles ;
These visions so fair are delusion's wiles
And the acres are only "*Chateaux en Espagne*,"
Built up in the head of Joe Chamberlain ;
They are there, they are there, my man !

EDWARD WALFORD, M.A.

Life, December 10, 1885.

New Words and Old songs (Dec 1885)

This verse was first published in the satirical magazine *Punch* and shows a general cynicism about all those involved in the electoral process, from the women of the Tory Primrose League to the proponents of the Radical Programme. The verses were later published in the collection: *Parodies of the Works of English and American Authors Vol III*; Walter Hamilton, 1886. Hamilton includes it in a number of parodies of Charles Kingsley's poem *Three fishers went sailing away to the West*.

First line: *Three acres seemed pleasant to countryman Hodge*

NEW WORDS AND OLD SONGS.

THREE acres seemed pleasant to Countryman Hodge ;
With Countryman Hodge, too, the Cow went down ;
The Acres and Cow were a capital dodge
For those who could never get in for the town.
The men may vote—the women may not—
But the Primrose League is the comfort they've got ;
So the Knights and Dames go cadging !

Three Rads came out in the country to speak—
By the village-pumps where the Cow went down ;
And they all kept talking on end for a week,
Till the rustics came polling up, horny and brown.
The men did vote—the women did not—
But though they did'nt, they canvassed a lot ;
And the Knights and Dames went cadging !

Three Tories retired to their Primrose Lodge—
Left out in the cold when the Cow went down ;
And the women sate cussing at Countryman Hodge,
For going and spoiling the votes of the town.
That men should vote—and women should not !
But if ever they do, 'twill for Members be hot,
So, good-bye to the Dames, and their cadging !

Punch, December 19, 1885.

Mad Voter's Song (Dec 1885)

An extract from a humorous "mock-play" entitled "Mr Gladstone as a Dramatic Poet", published in *The Aberdeen Journal*, a Scottish newspaper which supported the Conservatives and the Church of Scotland:

[Mad voter sings:]

Say what you may, say what you will,
It matters little now
A while ago I was sane still.
Three acres and a cow!

A while ago I still was sane
I know not if or how
I ever shall be sane again.
Three acres and a cow!

A while I kicked against the pricks;
To fortune now I bow
A lunatic to politics.
Three acres and a cow!

CHORUS

*Three acres and a cow, my men
Three acres and a cow!
Though ne'er tray we be sane again
Three acres and a cow!*

The tune is not indicated.

The promised land! (c1885)

Another verse dismissing the radical programme as utopian and denigrating Chamberlain's motivation. The author and initial place of publication are unknown, but it was published in *Parodies of the Works of English and American Authors Vol III*; Walter Hamilton, 1886, p137. One of a number of parodies of Felicia Hemans' poem *The better land*. As Hamilton's book was published in 1886 it's likely that this parody comes from 1885.

First Line: *I hear thee speak of a plot of land*

Line of chorus/refrain: *Is it there? Is it there?*

"THE PROMISED LAND!"

(Three Acres.)

"I HEAR thee speak of a 'Plot of Land,'
For each and all of the Peasant band;
Where! Oh Where! is this garden store?
Shall we not till it and starve no more?
Is it where the lordling sits in his pride,
'Mid wealth that to me has been denied?
Is it where the flocks on the hill-side graze,
Or the stag in the forest leaps and plays;
Or the hare runs wild on every hand?
Is it there? Is it there? That Promised Land!"

"Not there! Not there! my Giles!"

"Is it far away in some distant spot,
This promised parcel of garden plot?
Where nothing is heard but the murmuring bees,
And the sound of the wind among the trees;
Where no turnips are planted, or apples grown,
Or the fruits of the earth in season sown;
Where the land is idle, and nought is seen
But the fragrant flowers and woodland green,
And the sun shines down on a desolate spot,—
Is it there? Is it there? 'My three-acre plot!'"

