Blow The Man Down
(version 1)

CHORUS:
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    D                                                  Em   G          A7
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Oh, blow the man down, bullies, blow the man down; to me way, hey, blow the man down!
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    A7                                                         D
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Oh, blow the man down, bullies, blow him away. Give me some time to blow the man down!

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

CHORUS:

She was round in the counter and bluff in the bow. To me, way aye blow the man down!
So I took in all sail and cried, "Way enough, now!" Give me some time to blow the man down!

CHORUS:

I hailed her in English, she answered me clear. To me, way aye blow the man down!
"I'm from the *Black Arrow* bound to the *Shakespeare.*" Give me some time to blow the man down!

CHORUS:

So, I tailed her my flipper and took her in tow. To me, way aye blow the man down!
And yardarm to yardarm away we did go. Give me some time to blow the man down!

CHORUS:

But as we were going she said unto me. To me, way aye blow the man down!
"There's a spanking full-rigger just ready for sea." Give me some time to blow the man down!

CHORUS:

That spanking full-rigger for New York was bound. To me, way aye blow the man down!
She was very well-manned and very well-found. Give me some time to blow the man down!

CHORUS:

But as soon as that packet was clear of the bar. To me, way aye blow the man down!
The mate knocked me down with the end of a spar. Give me some time to blow the man down!

CHORUS:

It's starboard and larboard on deck you will sprawl. To me, way aye blow the man down!
For "Kicking Jack" Williams commands the Black Ball. Give me some time to blow the man down!

CHORUS:

So, I give you fair warning before we belay. To me, way aye blow the man down!
Don't ever take head of what pretty girls say. Give me some time to blow the man down!

Notes On "Blow The Man Down"

Eli Cohen, Captain of the Goucher Pyrate Alliance, found the origin of these notes: "...On your website, under the "Blow the Man Down" page, you mentioned that you couldn't remember where you got the history of the song from. I found the same history, word-for-word, at this site, which quotes Stan Hugill's "Shanties of the Seven Seas." (www.contemplator.com/sea/blowdown.html) Not particularly surprising; if you ever don't know a source on shanty information, there's a 80% chance it's from Stan Hugill.."

"Blow The Man Down" originated in Western Ocean sailing ships. The tune could have originated with German emigrants, but it is more likely derived from an African-American song entitled "Knock A Man Down". "Blow The Man Down" was originally a halyard shanty. There are countless versions of "Blow the Man Down". The other version (version 2) is from the Burl Ives Songbook and tells of the Black Ball Line. A variant of this is "The Black Ball Line" (with a more positive view of the Black Ball Line as well).

Western Ocean Law was basically Rule With A Fist. "Blow" refers to knocking a man down with fist, belaying pin or capstan bar. Chief Mates in Western Ocean ships were known as "blowers", second mates as "strikers", and third mates as "greasers."

The Black Ball Line was founded by a group of Quakers in 1818. It was the first line to take passengers on a regular basis, sailing from New York, Boston and Philadelphia on the first and sixteenth of each month. The Black Ball flag was a crimson swallow-tail flag with a black ball.

The ships were famous for their fast passage and excellent seamanship. However, they were also famed for their fighting mates and the brutal treatment of seamen. (Western Ocean seamen were called "Packet Rats"). Many ships bore the name "bloodboat." Most of the seamen hailed from New York or were Liverpool-Irish.

By 1880 the sailing ships were being replaced by steamers and the packets entered other trades or were sold.