A MAINSAIL HAUL

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A Mainsail Haul by John Masefield

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JOHN MASEFIELD

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I yarned with ancient shipmen beside the galley range
And some were fond of women, but all were fond of change;
They sang their quavering chanties, all in a fo'c's'le drone,
And I was finely suited, if I had only known.

I rested in an ale-house that had a sanded floor,
Where seamen sat a-drinking and chalking up the score;
They yarned of ships and mermaids, of topsail sheets and slings,
But I was discontented; I looked for better things.

I heard a drunken fiddler, in Billy Lee's Saloon,
I brooked an empty belly with thinking of the tune:
I swung the doors disgusted as drunkards rose to dance,
And now I know the music was life and life's romance.

1904

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DON ALFONSO'S TREASURE HUNT

Now in the old days, before steam, there was a young Spaniah buck who lived in Trinidad, and his name was Don Alfonso. Now Trinidad is known, in a way of speaking, among sailormen, as Hell's Lid, or Number One Hatch, by reason of its being very hot there. They've a great place there, which they show to folk, where it's like a cauldron of pitch. It bubbles pitch out of the earth, all black and hot, and you see great slimy workings, all across, like ropes being coiled inside. And talk about smell there!—talk of brimstone!—why, it's like a cattle-ship gone derelict, that's what that place is like.

Now by reason of the heat there, the folk of those parts—a lot of Spaniards mostly, Dagoes