

"The Song of the Classes"

- Ernest Jones

Chartist leader and poet, 1819–1869; sentenced in 1848 to two years imprisonment.

We plough and sow—we're so very, very low
That we delve in the dirty clay,
Till we bless the plain—with the golden grain,
And the vale with the fragrant hay.
Our place we know—we're so very low.
'Tis down at the landlord's feet:
We're not too low—the bread to grow,
But too low the bread to eat.

Down, down we go—we're so very, very low,
To the hell of the deep sunk mines,
But we gather the proudest gems that glow
Where the crown of a despot shines,
And whenever he lacks—upon our backs
Fresh loads he deigns to lay:
We're far too low to vote the tax,
But not too low to pay.

We're low—we're low—mere rabble, we know,
But at our plastic power
The mould at the lordlings' feet will grow
Into palace and church and tower
Then prostrate fall—in the rich man's hall,
And cringe at the rich man's door:
We're not too low to build the wall,
But too low to tread the floor.

We're low—we're low—we're very, very low,
Yet from our fingers glide
The silken flow and the robes that glow

Round the limbs of the sons of pride.
And what we get—and what we give
We know, and we know our share:
We're not too low the cloth to weave,
But too low the cloth to wear.

We're low—we're low—we're very, very low,
And yet when the trumpets ring,
The thrust of a poor man's arm will go
Through the heart of the proudest king.
We're low—we're low—our place we know
We're only the rank and file,
We're not too low to kill the foe,
But too low to touch the spoil.

We Have Fed You All For a Thousand Years

- Unknown Proletarian

We have fed you all, for a thousand years
And you hail us still unfed,
Though there's never a dollar of all your wealth
But marks the worker's dead.
We have yielded our best to give you rest
And you lie on crimson wool.
Then if blood be the price of all your wealth,
Good God! We have paid it in full.

There is never a mine blown skyward now
But we're buried alive for you.
There's never a wreck drifts shoreward now
But we are its ghastly crew.
Go reckon our dead by the forges red
And the factories where we spin.
If blood be the price of your cursed wealth
Good God! We have paid it in.

We have fed you all for a thousand years
For that was our doom, you know,
From the days when you chained us in your fields
To the strike of a week ago.
You have taken our lives, and our babies and wives,
And we're told it's your legal share;
But if blood be the price of your lawful wealth
Good God! We have bought it fair.