

## THE SEA.

O changeful sea! thy face to me  
Hath many a different aspect worn;  
I've roamed by thee in hours of glee,  
And when my heart with grief was torn.

With deepening roar upon the shore  
Thy billows beat, and find no rest;  
In storm or calm their ceaseless psalm  
Hath waked sweet echoes in my breast.

But now my heart can only start  
To hear their moan with shuddering dread;  
For every wave beats o'er a grave—  
The grave wherein my love lies dead.

He was so young, so brave and strong,  
Hope sat so radiant on his brow;  
No shadow fell on our farewell  
Of that despair which haunts me now.

A mother pressed him to her breast—  
A mother's love is right divine;  
My love I knew was great and true,  
But yet her claim was more than mine.

He sailed away that Autumn day,  
And we two women stopped our tears  
To watch that face whose youthful grace  
Shall shine no more through all the years.

As day declined, the treacherous wind  
Rose fierce and high with tempest's breath;  
In that dread hour Hope lost her power—  
I knew and felt my sailor's death.

Since then, to me, O changeful sea,  
Thy face hath worn a look of gloom;  
Thy sparkling waves have told of graves—  
Of useless prayers and timeless doom.

But when at last that gulf is passed  
Which oft seems very near to me,  
Just o'er the brink I love to think  
In that sweet land "is no more sea"—

No more of tears or haunting fears,  
Or sickening hope through long delay:  
O faithless soul, so bright a goal  
Should help thee forward on thy way!

## THE DEMON SNUFFERS.

I'm not at all given to parading my troubles—nothing of the kind. I may be getting old, in fact I am; and I may have had disappointments such as have left me slightly irritable and peevish; but I ask, as a man, who wouldn't be troubled in his nerves if he had suffered from snuffers?

Snuffers? Yes, snuffers—a pair of cheap, black, iron snuffers, that screech when they are opened, and creak when they are shut; a pair that will not stay open nor yet keep shut; a pair that gape at you incessantly, and point at you a horrid, sharp, iron beak, as a couple of leering eyes turn the finger and thumb holes into a pair of spectacles, and squint and wink at you maliciously. A word in your ear—this in a whisper—those snuffers are haunted! their insignificant iron frame is the habitation of a demon—an imp of darkness; and I've been troubled till I've got snuffers on the brain, and I shall have till I'm snuffed out.

It has been going on now for a couple of years, ever since my landlady sent the snuffers up to me first in my shiny crockery-ware candlestick, where those snuffers glide about like a snake in a tin pail. I remember the first night as well as can be. It was in November—a weird, wet, foggy night, when the river-side streets were wrapped in a yellow blanket of fog—and I was going to bed, when at my first touch of the candlestick those snuffers glided off with an angry snap, and lay, open-mouthed, glaring at me from the floor.

I was somewhat startled, certainly, but far from alarmed; and I seized the fugitives, and replaced them in the candlestick, opened the door, and ascended the stairs.

Mind, I am only recording facts, untinged by the pen of romance! Before I had ascended four steps, those hideous snuffers darted off, and plunged point downwards on to my left slippered foot, causing me an agonizing pang, and the next moment a bead of starting blood stained my stocking.

I will not declare this, but I believe it to be a fact: as I said something oathish, I am nearly certain that I heard a low, fiendish chuckle; and when I stooped to lift the snuffers, there was a bright spark in the open mouth, and a pungent blue smoke being breathed out to annoy my nostrils.

I was too bold in those days to take much notice of the incident, and I hurried upstairs—not, however, without seeing that there was a foul black patch left upon the holland stair-cloth; and then I hurried into bed, and tried to sleep. But I could not, try as I would. In the darkness I could just make out the candlestick against the blind; and from that point incessantly the demon snuffers gradually approached me, till they sat spectacle-wise astride my nose, and a pair of burning eyes gazed through them right into mine.

Need I say that I awoke next morning feverish and unrefreshed to go about my daily duties?

"I'll have no more of it to-night," I said to myself, as I rose early to go to bed, and make up for the past bad night; and I smiled sardon-

cally as I took up the highly glazed candlestick, and tried to shake the black, straddling reptile out upon the sideboard. I say tried; for, to my horror, the great eyeholes leered at me as they hugged round the upright portion of the stick, and refused to be dislodged. I shook them again, and one part went round the extinguisher support, which the reptile dislodged, so that the extinguisher rattled upon the sideboard top. But the snuffers were there still. I tried again, and they, or it, dodged round and thrust a head through the handle, where they stuck fast, grinning at me till I set the candlestick down and stared.