"Not there! Not there! my Giles!"

"It is deeply hid in the *mazy* brain
Of the venturesome Joseph Chamberlain!
'Tis but a bribe to catch a vote,
A bait to hook fish by the throat;
In vulgar phrase it's '*All my eye*'!
A newly invented election cry.
It has *no existence in sober sense*,—
It is but the product of impudence!
It lives but in *Chamberlain's speech so bland*,
This tempting plot of that Promised Land—
It is there! only there! my Giles!"

The promised land: an answer (c1885)

An anti-Tory response to the previous verse. As previously, the author and initial place of publication are unknown, but it was published in *Parodies of the Works of English and American Authors Vol III*; Walter Hamilton, 1886, p137. Another parody of Felicia Hemans' poem *The better land*. Again, I would suggest that as Hamilton's book was published in 1886 it's likely that this parody comes from 1885.

First Line: *I hear thee speak of a plot of land*

First Line of chorus/refrain: *Is it there? Is it there?*

THE PROMISED LAND: THREE ACRES.

(An answer to the preceding Parody.)

I HEAR thee speak of a Plot of Land
For every one of the peasant band,
Tories! Oh, where is that garden store?
Shall we not till it and starve no more?
Is it where the lordling sits in his pride,
'Mid wealth that to me has been denied?
Is it where the flocks on the black hills graze,
Or the stag in the forest leaps and plays?
Or the hare runs wild on every hand,
Is it there, dear friend, that better land?
Not there, not there, my man.

Is it far away in some distant spot,
The promised parcel of garden plot
Where nothing is heard but the murmuring bees,
And the sighs of the winds among the trees;
Where no turnips are sown or sweet apples grown,
Or fruit of the earth in its season known;
Where the land is idle and nought is seen
But the dear wild flowers and woodland green,
And the sun shines down on a desolate spot—
Is it there, is it there, my three acre plot?
Not there, not there, my man.

It only exists in the "Tory" brain
Though they always "father it" on Chamberlain;
They think we want bribes to get a vote,
Like the Tories from Parnell, then cut his throat;
But in vulgar phrase, it is all in "my eye,"
"A great, big, thumping," Tory "lie;"
It has no existence in sober sense,
It's the product of Tory insolence;
It's author I think was the man in the moon,
And if you expect to find such a boon—
It is there, it is there, my man.

ANONYMOUS.

Bit o land, The (Jan 1886)

Apparently re-published from a Devon newspaper, this appeared in the conservative (small c, ie Whig) Liberal newspaper *The Star*, based in Guernsey. It also appeared in the collection *Parodies of the Works of English and American Authors Vol III*; Walter Hamilton, 1886, p137. Yet another parody of Felicia Hemans' poem *The better land*.

First line: *I hear thee speak of a bit o' land*

THE BIT O' LAND.

I hear thee speak of a bit o' land
And a cow for every labouring hand.
Tell me, dear mother, where is that shore—
Where shall I find it and work no more?
Is it at home, this unoccupied ground,
Where the three acres and cow will be found?
Is it where pheasants and partridges breed,
Or in fields where the farmer is sowing his seed;
Is it on the moor so wild and grand,
I shall find this bit of arable land?
Not there, not there, my Giles.

Is it far away on the Rio Grande?
In Zululand or Basutoland?
Is it far away on forbidden shores,
Where unicorns fight and the lion roars?
Or will it in Soudan be found,
Where English bones manure the ground?
Or on the banks of ancient Nile?
Perhaps 'tis on some coral isle
With dusky groves and silver strand;
Is it there, dear mother, that bit o' land?
Not there, not there, my Giles.

Eye hath not seen that fair land, my child;
Ear hath but heard an echo wild;
The nightmare of excited brain
That dreamers have like Chamberlain.
Far, far away, beyond the ken
Of sober, practical business men;
And far away beyond the sight
Of men whose heads are screwed on right;
Where castles in the air do stand,
Behold the cow and bit o' land;
'Tis there, 'tis there, my Giles.

