

Blow the Man Down

Source:

Joanna Colcord

Roll and Go

Indianapolis, Ind.: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1924

Oh — blow the man down, bul - lies, blow the man down!

To me way - aye, blow the man down.

Oh, blow the man down, bul - lies blow him right down!

Give me some time to blow the man down.

1. As I was a-walking down Paradise Street,
A pretty young damsel I chanced for to meet.
2. She was round in the counter and bluff in the bow,
So I took in all sail and cried "Way enough now."
3. I hailed her in English, she answered me clear,
"I'm from the Black Arrow bound to the Shakespeare."
4. So I tailed her my flipper and took her in tow,
And yardarm to yardarm away we did go.
5. But as we were going she said unto me,
"There's a spanking full-rigger just ready for sea."
6. That spanking full-rigger to New York was bound;
She was very well manned and very well found.
7. But soon as that packet was clear of the bar,
The mate knocked me down with the end of a spar.
8. And as soon as that packet was out on the sea,
'Twas devilish hard treatment of every degree.
9. So I give you fair warning before we belay;
Don't never take heed of what pretty girls say.

Background Information

This song was sung on board sailing ships commanded by Lincoln A. Colcord of Searsport, Maine in the decades at the turn of the 20th century and recorded by his daughter, Joanna. [It was] "probably the most famous of the old packet-ship shanties. The earliest version celebrates the Black Ball Line, and the hard lives that were lived aboard those ships. It should be noted that in those days, 'blow' meant 'knock.' ...[This text, the so-called 'Shanghai-ing version,'] is the latest and best-known version of this well-loved old shanty."

Joanna Colcord,
Songs of American Sailormen