O'Reilly and the Big McNeill

O'Reilly and the Big McNeill
(Donneil Kennedy)

The day I met O'Reilly it was 32 below;
The sparks were flying off me pick, I was up to me neck in snow.
His footsteps shook the basement slab, I saw the sky go black
As he roared out, ``I'm your ganger now, so dig until you crack."

He was bigger than a dumper truck with legs like concrete piles,
His face was like a load of bricks, his teeth were six inch files.
His eyes, they shone like danger lamps, his hands were tough as steel,
But a man as small as that was never a match for Big McNeill.

When tea came round at dinner-time, he grabbed a gallon tin,
But I said, ``Better put that down, if you would save your skin.
You may be called O'Reilly but I will to you reveal
That the cup you've got your hands on, it belongs to Big McNeill."

Well, he laughed at me and carried on as if I hadn't spoke.
He said, ``A man from Dublin Town can always take a joke."
But when he picked a shovel up, wee Jimmy gave a squeal \(em
``You'd better leave that teaspoon, it belongs to Big McNeill."

Well, everything the ganger touched we said to leave alone,
Or else McNeill would grind him up and make plaster of his bones.
At last O'Reilly lost his head and said he'd make a meal
Out of any labourer in the squad, especially Big McNeill.

We said McNeill was sick in bed and told him where to go.
The boys all downed their tools and went along to watch the show,
And when we got to Renfrew Street, wee Jimmy danced a reel,
To see him thundering at the door to fight the Big McNeill.

When the ganger got inside he saw a monster on the bed,
A mound as big as a stanchion base with a barrel size of head.
He punched it and he thumped it and he hit about with zeal,
'Til the missus cried: ``Don't hurt the child, or else I'll tell McNeill."

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