

THE MERMAID (Child 289)

(Songbooks 2008)

As we were a-sailing along the Turkish shore
Wild was the gale and the billows did roar
What did we espy not ten leagues from the land?
But a mermaid with a comb and a glass in her hand

Oh where is King Arthur my brother? She cries
The truth you must tell me, the truth and no lies
For if he is living safe home you'll go free
But if he is dead, you shall sink in the sea.

Then up spoke our captain and a wise man was he
I have ne'er seen your brother and the truth this must be
Though I've looked well to windward and a very long way
If he's living or dead, I'm afraid I can't say

Oh where is King Arthur my brother? She cries
The truth you must tell me, the truth and no lies
For if he is living safe home you'll go free
But if he is dead, you shall sink in the sea.

Then up spoke our bosun, a fine salty tar
I've ne'er seen your brother and I've travelled afar
I ne'er saw him at Spithead, Cape Horn or Cathay
If he's dead or alive, well I can't rightly say

Oh where is King Arthur my brother? She cries
The truth you must tell me, the truth and no lies
For if he is living safe home you'll go free
But if he is dead, you shall sink in the sea.

Then up spoke our cabin boy, just ten years old
My dear mother taught me that truth must be told
For the truth shames the devil, as you very well know
King Arthur he died many long years ago

Alas for my brother! The mermaid she cries
For truth you have told me, the truth and no lies
Since he is not living you ne'er shall go free...
And our ship turned keel over, and sank in the sea!