

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Empires of Plenty

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(Sam Richards)

This is the land where my grandfather's grandfather
Ploughed with his horses, turned the red soil
Daylight till twilight, through seed time and harvest
Life had its reasons, life had its seasons
All things in place and a place there for all
But the old world was fading in an empire of plenty
In his last years he knelt by the side of the road
Cracking up stones till he lay down his bones in the workhouse

Grandfather's father was born on a Saturday
Six in the evening came into the world
When he was seven knew all about farm work
Lending a hand to the men on the land
Brought up the old fashioned way by hard toil
But the old world was fading in an empire of plenty
Eight million soldiers trooped off to the war
Each year there's a wreath for the ones who met death for their country

Here in the stone quarry grandfather's hammer rang
Hard on the drill in the sunshine or cold
Drilling and blasting and ripping the rocks away
Daily he'd go though his wages were low
Better, he said, than a life on the dole
But the old world was fading in a land of depression
If you don't like it, there's others who will
War killed the pain; then millions again got their papers

Father said he felt the pull of the land again
Just as before in his grandfather's time
But with tractors and balers and spreaders and harvesters
Different winds blow; the land tells him, go
Into the towns now and leave me behind
For the old world has faded and the empire of plenty
Drives us like cattle away from the land
The old hands pass on; they die like the sun in the evening

Farewell to the fields and goodbye to the village
To farmland and factory farm I'll say goodbye
Though you did mold me, you'll no longer hold me
With wages so low, up country I'll go
Live near a city and work on the line

For the old world has faded and now in a factory
I'll work there to earn enough money to buy
The food that my ancestors grew on the land that I'm leaving

From the New City Songster, from 1980.

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