—*Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette.*

Lay of the London Rough, The (Feb 1886)

A song or verse written in the style of a Music Hall Coster song, which was republished in *The Aberdeen Journal*, apparently taken from the 19th century English periodical *Vanity Fair*.

First Line *I likes my biled pertater*

THE LAY OF THE LONDON ROUGH.

I likes my biled pertater
And pot o' swipes, no doubt ;
But I likes a rump steak better,
Washed down with a quart o' stout ;
And I allus shirk
A piece o' work
When I can do without.

That Chamberling and Gladstin,
They talks uncommon free
O' the welfare of the masses ;
But blarmed if I can see,
If they rob rich folks
For country blokes,
Why not for sich as me ?

They'll help the Irish Paddy,
When he kicks up a shine,
To bundle out his landlord ;
But that's all blooming fine,
For I've got no 'and
In Irish land,
And his boss isn't mine.

And when they speaks so fairly
To chaps as mind the plough,
And says they'll take and give 'em
Three acres and a cow,
It's my complaint
That still I ain't
No better off nohow.

Ain't I one of the people
About whose rights they brag ?
And ain't I got the right, then,
To wave a scarlet flag,
And show 'em what
I wish I'd got,
And 'ave a part o' the swag ?

Me and my pals like watches
And scarves and diamond rings,
And wine and fust-class baccy,
As much as queens and kings ;
And supposin' we won't,
Since others don't,
Go workin' for sich things ?

Ain't we the rich men's ekals ?
Ain't they got heaps to spare ?
Blow me, if they won't give it
We'll come and take our share !
And so, 'ooray !
Let's cut away
For a row in Trafalgar Square.

Vanity Fair.

Poor Joe (July 1886)

A song relating to the election which took place after Irish Home rule prompted the collapse of the Liberal government. Another song/poem included in *Parodies of the Works of English and American Authors Vol* by Walter Hamilton (Vol IV, p233, 1887, this one was first published in the periodical *Truth*. Described as a parody of a "Scotch song", it appears to be based on the song often known as *Johnny so Long at the fair* (Roud number 1279).

The song was published in mid-July, before the 1886 election was over (it took place between first and 27th of July), so the idea that Joe might be "very much out" was perhaps wishful thinking.

First line: *He promised to give us a cow and 3 acres*

First line of chorus: *Oh dear what can the matter be*

POOR JOE.*

**OH, dear ; what can the matter be ?
Oh, dear ; what can the matter be ?
Oh, dear ; what can the matter be ?
Joseph's so very much out.**

* Mr. Joseph Chamberlain.

**He promised to give us a cow and three acres,
And make us contented and placid as Quakers,
But now we can't even get bread at the bakers,
Joe was so very much out !**

**He told us that Erin was not to be trusted,
And that our friend William was very nigh "busted,"
But all his remarks with romance have been crusted,
Joe was so very much out !
"Our Imperial Integrity" was the foundation
Which lured us to "back up" poor Joe's declamation,
But the words, it appears, meant a clap-trap oration,
By Joe, who was very much out !**

**Then let us rejoice to rejoin the old master,
Who never has led us to wrong or disaster,
Nor pretended to cure us with "Brummagem plaster,"
Like Joe, who was very much out !
Oh, dear ; what can the matter be ?
Oh, dear ; what can this chatter be ?
Oh, dear ; what can this clatter be ?
Why, Joseph's so very much out.**

Truth. July 15, 1886.

