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When the Battle It Was Won

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Come all you aged people, I pray you lend an ear
You'll hear my feeling story, you can't but shed a tear
'Twas of an aged couple that had only one son
He was shot as a deserter when the battle it was won

He was tall, neat, and handsome, his countenance was fair
Red and rosy was his cheeks, and dark brown was his hair
He stood and gazed around the crowd and gave one heavy sigh
"If it was not for my mother I would not fear to die."

The morning I was leaving home my mother said to me
"It is the breaking of my heart to see you go away
You know you are my darling, my dear and only son
May the Lord restore you home again when the battle it is won."

About six weeks thereafter, while standing on the field
A letter was put in my hand, and dark brown was the seal
I quickly tore it open, and the first lines caught my eye
"Come home and see your mother once more before she dies."

O who could shun those dying words all from a mother dear?
Before the dawning of next day at her bedside stood near.
She threw her arms around my neck, which gave her much joy
"Behold I see you home again, my own and soldier boy."

I scarce had time to press her lips when a heavy step I heard
And turning round to hear the cause, an officer I spied.
He said, "You cowardly rascal, from the battlefield you've run
You'll be shot as a deserter, when the battle it is won."

And turning from her bedside: "Take care, sir, what you say,
My mother she is dying, on her death-bed doth she lay
I don't care if you shoot me, I'll never leave her so
Until she do recover or to her grave doth go."

He called his men around me and took me right away
Before I had time to defend myself or had a word to say
They put me in the guard-house where many have gone before,
And it's my dying mother I'll never see no more.

from MacKenzie, Ballads and Songs from Nova Scotia

collected from John Brown in Pictou County, Nova Scotia

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