The Deserter (2)

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As I was a-walking down Radcliffe highway
A recruiting party came a-beating my way
They enlisted me and treated me till 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 help 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 sticks
Saying "Where is that young man whose coffin 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"

Recorded by Fairport Convention on Liege and Lief and by the
Young Tradition as "Ratcliff Highway"
JY