

A Song of Light

Words by John Barr published in 'The Bulletin', here set to the tune of the 'Old Keg of Rum'. John Barr was for a time a sub-editor of 'The Bulletin' which was published in Sydney from 1880 to 2008. During its heyday from 1880 to 1918 it largely dictated the debate in Australian culture and politics. It lampooned colonial governors, business leaders, the bourgeoisie, the church, feminists and prohibitionists, while it supported the labour movement, Australian independence, liberal democracy and White Australia.

The musical score is written in 6/8 time and consists of six staves. Each staff contains a line of music with lyrics underneath and guitar chords (C, G7, F) indicated above the staff. The lyrics are as follows:

There have plen - ty songs been writ - ten, of the moon-light on the hill, ____
Of the star - light on the o - cean, and the sun - flecks on the rill, ____
But one glor - ious song has nev - er fall - en yet up - on my ear, ____
'Tis a roy - al song of glad-ness of the gas - light on the beer. ____
The gas - light on the beer. ____ The gas - light on the beer. ____
'Tis a roy - al song of glad-ness of the gas - light on the beer.

I have watched an amber sunset, creep across a black-faced bay;
I have seen the blood-flushed sunrise paint the snow one winter day,
But the gleam I will remember best, in lingering days to come,
Was a shaft of autumn radiance on a pint of golden rum.
A pint of golden rum. A pint of golden rum.
Was a shaft of autumn radiance on a pint of golden rum.

I have seen the love stars shining through bronze hair across my face,
I have seen white bosoms heaving 'neath a wisp of open lace,
But resplendent yet in memory and it seemeth brighter far-
Was a guttered candle's flicker on a tankard in a bar
A tankard in a bar. A tankard in a bar
Was a guttered candle's flicker on a tankard in a bar