High Barbaree

This spirited song is sometimes attributed to Charles Dibdin (1745-1814), a noted British song writer. Over the years, however, it has found its way into the folk tradition, easily adopted by English and American sailormen as well as shore-side people. It has been classified as a forecastle chantey and describes the encounter between a British frigate, The Prince of Wales, with one of the Barbary pirate ships off the coast of North Africa.

Medium tempo, robust style

1. There were two lofty ships from old England came,
2. "A loft! a loft!" our jolly bos'n cries,

high, blow low, And so sailed we; One
high, blow low, And so sailed we; Look a
3. "There's nought upon the stern, there's nought upon the lee,"
   Blow high, blow low, and so sailed we;
   "But there's a lofty ship to windward, and she's sailing fast and free,
   Sailing down along the coast of the High Barbaree."

4. "O hail her, O hail her," our gallant captain cried,
   Blow high, blow low, and so sailed we;
   "Are you a man-o'-war or a privateer," said he,
   'Cruising down along the coast of the High Barbaree?"

5. "O, I am not a man-o'-war nor privateer," said he,
   Blow high, blow low, and so sailed we;
   "But I'm a salt-sea pirate a-looking for my fee,
   Cruising down along the coast of the High Barbaree."

6. "O, 'twas broadside to broadside a long time we lay,
   Blow high, blow low, and so sailed we;
   Until the Prince of Luther shot the pirate's masts away,
   Cruising down along the coast of the High Barbaree.

7. "O quarter, O quarter," those pirates then did cry,
   Blow high, blow low, and so sailed we;
   But the quarter that we gave them—we sunk them in the sea,
   Cruising down along the coast of the High Barbaree.