

THE CROSS

(Selected)

GOD laid upon my back a grievous load,
A heavy cross to bear along the road;
I staggered on, till, lo! one weary day,
An angry lion leaped across my way.
I prayed to God, and swift at His command
The cross became a weapon in my hand;
It slew my raging enemy, and then
It leaped upon my back a cross again!
I faltered many a league, until at length,
Groaning, I fell and found no further strength.
I cried: "O God! I am so weak and lame,"
And swift the cross a winged staff became,
It swept me on until I retrieved my loss,
Then leaped upon my back again a cross.
I reached a desert; on its burning track
I still perceived the cross upon my back.
No shade was there, and in the burning sun
I sank me down and thought my day was done;
But God's grace works many a sweet surprise,
The cross became a tree before mine eyes.
I slept, awoke, and had the strength of ten,
Then felt the cross upon my back again.
And thus through all my days, from that to this,
The cross, my burden, has become my bliss;
Nor shall I ever lay my burden down,
For God shall one day make my cross a crown.

SHEPPARD.