

Drill Ye Tarriers, Drill

original lyrics:

Every morning at seven o'clock
you see a gang of tarriers drilling in the rock,
The foreman yells, "Now don't stand still
Come down heavy on the cast iron drill."

Drill ye tarriers, drill,
Drill ye tarriers, drill.

The boss sent us to drill a hole,
He swore and cursed our Irish soul,
He cursed the ship that brought us through,
To work on the CP railway crew.

Drill ye tarriers, drill,
Drill ye tarriers, drill.

The foreman's name was Pat McGann,
B'gosh he was an awful man,
One day a premature blast went off,
And a mile in the sky went big Jim McGough.

Drill ye tarriers, drill,
Drill ye tarriers, drill.

When payday next did come around,
Big Jim a dollar short was found.
"What for?" says he. Came this reply:
"You're docked for the time you were up in the sky."

Drill ye tarriers, drill,
Drill ye tarriers, drill.

additional lyrics:

*Workin' all day without sugar in my tay,
Hammerin' rocks on the old railway,
The months roll by and I don't get no pay,
Drill ye tarriers, drill,
Drill ye tarriers, drill,
Drill ye tarriers, drill.*

*Workin' in the tunnel, shovelin' out the dirt,
I worked so hard that I wore out me shirt,
The tunnel cave in and we all got badly hurt,
Drill ye tarriers, drill,
Drill ye tarriers, drill,
Drill ye tarriers, drill.*

*Standin' in the mud about six feet deep,
Workin' all night without a bite to eat,
Couldn't get to camp for the mud on me feet,
Drill ye tarriers, drill,
Drill ye tarriers, drill,
Drill ye tarriers, drill.*

*I went to the river to wash out my clothes,
I laid 'em on a log where the river swiftly flows,
The log rolled in, down the river went my clothes,
Drill ye tarriers, drill,
Drill ye tarriers, drill.*

Vocabulary

tarrier – railway workers who blasted the rock to clear the way for the rail bed

tay – tea

premature – too early, before it is supposed to happen

docked – payment withheld or kept back

Original lyrics were by Thomas Casey and Connelly.
Extra verses author unknown.

Give an Honest Irish Lad a Chance

My name is McNamara, and I came from County Clare,
In that darling little isle across the sea,
Where the mountains and the hills, the lakes and rippling rills,
Are singing sweetest music all the day.
Our little farm was so small, it would not support us all,
So one of us was forced away from home;
I bid them all goodbye, with a teardrop in my eye
And I sailed for Castle Garden all alone.

Chorus:

I am an Irish lad, of work I'm not afraid,
If it's pleasure to you I will sing or dance;
I'll do anything you say, if you'll only name the day
When they give an honest Irish lad a chance.

When I landed in New York, I tried hard to get work,
And I traveled through the streets from day to day;
I went from place to place with starvation in my face,
But everywhere they say they want no help they say.
And still I wandered on, a-hoping to find one
That would give a lad a chance to earn his bread,
But then it's the same, and I know I'm not to blame,
And often-times I wished that I was dead.

Chorus

<http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/songster/18-give-an-honest-irish-lad-a-chance.htm>

Document

James Mahoney was an artist living in Cork, Ireland. In early 1847 he was asked by the Illustrated London News to tour the surrounding countryside and report on what he saw. The resulting articles and illustrations did much to alert the British public of the crisis. We join Mahoney's account as he journeys to the village of Skibbereen in the south of Ireland:

"I started from Cork, by the mail, for Skibbereen and saw little until we came to Clonakilty, where the coach stopped for breakfast; and here, for the first time, the horrors of the poverty became visible, in the vast number of famished poor, who flocked around the coach to beg alms: amongst them was a woman carrying in her arms the corpse of a fine child, and making the most distressing appeal to the passengers for aid to enable her to purchase a coffin and bury her dear little baby. This horrible spectacle induced me to make some inquiry about her, when I learned from the people of the hotel that each day brings dozens of such applicants into the town.



Mahoney's sketch
of the woman and child

After leaving Clonakilty, each step that we took westward brought fresh evidence of the truth of the reports of the misery, as we either met a funeral or a coffin at every hundred yards, until we approached the country of the Shepperton Lakes. Here, the distress became more striking, from the decrease of numbers at the funerals, none having more than eight or ten attendants, and many only two or three.

