

Based on a poem Cicely Fox Smith  
As sung by Mike Kennedy with additional changes by Charlie Ipcar

**Key: F**

## High Noon in the Tropics

C--Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
It's rum how things come back to you, down by the Docks;  
--Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
I stopped in a junk store, filled with boots and broken clocks,  
----Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
And there by the door, a flying-fish, dinky and gray,  
-----Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
That once glittered like a rainbow, as it flittered through the spray;  
-----Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
And, Lord, it came back to me! As clear as it could be,  
Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
High noon in the Tropics, the ship running free,  
-----Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
And the blue old Pacific, just as far as you could see.

----Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
The sway of the masts, the dip and lift of the rail:  
----Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
The mate with his eye cocked aloft, at the set of sail;  
----Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
The barefoot helmsman at the wheel, in his trousers and his vest,  
--Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
A glint of light from his ear-ring, and a sea snake tattooed on his chest;  
Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
High Noon in the Tropics, the white, the gold, the blue,  
-----Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
The glittering of the flying-fish, as they flew,  
-----Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
And the songs we sang and the tales we told, and the shipmates that we knew.

---Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
It passed as a dream; I was back in port again,  
-----Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
With my collar turned up to my ears, in the cold and rain,  
----Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
And as I walked be-side the Docks, I heard the North Wind say,  
Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
"Oh, to be in the Tropics! Ten thousand miles a-way;  
Gm-----Am-----F-----C  
"Oh, to be in the Tropics! Ten thou-sand miles a-way!"

Notes:

Excerpted from “High Noon” by Cicely Fox Smith, *Full Sail: More Sea Songs and Ballads*, © 1926, pp. 61-63.

My friend Mike Kennedy set this Cicely Fox Smith poem to music and has graciously permitted me to record it. Here the old sailor steps into a nautical junk shop and is once again transported to the sailing days of his youth. Alison Lee Freeman provides harmony on this song.

The header graphic is from a set published in London by Abraham Rees in the period 1797-1820.

# High Noon

It's rummy, the way things come back to you . . . Down by the Docks  
I'd stopped at a junk store, all rusty old hinges and locks,  
Old shoes, and false teeth, and odd chessmen, and broken-up innards of clocks.

And, chucked in a heap with a lot of such litter, there lay  
A badly stuffed flying-fish, dingy and dusty and grey,  
That had gleamed like a rainbow long since as it flitted through sunshine and spray.

And, Lord! how it brought it all back to me! Clear as could be,  
High noon in the Tropics – the ship running free,  
And the blue old Pacific a-shining as far as a fellow could see . . .

The sway of the masts and the slow dip and lift of the rail:  
The mate with his eye cocked aloft at the set of the sail,  
And the bosun, the ugly old image, his mouth opened wide in a hail:

Old Sails with his palm and his needle, cross-legged on the hatch,  
A-stitching away at a bolt-rope, or putting a patch  
In a fair-weather topsail, and spinning his endless old yarns with the watch:

Old Slush at the door of his galley: and Chips with his chest:  
The barefooted man at the wheel in his trousers and vest,  
The flash of the rings in his ears and the sea-snake tattooed on his breast.

High noon in the Tropics – the white and the gold and the blue,  
The glitter of flying-fish scattering spray as they flew,  
The songs that we sang and the tales that we told and the shipmates we knew!

Then it passed like a dream: I was back here in Poplar again  
With my collar turned up to my ears in the cold and the rain,  
And the ships as they groped through the river mist wailing like creatures in pain.

\* \* \* \* \*

From *Full Sail: More Sea Songs and Ballads*, edited by Cicely Fox Smith, published by Houghton Mifflin Co., New York, US, 1926, pp. 61-63. First published in *Punch* magazine, Volume 165, 1923.