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Three Men of Eddystone

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(Cyril Tawney)

Three brave men to the red reef came
Each one made the very same claim
That he could make the Eddystone rocks
As tame as a bully in the market stocks
Two worked with timber one with stone
All three with faith and faith alone.

cho: So drink up one man, drink up all
To the trio bold and their towers tall
Winstanley, Rudyerd, Smeaton too
And one more drop for the Cornish crew.

Winstanley was the first one's name
He'd made a packet at the showman's game
And he swore in sixteen ninety-six
He'd teach old Neptune a couple of tricks
But seven years on, like a bride and groom,
The man and his dreams met a watery doom.

Then merchant Rudyerd's plans were laid
Of timber tough his tower was made
For fifty years it would not yield
To all the might the sea could wield
But fire succeeds where tempests fail
To write the close of Rudyerd's tale.

Once more the seamen sailed in fear
Till one John Smeaton, engineer
Took inspiration from the trees
That taper up to beat the breeze
With Dorset heart and Devon hide
His tower of stone the seas defied.

Twelve decades later warning came
That while the light might shine the same
The cunning sea had subtler ways
Of cutting short the tower's days
Each wave a tunnel small could trace
To undermine the rocky base.

Machines and skills were now at hand
To bring the Douglas house to stand
One hundred and fifty feet in height
Just forty yards from Smeaton's light,
Which brick by brick was brought to shore
For blushing maids forevermore.

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