We next reached Skibbereen... We first proceeded to Bridgetown...and there I saw the dying, the living, and the dead, lying indiscriminately upon the same floor, without anything between them and the cold earth, save a few miserable rags upon them. To point to any particular house as a proof of this would be a waste of time, as all were in the same state; and, not a single house out of 500 could boast of being free from death and fever, though several could be pointed out with the dead lying close to the living for the space of three or four, even six days, without any effort being made to remove the bodies to a last resting place.

After leaving this abode of death, we proceeded to High-street, or Old Chapel-lane and there found one house, without door or window, filled with destitute people lying on the bare floor; and one, fine, tall, stout country lad, who had entered some hours previously to find shelter from the piercing cold, lay here dead amongst others likely soon to follow him. The appeals to the feelings and professional skill of my kind attendants here became truly heart-rending; and so distressed Dr. Donovan, that he begged me not to go into the house, and to avoid coming into contact with the people surrounding the doorway...

Next morning...I started for Ballidichob, and learned upon the road that we should come to a hut or cabin in the parish of Aghadoe, on the property of Mr. Long, where four people had lain dead for six days; and, upon arriving at the hut, the abode of Tim Harrington, we found this to be true; for there lay the four bodies, and a fifth was passing to the same bourne. On hearing our voices, the sinking man made an effort to reach the door, and ask for drink or fire; he fell in the doorway; there, in all probability to die; as the living cannot be prevailed to assist in the interments, for fear of taking the fever.

We next got to Skull, where, by the attention of Dr. Traill, vicar of the parish (and whose humanity at the present moment is beyond all praise), we witnessed almost indescribable in-door horrors. In the street, however, we had the best opportunity of judging of the condition of the people; for here, from three to five hundred women, with money in their hands, were seeking to buy food; whilst a few of the Government officers doled out Indian meal to them in their turn. One of the women told me she had been standing there since daybreak, seeking to get food for her family at home.

This food, it appeared, was being doled out in miserable quantities, at 'famine prices,' to the neighbouring poor, from a stock lately arrived in a sloop, with a Government steamship to protect its cargo of 50 tons; whilst the population amounts to 27,000; so that you may calculate what were the feelings of the disappointed mass.

Again, all sympathy between the living and the dead seems completely out of the question... I certainly saw from 150 to 180 funerals of victims to the want of food, the whole number attended by not more than 50 persons; and so hardened are the men regularly employed in the removal of the dead from the workhouse, that I saw one of them, with four coffins in a car, driving to the churchyard, sitting upon one of the said coffins, and smoking with much apparent enjoyment. The people also say that whoever escapes the fever is sure of falling sick on the road (the Public Works), as they are, in many instances, compelled to walk from three to six miles, and sometimes a greater distance, to work, and back again in the evening, without partaking of a morsel of food. Added to this, they are, in a great number of instances, standing in bogs and wet places, which so affects them, that many of the poor fellows have been known to drop down at their work."

References:

Mahony, James, *Sketches in the West of Ireland*, published in the *Illustrated London News* (1847); Kissane, Noel, *The Irish Famine, a Documentary History* (1995); Woodham-Smith, Cecil, *The Great Hunger* (1962).

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Photo



John Casement's crew laying track in 1866. Sometimes they laid as much as two miles of track per day. For sake of the photographer, the men are posed, about the only time they stood still.
A.J. Russell photograph

<http://www.univie.ac.at/Anglistik/easyrider/data/building.htm>



Photo



Irish laborers working on the railroad.

<http://stlfire4.loudclick.net/>

Excerpt from Newspaper

From "The New York Daily Tribune" 1868

Mr. (Grenville) Dodge, the Chief Engineer of the Union Pacific, has forged more than 8,000 workers – many of them Irish immigrants – into a formidable army. They have fought off the depredations of Cheyenne war parties, although dozens of the workers have been brutally scalped...A train of 24 cars is needed to supply this army its daily needs. Each train is shunted onto a siding when a fresh supply train comes through.

Five men work on each 700 pound iron rail, ten men to a pair of rails. Thirty seconds is allowed for each pair of rails, two rail lengths every minute, three blows to each spike, 10 spikes to the rail; that means 400 rails, 4,000 spikes, and 12,000 hammer blows for a single mile of track!

from American Heritage American Voices: Westward Expansion by David C. King, p. 99.

King, D., American Heritage American Voices: Westward Expansion (2003). Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.