"Pooh!—stuff!—ridiculous!" I exclaimed, quite angry at my weak, imaginative folly; and determined to act like a man, I seized the candlestick with one hand, the snuffers with the other, and after a hard fight, succeeded in wriggling them out of their stronghold, banged them down upon the table cloth, seized them again, snuffed my candle viciously before replacing them on the table, and then marched out of the room, proud of my moral triumph, and rejoicing in having freed myself of the demon. But as I stood upon the stairs, I could see that my hand was blackened; and the icy, galvanic feeling that assailed my nerves when I first touched the snuffers still tingled right to my elbow.

But I was free of my enemy; and marching with freely playing lungs into my bed-room, I closed and locked the door, set down my empty candlestick, changed my coat and vest for a dressing-gown, and began to brush my hair.

It is my custom to brush my hair with a pair of brushes for ten minutes every night before retiring to rest. I find it strengthening to the brain. On this occasion I had brushed hard for five minutes, when there was a loud knock at my bed-room door.

"Can I speak to you a moment, sir?" said the voice of my landlady.

I rose and opened the door, and then started back in disgust, as I was greeted with—

"Please, sir, you forgot your snuffers!"

My snuffers! It was too horrible; but there was more to bear.

"And please, sir, I do hope you'll be more careful. It's a mussy we war'n't all burnt to death in our beds, for the snuffers have made a great hole as big as your hand in the table cloth, and scorched the mahogany table; and it was a mussy I went into your room before I went up to bed."

I couldn't speak, for I was drawn irresistibly on to obey, as my landlady held the snuffers' handle towards me, and pointed to the great fungus snuff upon my common candle. I thrust in a finger and thumb, closed the door in desperation—for I could not refuse the snuffers—once more locked myself in, and stalked to the dressing table, and, as I heard my landlady's retreating steps, I snuffed the candle, which started up instantly with a brighter flame as the snuffers' mouth closed upon the incandescent wick.

"I'm slightly nervous," I said to myself, as I essayed to put down my enemies. "I want tone—iron—iodine—tonic bitters—and—course the thing!" I ejaculated, shaking my hand, and trying to dislodge the snuffers. My efforts were but vain, for the rings clung tightly to my finger and thumb, cut into my flesh, and it was not until I had given them a frantic wrench, which broke the rivet and separated the halves, that I was able to tear out my bruised digits, and stand panting at the broken instrument.

There was relief though, here. I felt as if I had crushed out the reptile's life; and the two pieces—their living identity gone—lay nerveless and devoid of terrors in the candle-tray.

I slept excellently that night, and smiled as I dressed beside the broken fragments. I had achieved a victory over self, as well as over an enemy. I enjoyed my breakfast, after raising the white cloth to look at the damage, which I knew would appear as twenty shillings in the weekly bill; but I did not care, though I shuddered slightly as I thought of the snuffers' horrible designs. I dined that day with friends, played a few games afterwards at pool, and then we had oysters.

I was in the best of spirits as I opened the door with my latch-key, and I laughed heartily at what I called my folly of the previous nights; but, as I entered my room, there was the great black hole in the green cloth table cover, and the charred wood beneath, while up on the sideboard—

I groaned as I stood half transfixed. I could have imagined that I had on divers' leaden-soled boots; for there, maliciously grinning at me, with half-opened mouth, were the demon snuffers, joined together by a new, glistening rivet, which only added to their weird appearance, as the beak cocked itself at me, and the great eyes glared, as the black mouth seemed to say—

"You'll never get rid of me!"

Something seemed to draw me, and I went and took the candlestick, my eyes being fixed the while upon the snuffers; and I came in contact with several pieces of furniture as I went into the passage, where I held the candlestick very much on one side as I lit the candle at the little lamp. I hoped that the snuffers would fall out; but they grinned maliciously, and did not stir.

The next moment I was obliged to use them, for the candle began to gutter; when, as nothing followed, I grew bolder, and began to ascend the stairs. In a minute, though, before I was

half up the second flight, and though the candlestick was carried perfectly straight—crash! the demon snuffers darted out, and dashed themselves upon the floor.

I did not stay to look, but hurried to my bedroom, closing and locking the door.

