

The Mermaid

English ballad from ca.1870 possibly written by William Makepeace Thackeray⁶. J. R. R. Tolkien translated it into Old English. Roud 9143.

O 'twas on the broad Atlantic 'mid the equinoctial gales
That a young fellow fell overboard among the sharks and whales
And down he went like a streak of light, so quickly down went he
'til he came upon a mermai-ed at the bottom of the deep blue sea

Chorus

*Singing Rule Britannia, Britannia rule the waves
Britons never never never shall be
Marri-ed to a mermai-ed
At the bottom of the deep blue sea*

She raised herself on her beautiful tail and gave him her soft white hand
“I've long been waiting for you my dear, now welcome safe to land
Go back to your mess mates for the last time and tell them all from me
That you're marri-ed to a mermai-ed at the bottom of the deep blue sea”

We sent a boat to look for him expecting to find a corpse
When he came up with a bang and a shout and a voice sepulchrally hoarse
“My comrades and my mess mates, oh do not look for me
For I'm marri-ed to a mermai-ed at the bottom of the deep blue sea”

The anchor was weighed and the sails unfurled and the ship was
sailing free
When we went up to our cap-itan and our tale we told to he
The captain went to the old ship's side and out loud bellowed he
“Be as happy as you can with your wife my man at the bottom of the
deep blue sea”

Chorus X2

⁶ <https://balladindex.org/Ballads/Har174.html>