

Fairport Convention, The Deserter

The Deserter
(trad. arr Fairport Convention)

As I was a-walking
along Radcliffe Highway
A recruiting party came
a-beating my way.
They enlisted me and treated me
'til I did not know
And to the Queen's barracks
they forced me to go.

When first I deserted, I
thought myself free
Until my cruel comrade
informed against me.
I was quickly followed after
and brought back with speed,
I was handcuffed and guarded,
heavy irons put on me.

Court martial, court martial,
they held upon me
And the sentence passed
upon me: three-hundred-and-three.
May the Lord have mercy
on them for their sad cruelty,
For now the Queen's duty
lies heavy on me.

When next I deserted, I
thought myself free
Until my cruel sweetheart
informed against me.
I was quickly followed after
and brought back with speed
I was handcuffed and guarded,
heavy irons put on me.

Court martial, court martial
then quickly was got
And the sentence passed upon
me: that I was to be shot.
May the Lord have mercy on
them for their sad cruelty,
For now the Queen's duty
lies heavy on me.

Then up rode Prince Albert in
his carriage-and-six,
Saying, Where is that young
man whose coffin it is fixed?
Set him free from his irons
and let him go free,
For he'll make a good soldier
for his Queen and country.