

## MISCELLANEOUS.

### SUBCONSCIOUS VERSE.

A prominent journalist who has written poetry of unusual merit and whose verses have appeared in the most critical magazines of this country, sends a poem automatically written which he introduces with the following explanation:

"I am sending you a queer thing, some verse I wrote automatically. It welled up out of my subconscious mind—I suppose that's where it came from—with no effort of my own at all. When I wrote the first line I did not know what the next one would be at all; when I got as far as the fourth stanza I began to influence the thing consciously just a bit, but not much. It reads like the wail of a Scotch Presbyterian who had somehow made a mistake and got into a Catholic Purgatory. The writing took only a very few minutes; I am afraid to say how few. Usually when I write verse I have to spend a long time over each stanza. This isn't very good verse; the fifth stanza is the only one in the whole thing that I'd care to print over my own signature; and yet the manner in which I got it is rather interesting.

"I have a theory about how I got it that may interest *The Open Court*. I have a great deal of Scottish blood in me; and in my family for generations back there have always been a lot of Presbyterian preachers. And—whether I like it or not!—I have inherited their mental make-up to a certain extent; I do not consciously subscribe to their beliefs; nevertheless, they insist on occupying a certain portion of my mind. The conscious part of my mind took a vacation for a few minutes, as happens in dreams, and the subconscious part got busy before I could stop it. I do not write Scots dialect, nor read it easily; there are doubtless many imperfections in this; if I had been getting it from a Scotch Presbyterian ghost he would certainly have got his dialect right. But I didn't; I got it out of myself; and there being no correct Scots dialect in me, not any could come out of me.

"And the thing which pulled the trigger and let this loose—at least I presume it is the thing—is not uninteresting in its relationship to the whole stunt. For a long time I had been making a lot of psychological experiments; on several occasions I had been very much frightened by getting into communication with—well, really with a series of memories and impressions of my dead grandfather which are stored away in that same subconscious mind. That is what my conscious mind *really* got into communication with, although a spiritualist would say I had been in communication with the ghost of that grandfather. But, as I say, I had been frightened; especially on one occasion. A person need not believe in ghosts to be afraid of them, you know. This grandfather was a strict Presbyterian.

"Shortly before the enclosed verse was written I had sent to my sister, at a distance, a magazine article in which I took a rather didactic and preacher-fied tone. She laughingly wrote me that my grandfather's ghost had finally succeeded in making me his mouthpiece; that I was turning into a Presbyterian preacher. It was this suggestion with regard to the Presbyterian ghost that wanted a mouthpiece on earth which ripened in my subconscious mind to the conception embodied in the verse—the conception of a wraith between two states of existence. And it was only natural that when the impulse came the verse should be written *in character*. In short, I had been consciously thinking about Presbyterians, ghosts and ancestors so much that day that my mind hypnotized itself into the belief that it was the mind of a Presbyterian ancestor's ghost, and spoke in the terms of that assumed personality.

"At the same time, I should not like to be condemned to writing verse automatically. In the first place it is not such good verse as I can write myself; and in the second place I don't like the uncanny, creeping feeling—the sense of being the tool of another and distinct personality—which was on me as I wrote.

"If you care to use this verse, and the rational explanation of it I have tried to make, I would rather you did not use my name; but sign it Sanders McIvor. And for these reasons: There is so much flub-dub being written now about communication with spirits, that the writers of it would be sure to take up an instance of this kind as a proof that some ghost wrote it, instead of my subconscious mind, in spite of my explanation; and I would get a kind of notoriety I don't want. And in the second place, as I am a writer myself, they would be apt to think that I had written this long explanation as a medium for advertising my wares; there is so much of that sort of thing done nowadays by writers.

"It is characteristically Presbyterian that the ghost's trouble and doubt is not with regard to his opinions; whether he may have lived up to his faith or not, he is quite sure that the faith itself is all right. He is not afraid to put the matter to the test and face God because he is afraid God isn't a Presbyterian, you know; he is still sure of that; his system of theology hasn't failed him because of the mere accident of dying—his trouble and doot is about his actions—never his *opinions!*" Isn't that Scotch, though? He thinks he is humble in this poem; but he is really so proud of his humility that he becomes arrogant."

#### LIGHT.

Licht! Licht! Licht!

O, God, I pray Thee, gie to me  
That licht of which Thou saidst: "Let be  
Its glory ower baith land and sea  
Through time and through eternity!"

I dreeft in darkness; I'm a soul  
That weevers t'ward an unkent goal  
Set middlins twaxt far pole and pole  
Whaur astral tides unplumbit roll;

I am not flesh, nor yet fu' wraith;—  
 I'm twaxt twa lives, whaur love's too rathe  
 A fashion noo';—though I hae faith  
 O' love at last too strang for scathe.

Not altogether purified,  
 I keep the shape whaurin I died,  
 The smack of sin, the reek of pride,  
 The vanity o' God denied.

Yon outer wards twaxt world and world,  
 Whaur God the sinnin' angels hurled,  
 Wax red wi' flags o' flame unfurled  
 Whaurin dead souls like leaves are swirled;

I skirt the brink o' that fell place,  
 Too fair for Hell, too foul for grace;  
 I yearn to meet God face to face,  
 Yet scarcely dare to plead my case.

Thairfur, the trooble and the doot;  
 Thairfur, the ghaist that dangs about,  
 Strang braced wi' faith, and yet wi'oot  
 The heart to face the matter oot!

SANDERS McIVOR.

---

### BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTES.

HOW TO TALK WITH GOD. By a Veteran Pastor. Philadelphia: Sunday School Times Company. Pp. 99.

Under the veil of anonymous utterance the author is able to give more of his personality to his readers than an unavoidable self-consciousness might otherwise permit. Himself a minister of forty years' service, and the son of a minister, he has had intimate knowledge of the importance of carefully worded petitions in their influence on the minds of their hearers. With the utmost humility of spirit and modesty of expression the Veteran Pastor follows a "Personal Explanation" with a short essay "How to Talk with God," which gives seventeen informal rules for beginning and growth in the power of prayer, based on the principle that "the method and the conditions of true prayer are largely indicated by the habits of the normal child in the normal home." The book concludes with many instances of "A Veteran Pastor's Prayers," which are beautiful examples of the principles the author has endeavored to inculcate. To no one else, it is certain, will they appeal as "lamentably stiff, formal and artificial," or weighted with "the clumsiness of self-consciousness" which "signifies a defective piety."

---

AT THE DOOR. By Katherine M. Yates. Chicago: K. M. Yates & Co., 1908.  
 Price 50 cts. Leather \$1.00.

This is a dainty little allegory written as is stated on the title page to be read "both on the lines and between." The heroine Marjorie is led by the