

ARTICLE VI.

A GARLAND OF ORIGINAL VERSE.

BY THE REVEREND JAMES LINDSAY, D.D.

THE poems that follow will be found to revolve mainly around the problems of the soul's life: Nature, so far as appealed to, is chiefly invoked in illustration of the spiritual life. If they wear a reflective cast, that is because poetry is likely to depend always more, for its power and appreciation, on its reflective character.

ODE TO VIRTUE.

I.

O Virtue! white-winged god! erect of Deity
 Thy shrine within the temple of man's soul!
 Ancients, as men of latest sun, aseity
 To thee ascribed, as did thy glories roll.
 From Heaven thou cam'st,
 Man's life thou tam'st,
 And ever dost with moral splendors fill:
 No ill attends,
 High Heaven forefends,
 For thou art sovran care of Heaven's great Will.

II.

O Virtue! thou the Ideal hast brought down to men,
 But thine Ideal is the God Most High!
 On meanest virtue rests the seal of Godhead then,
 No virtue but to life of God draws nigh.
 Virtue is height
 In humblest wight
 That to his soul thy vision doth apply:
 Nothing he needs
 Whose only deeds
 Are done in strength thy goodness doth supply.

III.

No power hath touched me, Virtue, like thy sceptered
 sway—

Sway as of autumn wind on waving grain—
 Life's sole nobility art thou—sun of its day,
 Turning the dark to light, all loss to gain.

Radiance thou art—

Piercing thy dart

That gives to Reason far its farthest fling:

Greatness art thou,

My soul endow

With powers enabling it new flights to wing.

IV.

No self-bound graces, Virtue, do I seek from thee,

This self a sterile, wayward, empty thing,

But, since Incarnate Virtue stooped men's sons to free,

Would my poor graces find in thee their spring:

For one with thee

They fain would be,

Of mine own self I nothing can perform:

Sole good thou art;

Nor any smart

Knows he who to thy precepts doth conform.

V.

Thy willing slave, O Virtue, would my spirit be,

So human seem'st thou, and art so divine,

Through fire and flood, unscathed, thy form doth
 carry me;

Nor needs thy viewless might one stroke of mine.

Nature may fall,

May crush my all,

I triumph o'er her hidden forces still;

For thou art more

Than Nature's store:

O'er ev'ry ruin sits thy regnant Will.

THE REASON OF FAITH.

I.

'Twas asked, What means thy faith?

This answer mine:—

The soul's ascent of tuneless heights to hear

The harmonies divine;

The soul's descent of ocean deeps which, with its filaments, it
sweeps

Where base or bottom there is none,
But the All-Real is touched and won;

The soul, self-scorning, turned within, that, stilled the sound
of sense and sin,

Eternal glory may come in.

II.

'Twas asked, What gives thy faith?

I answer cried:—

All things that may on earth be touched or seen

Possess a mystic side,

Nor simply self-announcing are, the sole Reality declare;

For not without that primal Power

Could man or matter last an hour:

No being, breathing thoughtful air, to live in world derived
and fair,

Faith's lamp unlit, may wisely dare.

III.

'Twas asked, What proves thy faith?

My ready plea:—

No rayless realm those reaches, peopled, vast,

By men named earth and sea;

The parts they of one mighty home, lit up by living Father's
smile,

His law for me, a child of dust,

The life of pure-eyed, manful trust:

Where thought, with vain essay, would come, lives, self-
illuminated, my trust as son,

And deeper proof knows there is none.

IV.

'Twas asked, Why keep thy faith?

My swift reply:—

Wings for its sov'reign flight faith's power alone

To reason can supply;

For faith has reason, reason faith, and faith and reason melt
in one

Within the spirit's upper zone,

Where discord is no longer known:

If faith shall cease to pierce the sky, and bring a living Fa-
ther nigh,

The soul of sonship then shall die.

RIGHTEOUSNESS AS HEART OF THE UNIVERSE.

