

18. The Coasts of High Barbary

This is a ballad that comes down to us from the late 1600s when the Tudor Queen Elizabeth I ruled in England. During that time, the Mediterranean coast of Africa from Egypt to Gibraltar was known as the *Barbary Coast*. The name derives from the Berber tribes who had lived in that region since more than 2000 years before the birth of Jesus. But during the 1600s it was an outpost of the Turkish Ottoman Empire and had been taken over by pirates who were preying on merchant ships sailing in that area. For at least two centuries, nations including America, paid ransom to pirates of the Barbary Coast for safe passage. The verses of the song were probably inspired by actual events.



THE COASTS OF HIGH BARBARY

Traditional
Arr. by J. A. Rogers

1

Em D Em D Em

1. Look a - head, look a - stern, look the wea - ther in the lee, Blow

6

Em D Em B Em

high! _____ Blow low! _____ And so _____ sail _____ we. _____ I see a wreck to

11

D Em D Em Am6 Em

wind - ward and _____ a lof - ty ship to lee, a sail - ing down all on the coasts of

16

B Am6 Em

High Bar - - bar - - y.

THE COASTS OF HIGH BARBARY

Verse 1

Look ahead, look a stern,
Look the weather in the lee,
Blow high! Blow low! And so sailed we.
I see a wreck to windward
And a lofty ship to lee,
A sailing down all on
The coasts of High Barbary

Verse 2

O are you a pirate,
Or man-o-war, cried we.
Blow high! Blow low! And so sailed we.
O no! I'm not a pirate,
But a man-o-war, cried he.
A sailing down all on
The coasts of High Barbary

Verse 3

We'll back up our topsails,
And heave our vessel to.
Blow high! Blow low! And so sailed we.
For we have got some letters,
To be carried home by you.
A sailing down all on
The coasts of High Barbary

Verse 4

With cutlass and gun,
O we fought for hours three.
Blow high! Blow low! And so sailed we.
The ship it was their coffin,
And their grave it was the sea.
A sailing down all on
The coasts of High Barbary