"Safe this time!" I thought; for it was late, and I knew that my landlady must have been long in bed. Then I began to think of how they had hopped out of the candlestick, and I remembered what they had done upon the previous night—how they had tried to set fire to the house. Suppose they should do so now! The cold perspiration trickled down my nose at the very thought. I dared not leave the demon, or twin demons—the horrid Siamese pair.

I would, though—I was safe here. But, fire! Suppose they set the house on fire?

Irresistible fate, with an inconceivable attraction, led me back to the door, which I opened, and then I groaned, for there was no help for it. I could smell strongly that animal-burning odor given off by woollen fabrics, and I knew that the carpet must be on fire.

Down I went in the dark—very softly too, lest I should alarm the landlady and the other lodgers; but, though the odor was strong, I went right to the bottom and stood upon the doormat without finding my enemies.

I stood and thought for a few minutes, and then began slowly to ascend, feeling carefully all over every step as I went up to my bedroom, where I arrived without ever my hand coming in contact with that which I sought.

"I'll go to bed and leave them!" I ejaculated, and I turned upon my heel; but at that moment the pungent burning odor came up stronger than ever. I was compelled to descend, to find that the demon twins had been lying in ambush half-way down, so that I trod upon them, tripped, in my terror my foot glided over them, and I fell with a crash into the umbrella stand, which I upset with a hideous noise upon the oilcloth—not so loud, though, but that I could hear the little black imps take three or four grasshopper leaps along the passage, ending by attacking the pointed beak into the street door.

Before I could gather myself up, I heard doors opening upstairs, and screaming from the girls below, who slept in the kitchen; and the next minute old Major O'Brien's voice came roaring down—

"An' if ye shuir a shstep, I'll blow out yer brains!"

Of course I had to explain; and I had the horrible knowledge that they gave me the credit of being intoxicated—the Major saying he would not stop in a house where people went prowling about at all hours, ending by himself, at the landlady's request, examining the door to see if it was latched securely, and then seeing me safely to my room.

"An' if I did me duty, sor, I should lock you in," he said by way of good night. "And now get into the bed, sor, and at once; and—here are your snuffers!"

I could fill volumes with the tortures inflicted upon me by those haunted snuffers, for they clung to me, and, in spite of every effort, never left me free. It was in vain that I came home early and shifted them into the Major's candlestick: they only came back. I threw them out of the bed-room window once, and they were found by the maid in the area. I threw them out again, and they were picked up by the policeman, and they made him bring them back. Then I tried it at midday; but an old woman brought them in, and made a row because they went through her parasol, so that I had to pay ten shillings, besides being looked upon by my landlady as a lunatic.

I thrust them into the fire one night, and held them there with the tongs, lest they should leap out; but they would not burn, and my landlady finding them in the ashes, had them jappaned, and they were in their old place next day. I had no better luck when I thrust them—buried them—deep in a scuttle of ashes; they only turned up out of the dusthole when Mary sifted the cinders.

They always came off black on to my hands, when they did not anoint my fingers with soft tallow. If they fell out of the candlestick, it was always on to oilcloth or paint, where they could make a noise jumping about like a grasshopper, till they ended by standing upon the sharp beak, with the spectacle-like holes in the air. If I went up to dress, they would shoot into my collar box, or amongst my clean shirts, smutting them all over. If I tried to kill a wasp with them upon an autumn evening, when the insect crept out of a plum at dessert, the wretches only snipped him in two, as if rejoicing at the inflicted torture. In short, they have worn me out—those snuffers; and if it was not from fear, I should take and drop them from the parapet of a bridge.

But, there! it would be in vain; they would be certain to turn up: and they are not mortal, so what can you expect? Let this communication be a secret, for it is written wholly by day, when the snuffers lie in the lower regions.

A bright thought has occurred to me—the Major leaves this morning for Berlin.

I have done it—his carpet bag stood in the hall, waiting for the cab. The Major was in the drawing-room paying his bill. The maids were upstairs making the beds. I stole down like a thief into the kitchen. The snuffers were in my dirty candlestick upon the dresser. I seized the grinning, tallow-anointed demons, flew up the stairs, and as I heard the drawing-room door open, tore the bag a little apart, and thrust them in.

The next minute they were on the roof of a

cab, and on their way to Berlin, where they will haunt the Major.

