

Mill Workers' Song Lyrics

Hard Times Cotton Mills Girls

In 1814 I heard it said
Come to the mills and you'll get ahead.
Hard times, cotton mill girls
Hard times everywhere.

Chorus: And it's hard times cotton mill girls
Hard times cotton mill girls
Hard times cotton mill girls
Hard times everywhere.

Those country folk they ought to be killed
For leaving their farms,
And coming to the mill,
Hard times, cotton mill girls
Hard times everywhere.

(Chorus)

Us poor girls work ten hours a day
For fourteen cents of measly pay.
Hard times, cotton mill girls
Hard times everywhere.

(Chorus)

They raised the wages a half a cent
And the poor old girls didn't know what it meant.
Hard times, cotton mill girls
Hard times everywhere.

(Chorus)

When I die don't bury me at all
Just hang me up on the card room wall
Pickle my bones in alcohol.
Hard times everywhere.

(Chorus)

Poverty Knock

Up every morning at five
It's a wonder how we keep alive
Tired and yawning in the cold morning
It's back to the dreary old drive.

Chorus: Poverty, poverty, knock
My loom is a-saying all day;
Poverty, poverty, knock
Gaffer's¹ too skinny² to pay
Poverty, poverty, knock
Keeping one eye on the clock;
I know I can guttle³
When I hear my shuttle
Go "poverty, poverty, knock."

¹the boss
²stingy

³eat

Oh dear, we're going to be late
Gaffer stands out at the gate
We're all out of pocket, our wages are docket
We'll have to buy grub on the slate.⁴

⁴on credit

(chorus)

Oh dear, my poor head it sings
I should have woven three strings
But threads are a-breaking and my back is aching
Oh dear, how I wish I had wings.

(chorus)

Sometimes a shuttle flies out
And gives some poor woman a clout;
There she lies bleeding and nobody's heeding
Who's going to carry her out?

(chorus)

Tuner should tackle my loom
But he'd rather sit on his bum
He's much too busy a-courting our Lizzies
And I cannot get him to come.

(chorus)