I looked upon the outer forms
 Of being that around me lay;
 I looked upon the perfect norms
 Of truth that men could not gainsay;
 I said, Behind the endless veil
 Of what appears must be what is,
 Who shall it seek, and never fall,
 A wondrous secret shall make his.
 But why, methought, should I not prove
 What is the life, the soul, the strength,
 Of all that here doth live or move?
 'Twas thus my spirit came at length
 To rest in thought of righteousness.
 O righteousness, thou master-thought,
 Whose sway supreme none can repress!
 O word with heavenly bracing fraught
 For souls that might too yielding be!
 O reign that nevermore shalt end,
 But outlast kings and scepters all!
 O realm whose bounds eyes cannot see,
 My soul yet feels thy gentle thrall!
 No abstract entity art Thou,
 With being tenuous, unreal!
 Form personal hath stamped Thy brow:
 On Thee the Godhead set its seal!
 In Thee the Godhead lives and moves:
 Thou art the heart, the strength of all
 The mighty Universe, that proves
 Its power to lie in Thy great call.
 Oh, may my spirit wake to life,
 As o'er me waves of glory roll,
 In sharing, spite of earth's sad strife,
 The strength of the harmonious Whole!

A SONG OF SOUL-DEDICATION.

This life, O Lord, no temple made with hands,
 I dedicate to Thee! It open stands.
 Wilt Thou not enter, and Thy glory bring
 Where brooded darkness as of raven wing?
 All things are from Thee, and Thy glory show,
 Grant to this temple with Thy light to glow.
 Its sin-laid ruins do Thou still repair:
 Its destined glory do Thou yet declare:

Its feeble lights, Lord, do Thou quite replace:
 Its narrow confines widen into space:
 Strength to its pillars let Thy grace impart:
 Beauty bestow as with a crown of art:
 Thy favor be upon it! 'Tis Thine own!
 Usurping spirits all do Thou dethrone.
 Within its walls my tenant spirit bless,
 And let its altar-fires no more grow less.
 Founded in righteousness, oh, let it rise
 With minarets far-reaching to the skies,
 The glory of the Lord the bulking fill,
 Its uses all subserve His holy Will.

THE STREAM OF LIFE.

The stream of life flowed idly by
 Where chanced my pensive soul to lie,
 And, as I looked into the stream,
 Sore troubled did those waters seem:
 A plaintive sadness filled the air
 At sound of waters gurgling there.
 I gazed until the myst'ry dim
 Of life did make thought vainly swim:
 What means this stream? Whence took it rise?
 Why made to flow 'neath leaden skies?
 Sad from that stream I turned away,
 Felt as dull mist my heart o'erlay.
 Ah! as I left those waters seen,
 Valleys and meadows seemed less green,
 Joy was less real, and woes of earth
 Choked my heart-springs of healthful mirth.
 Oft have I, since that first, long, view,
 Come where I might that sight renew.
 And ever, as I gazing stood,
 Sadness seemed on my soul to brood.
 It was not that I could not tell
 Why waters there should always swell,
 But that their weary, ceaseless run
 Baffled the best thought 'neath the sun,
 And that they sent a cold, damp chill,
 That left me less joy and less will.
 Once as I walked at height of noon
 My secret need was unveiled soon:
 I saw the strong sun send his beams
 Into that sullenest of streams;

Its surface shone, its depths ran clear,
 Its deepest beds did now appear:
 So, there's a time for ev'ry mood,
 But ev'ry mood must end in God.
 The creeping sadness, wasteful gloom,
 No more within my heart find room;
 No more I to that stream repair,
 As though no sun rays filled the air;
 No more forget in Christ's great gleam
 'Tis joy doth best my soul beseem.
 For, Joy's the first, last truth of all,
 O'er sadness lets its mantle fall,
 Makes effort worth, makes weakness strong,
 Fills day with hope, and night with song.

FAITH REGAINED.

