

Fathom the Bowl

From a collection of English songs by William Alexander Barrett published in 1891 but probably originating in the 18th Century. 'Punch' comes from the Hindi word, panch (five), because of its five ingredients, spirit, water, lemon-juice, sugar and spices. Alfred Williams collected songs in the Upper Thames around 1910 and found Fathom the Bowl sung all the way from Malmesbury to Oxford.

Come all you bold heroes, give an ear to my song
And we'll sing in the praise of good brandy and rum
Ere that clear crystal fountain o'er England shall roll
Give me the punch ladle, I'll fathom the bowl

Chorus

*I'll fathom the bowl, I'll fathom the bowl
Give me the punch ladle, I'll fathom the bowl*

From France we do get brandy, from Jamaica comes rum
Fine oranges and lemons from Portugal come
But good beers and ciders are England's control
Give me the punch ladle, I'll fathom the bowl

My Father he do lie at the bottom of the sea
Cold rocks for his pillow but what do care he?
Ere that clear crystal fountain o'er England shall roll
Give me the punch ladle, I'll fathom the bowl

My wife she comes in as I sit at my ease
She scolds and she grumbles and does as she please
She may scold and grumble 'til she's blacker than coal
Give me the punch ladle, I'll fathom the bowl