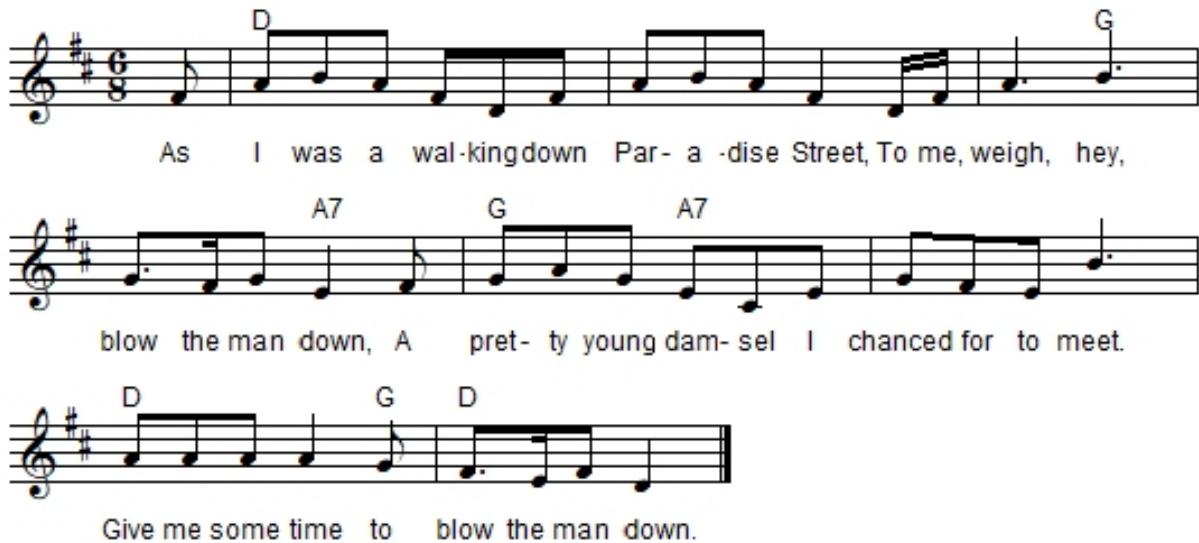


Blow the Man Down



As I was a walking down Paradise Street
To me, weigh, hey, blow the man down
A pretty young damsel I chanced for to meet.
Give me some time to blow the man down

She was round in the counter and bluff in the bow,
So I took in all sail and cried, "Way enough now".

I hailed her in English, she answered me clear,
"I'm from the Black Arrow bound to the
Shakespeare".

So I tailed her my flipper and took her in tow
And yardarm to yardarm away we did go.

But as we were going she said unto me
"There's a spanking full-rigger just ready for sea".

That spanking full-rigger to New York was bound;
She was very well manned and very well found.

And as soon as that packet was out on the sea,
'Twas devilish hard treatment of every degree.

But as soon as that packet was clear of the bar
The mate knocked me down with the end of a spar.

It's starboard and larboard on deck you will sprawl
For Kicking Jack Williams commands the Black Ball.

So I give you fair warning before we belay,
Don't ever take heed of what pretty girls say.

Blow the man down, bullies, blow the man down;
Blow the man down, bullies, pull him around.

Blow the man down, you darlings, lie down,
Blow the man down for fair London town.

When the Black Baller is ready for sea,
That is the time that you see such a spree.

There's tinkers, and tailors, and soldiers, and all,
They all ship for sailors on board the Black Ball.

When the Black Baller hauls out of the dock,
To see these poor fellows, how on board they flock.

When the Black Baller gets clear of the land,
'Tis then you will hear the great word of command.

'Lay aft here, ye lubbers, lay aft, one and all,
I'll none of your dodges on board the Black Ball'.

To see these poor devils, how they will all 'scoot,'
Assisted along by the toe of a boot.

It's now we are sailing on th' ocean so wide,
Where the deep and blue waters dash by our black side.

It's now when we enter the channel so wide,
All hands are ordered to scrub the ship's side.

And now, my fine boys, we are round the rock,
And soon, oh! soon, we will be in the dock.

Then all our hands will bundle ashore,
Perhaps some will never to sea go more.

A halyard chanty probably stemming from the Black Ball Line. The Black Ball Line was the name of two competing packet sailing companies in the 19th century. The first, founded in 1817 in New York, and the second, founded in 1851 in Liverpool. These packet ships were infamous for keeping to their disciplined schedules. This often involved harsh treatment of seamen and earned the ships the nickname, "bloodboats".

The lyrics were printed in Laura Alexandrine Smith's large collection of sailors' songs, **The Music of the Waters** (1888). Like most chanties of this type, "Blow the Man Down" was sung to a flexible combination of customary verses, floating verses from within the general chanty repertoire, and verses improvised in the moment or peculiar to individual singers. The song was of indefinite length, and created by supplying solo verses to an invariable two-part refrain.

Recorded by Burl Ives, The Hardtackers and just about every other group who sings chanties and sea songs.