I wandered lone in a light fairy land,
 Where all seemed done with magician's wand,
 My way I sought with an eager hand,
 Till lost in a waste of saffron sand.
 Drear was that waste, with no trace of green;
 Sole of man's foot there never had been;
 There step of God still less had been known,
 Mystery, barren, blank, over all thrown.
 Earth but a ball, with no socket, seemed;
 The planets a show'r that godless streamed.
 My soul awoke; 'twas only a dream,
 But a dream that hid more than may seem.
 For the land—that of science—I knew!
 And the waste—that where faith drops no dew!
 To my soul, sad, I said, "Soul of mine,—
 See thou that thy faith do not pine:—
 Be the stare of worlds stony and blank,
 And the movements of matter so rank,
 See thy wide-roaming thought lose not sight
 Of the reason that gilds all with light.
 To the reason that's inward and free
 Answers reason without—mark its plea.
 And what science pure, far-reaching, best,
 But the soul and its reason can test?
 Or what profit to scan realms of law,
 If our souls lose their rev'rence and awe?
 For law is no God, law is but dumb,
 Feels not a pang if the soul succumb."
 Thus did I speak, and hearken'd my soul

Back then the dark waves of doubt did roll;
 Waters of faith came flooding amain;
 Freedom and strength did my soul regain.

THE MYSTERY OF LIFE.

O Life! thou wondrous mystery!
 Whose depths unfathomed none may see,
 I cannot choose but gaze on thee!

A feeble, broken thing, they say,
 An earth-worn mold soon turned to clay,
 A speck soon lost as ocean-spray;

Yet glory fills for me thy name,
 Thy glory kindles into flame
 This soul—which sorrow cannot tame—

The flame leaps up within my heart,
 Awful the strength its fires impart,—
 But why should I in wonder start?

Thy throb that thrills the world afar:
 Thy light that pales the shining star:
 Thy breath that fills all things that are.

But what thou art? Whence hast thy way?
 Whither thou tend'st? Oh, who shall say
 That dark doth not o'erhang the day?

Thy broken threads I may not weave;
 Thy meanings all may not perceive;
 But thought of thee I cannot leave.

Thou larger art than thought of men;
 Too high for their poor finite ken;
 Why should'st thou not inspire us then?

Lost in thine arms, O Life, I lie,
 Thy pulses of infinity
 Declare to me I cannot die.

No more unlighted mystery,
 My soul, beholding life, shall see;
 For life is light, O Lord, in Thee!

THE SOUL.

The soul! the soul! the last
 Of facts most sure and fast
 Is just the soul!
 Let doubters have their day,
 Agnostics all say, Nay,
 Yet reason's latest ray
 Points to this pole.

From what source sprung it may,
 Come in whatever way,
 The soul is here. -
 Whate'er his present rôle,
 Whate'er his future goal,
 The frame of man the soul
 Will still ensphere.

What surer fact for me?
 What higher life can be
 Than of the soul?
 No grander growth I know,
 Than true soul-life can show,
 Through cycles vast and slow—
 Oh, keep it whole!

Oh, what a wondrous sense
 Within its orb intense
 The soul doth bear!
 Sense of a God most right,
 Sense of defects not slight,
 Sense of a dread sin-blight
 That all men wear.

Earth's bases may remove,
 But stable still shall prove
 Man's strange, dear soul:
 Live on shall all its powers,
 Through more than earth's short hours,
 Live where are fadeless bowers,
 While ages roll.

CHRISTIAN PERSONALITY.

My soul within itself did long
 To know whereunto it should come,
 When mounting, as on wings of song,
 It should the highest make its home.

A ray that fell from heaven's throne
 Chanced on my weary soul to light,
 And personality to own
 As highest, did me teach aright.

For other truths, more large, 'tis true,
 May here on earth by men be known,
 And other truths, here hid from view,
 As higher, may in heaven be sown.

But other truth, more deep or real,
 More high, we never here can know,
 No more may God or man reveal
 Than personality can show.

Oh, blessed truth to grasp and gain,
 That, self-determined, conscious, free,
 I may communion large attain
 With God's own personality.

Oh, growth of soul! Oh, grasp of mind!
 Oh, strength of this communion born!
 To reach the highest man may find
 I have not led a hope forlorn.

For now it is no longer I
 That live, but Christ that lives in me,
 And now the prime star in life's sky,
 Is Christian Personality.

SOUL DRIFTING.

"Take heed ye do not drift,"¹
 A Voice rang loud and clear;
 The tides of thought may shift;
 The Voice I still can hear.