A month of uninterrupted joy has passed. On the day of the Major's departure, I seemed to wed pleasure; and this has been the honeymoon. This morning, when I paid my bill, the landlady announced the coming back of the Major to his old apartments. I have been in dread ever since. But this is folly. I will be hopeful: my worst fears may not be confirmed.

It's all over—he has brought them back!  
They grin at me as I write.

## THE SHAH OF PERSIA.

A few facts respecting the Shah and Persia may prove of interest to our readers. His name is Nasser-ed-Din; born in 1830, being the eldest son of Shah Mohammed, he succeeded to the throne on the death of his father, Sept. 1848. His Imperial Majesty is therefore only 43, but he is not in robust health. It has been remarked that he seldom wears the wonderful aigrette of diamonds on his kulah, or cap. The reason is that anything heavy on his head gives him the headache. The custom of his nation forbids him to have his head uncovered, but it is not often that his head-dress is heavier than a cloth kulah. In his own country he seldom wears gloves, but since he has come to Europe he has taken to white gloves. His Majesty has two sons, born in 1850 and 1853.

The Shah of Persia, by his official title "Shah-in-Shah," is absolute ruler within his dominions, and master of the lives and goods of all his subjects; he has the right of designating his successor to the throne. The whole revenue of the country being at their disposal, recent sovereigns of Persia have been able to amass a large private fortune. That of the present Shah is reported to amount to four millions sterling; one half represented by diamonds, the largest, the Derya-i-Non of 178 carats, and other precious stones, forming the Crown Jewels. The Shah's talismans are very numerous, exceeding 200, and they are the most curious part of his baggage. One is a gold star of five points, and is supposed to have been possessed by the legendary Rustom. It is called Merzoum, and has the reputation of making conspirators immediately confess. When the Shah's brother was accused of treason some time since, the star was shown him, and, terrified and overcome with remorse, he avowed his iniquities, and was banished. The next important talisman is a cube of amber, which fell from Heaven in Mahomet's time. It is supposed to render the Shah invulnerable, and he wears it suspended around his neck. Another is a little box of gold, set in emeralds, and blessed by the Prophet. It renders the Royal Family invisible as long as they are celibates. The Shah had, however, numerous wives before it came into his possession. Another is a diamond set in one of his scimetars, which renders its possessor invincible, and there is also a dagger with the same property, but it is ordained that those who use it should perish by it. It is, therefore, carefully kept shut up in a sandal-wood box, on which is engraved a verse of the Koran.

The Shah has both given and received several interesting souvenirs of his visit to this country. Amongst them may be especially mentioned the portraits of himself, set in diamonds, which he presented both to Her Majesty Queen Victoria and the Prince of Wales, the Jewelled sword bestowed upon the Duke of Cambridge at the termination of the review held at Windsor, on June 21, and the casket enclosing the address presented by the Lord Mayor and Corporation of the City of London. This gold casket is of oblong octagon form, with a raised dome, surmounted by the civic arms and supporters, enamelled in proper heraldic colours. At the four corners of the base are kneeling camels, on whose backs the casket rests. The sides, corners and lid are composed of elegantly pierced work in pure Persian character, with particular enamelled backgrounds, ornamented with flowers, composed of pearls and other precious stones. On the front shield, in raised gold and enamel, are the Persian lion and sun, surmounted by the imperial crown. At the ends are other shields, inscribed with copies of His Majesty's autograph, whilst the remaining one at the back is engraved with a suitable inscription. The whole rests on a slab of Portico marble, supported by a purple velvet base. The casket is without doubt the finest work of the kind that has ever been presented by the Corporation on any similar occasion. The badge worn by the Reception Committee upon the day on which the Shah was received by the Corporation of the City of London, one of which was also presented to His Majesty, are exceedingly beautiful, consisting of a centre of fine gold, representing the Persian arms surmounted by "Guldhal, June 20, 1873." The outer border is particularly pretty, being formed of colored enamel and Persian ornaments, surmounted by the Shah's crown, with enamel jewels.

The Shah is the fourth sovereign of the dynasty of the Kasjars, which took possession of the crown after a civil war. It is within the power of the Persian monarch to alter or to overrule the existing law of succession. All the laws of Persia are based on the precepts of the Koran; and though the power of the Shah is absolute, it is only so far as it is not opposed to the accepted doctrines of the Mahometan religion. The Shah is regarded as the Vice-regent of the Prophet, and it is as such that he claims implicit obedience.