

BEAT THE RETREAT

by

R. P. Weston and Bert Lee

I'm a hundred and two today, bagoom!
Eh, today I'm a hundred and two,
And at ten years of age I was soldiering, aye,
I wor drummer boy at Waterloo.

And when Wellington said, 'Sam, my lad, get thy drum,'
I wor so mighty anxious to start
That I dashed out in front and got captured by French,
And wor taken afore Boneyparte.

And Boneyparte, scratching his-self under t'arm,
Like you see him in pictures today,
Said, 'Voila!' so you are a drummer boy, oui
Then show us how well you can play.'

'Sam, Sam! beat the Retreat!
Beat the Retreat on thy drum.'
I said, 'Beat the what?' He said, 'Beat the Retreat.'
I said, 'Nay, that's one thing as I'll never beat;

I'll beat y' the Charge, or I'll beat the Tattoo,
But I'm British and Yorkshire, ba goom!
And though you're Napoleon, I'll see thee blowed,
If I'll beat the Retreat on my drum!'

Then, scratching his-self under t'arm once again,
In the way Boneyparte always did,
He said, 'Sacre bloo!' which is French for 'Ba goom',
'Eh, thou hast got a sauce for a kid.'

Then he called Josephine (Josephine wor his Queen)
And he said, 'Tell this lad, Josephine,
If he don't beat Retreat on his drum,
He'll be shot, aye, and put underneath Guil-li-o-tine.'

So she put her arm round me, and stroking me 'air,
She whispered, 'Hush, hush now - coom, coom!
Be a good lad - do as Boneyparte tells thee,
And beat the Retreat on thy drum!'

I said 'Missus, nay!' then she started to cry,
And she murmured, 'O, lad, you are too sweet to die;
And hast thou a mother who loves thee?' she sobbed.

I said, 'Aye, and she's Yorkshire, ba goom!
And she'd beat the Retreat on me trousers
If I were to beat the Retreat on me drum!'

Then Boneyparte, scratching his-self once again,
Said 'My lad, I've a Mother like her,'
And, taking his medals off with his two hands
And unpinning his gold Croix de Guerre,

He put them on me, kissed me on both cheeks,
Then pulled me outside of the tent,
And leading me up to his Army,
And scratching his-self under t'arm as he went,

'Soldiers of France,' he cried,
'This is Sam Small, he's a hero, though only a kid,
'E-coutez, mes braves, et com-prenez toute suite!
What do you think this lad did?

"Beat the Retreat on thy drum!" said I.
"Beat the Retreat on thy drum!"
And this lad refused, though I said he should die,
Why did he refuse?' I said, 'I'll tell 'em why,

For two reasons I wouldn't beat the Retreat,
Though I knew that it meant kingdom come;
One reason was somebody pinched both me sticks,
And the other... I'd busted me drum.'