¹ μή παραρῶμεν (Heb. ii. 1).

A strangely solemn sound
 As oft it floats to me—
 Bidding not run aground
 In drifting on life's sea.

But why should I thus drift?
 As though no skill to guide,
 As in the clouds no rift,
 As though no port to hide.

Why on devouring wave
 Should I so sad depend?
 As though to guide and save
 High heaven no help did send.

Through changing seas I pass;
 I pass, but do not drift;
 My soul no helpless mass
 That any surge may lift.

With self-directing power
 My conscous course I steer,
 And in night's sablest hour
 Into the dark I peer.

For reason Christ hath given;
 And conscience His sweet gift;
 And while He lives in heaven
 Why should I weakly drift?

Drift as does raft or spar
 My soul's frail bark shall not;
 Christ is my guiding star,
 And he my wise Pilot.

Holst! Away! bark of my soul!
 Make for the port of truth!
 Safe though the wild waves roll,
 Sure of keeping ruth.

SPIRITUAL UNITY.

Why speak to me of being one?
 No prospect do I see
 That creeds and sects will fuse and run
 In mold of charity.

And yet I feel a growing need—
 A growing hope I find,
 Sect may from sect, and creed from creed,
 Be less and less confined.

That "higher unity" I seek—
 I seek it first in life—
 In life that flows from Christ the meek
 To end the reign of strife.

With Parsee prim, with Buddhist bold,
 With Arab brave and dun,
 With Chinaman convinced and cold,
 I may in Him be one.

The bigot and the broad-souled man
 Have in them one life poured,
 The Quaker and the Anglican
 One Lord have both adored.

Then to your knees, ye jangling sects,
 Whose strife may well be done,
 'Tis life alone that God respects,
 Such life in Him is one.

But ye have hid that life too long—
 Its light ye have withheld—
 Ye rob those nations of their song
 To One they have beheld.

Oh, would ye shine as guiding star,
 Or your own pulses fill!
 Go, prove to lands that lie afar
 Ye have a gospel still.

ON PESSIMISTIC MOODS.

I sat me down, and pondered well
 That sadness had such fatal spell
 Cast over men and me.
 To strive and toll seemed no more worth,
 A poor and hollow thing was earth,
 Nor one light did I see.

'Twas not that I had left my place
 To join in an ignoble race—

The race of empty fame:
 'Twas that of prizes earth had none,
 Nor any good for duty done—
 What good could any name?

Thus did I find the world intrude
 Into my sacred solitude—
 Intrude its nerveless thought:
 And with that evil entrance came
 A breath that blew upon the flame
 Of life, and darkness brought.

In darkness on my knees I fell;
 A tear stood in its sluice to tell
 The sadness in my heart:
 I cried that God again might come,
 Again might make my heart His home,
 Nor ever thence depart.

A warmth began my heart to fill,
 A joy of faith did soon distill
 Within the soul's sad sphere:
 That never lost is aught of good
 Was that most sure to my chang'd mood—
 No, for that God is here.

Is here—by eye of faith is seen;
 Is here my vexèd soul to screen
 From world that knows Him not:
 Now strength and joy, recovered, come;
 Now live I in my God as home—
 My sorrow all forgot.

THE SPRING-TIME OF THE SOUL.

I love the bud, the peeping bud,
 With tip of freshest green,
 As hedge of Spring it comes to stud
 Where Winter's black hath been.

I love it for its own sweet sake,
 So beauteous, tender, fair,
 And for the joy it comes to wake
 In bracing, vernal air.

But more I love the gentle bud
For thoughts it brings to me
Of soul-life hid 'neath mire and mud,
And struggling to be free.

Oh, once as gentle bud my soul
Stood out upon life's tree!
Life came not then a stinted dole,
But ceaseless, flowing, free.

For grace of life my Saviour gave
From life that was His own,
And deadness, as of wintry gloom,
My soul ne'er since hath known.

Oh, still and ever as a bud
My soul would freshly feel,
Upbursting from my Saviour-God
The life of endless weal.

And when beyond the narrow bounds
Of earthly life I fly,
My Spring shall know no cycling rounds
In worlds beyond the sky.