A lay of modern Cardiff (July 1886)

Another song published in the midst of the 1886 election relating to events which occurred in a closely fought, sometimes violent contest in Cardiff, reflecting strong feelings about Irish home rule. The sitting MP was Sir Edward Reed a prominent Liberal MP. Henry Brand was his only opponent, a Liberal Unionist. The Liberal Unionists were a breakaway from the Liberals who opposed Irish home rule and later ended up propping up the Tory government. Reed narrowly held the seat, but the contest was bitterly fought and there were riots in Cardiff (see a contemporary report at <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3365293/3365295/6>). This song was published in the Western Mail - which supported Brand. It seems to suggest that whilst the Radical Programme was still in people's minds, by mid-1886 the hot political issue was Irish home rule.

First Line: *Sir Edward Reed of Hextable*

ELECTION ODES, DITTIES AND CRIES.

A LAY OF MODERN CARDIFF.

Sir Edward Reed of Hextable,
By his own brass he swore
That the great Irish nation
Should suffer wrong no more.
By his own brass he swore it
That they should have amends,
And straightway sent addresses forth,
East and west, and south and north,
To summon all his friends!

East and west and south and north
The tidings travel fast
That Erin's muzzled Fenians
Shall find relief at last.
Shame on the false elector
Who by him will not stand,
Who will not give Parnell Home Rule,
Who will not—briefly—be a fool,
But vote for Mr. Brand!

In halls, in streets, in balconies
This hero grandly tells
How he will stir our rulers up,
How he will bore the swells;
How Erin's every grievance
He'll ceaselessly relate.
Postpone for Captain Moonlight
The business of the State.

Er-while our land abuses
He said he'd sweep away,
And priests' and bishops' arrogance
By law would promptly stay;
That agricultural labourers
Of woe had had enough,
And how he meant to give them
Three acres and a cow.

Ye gallant men of Cardiff,
With loyal hearts and true,
Come, take your stand for Robert Brand,
That he may stand for you.
Heed not this Knight Commander
Who thinks himself so sharp,
Who values not old England's flag,
But would reduce it to a rag
By cutting out the harp.

Conservative and Liberal,
Oh, lay your jaes aside,
Let party spirit rule you not,
But let your hearts abide
In love of steadfast unity,
And, joining hand in hand,
Send back this Reed to Hextable
And pump for Robert Brand!

LARS FORSYTH.

A startling transformation (Oct 1886)

This song refers to internal debates in the Conservative Party about how to respond to the Radical Programme. Whilst the Tories almost universally hated any hint of redistribution of land, at different times prominent Tories like Henry Chaplin and Randolph Churchill seemed to take different stances (in their rhetoric at least). This song came out at a time when former proponents of the radical programme like Chamberlain had become Liberal Unionists, without whose support the Tory government would not have a parliamentary majority.

A Startling Transformation.

[According to Mr. Chaplin's recent manifesto, he seems likely to adopt the advanced views of Lord R. Churchill.]

WHAT nonsense! Can it be! Good gracious!
Surely this surprising news
Can't pretend to be veracious
Touching Mr. Chaplin's views.
Can it be that he will follow
Plans that would the Tories wake?
Can it be that he will swallow
All that Randy bids him take?
Will he forfeit all his glory
As a crusted, changeless Tory?

Can the man that always prayed so
For a swinging tax on corn,
Make his ancient fancies fade so,
All in dread of Randolph's scorn?
He whose hobby was protection,
Holds quite Raddish notions now,
And even shows a predilection
For **three acres** and a cow.
Can we really trust this story,
Of this once inveterate Tory?

Randolph *must* be a magician;
Randolph must be wide awake,
In H. Chaplin's old condition
Such a marvellous change to make.
Of late we saw the Liberal thunder,
Stolen by the bold R. C. ;
And now his colleagues share the plunder,
Saying, "This belongs to me."
Thus measures in which Liberals glory
Are annexed by many a Tory.

It matters not which Party passes
Measures that to progress tend;
If they benefit all classes,
That's all right—and there's an end.
But when one Party starts annexing
All the other party's schemes,
Matters growing quite perplexing,
Make the poet think he dreams;
For now-a-days with Liberal glory
Shines the once becrusted Tory.

[Oct. 27, 1886; Fun]

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