

LIZARDS IN INDIA.



IN India there is a great variety of the lizard tribe. Some are from two to three feet long. Their skin is almost impenetrable, and, in former times, was used to make gauntlets for soldiers. The Hindu writers, who almost always exaggerate to make their stories wonderful, say that these lizards were used to scale forts and walled towns. They say that they are so strong, and cling so close to walls, that the warriors used to take them by the tails, and place them against the wall. The lizard would then run up to the top, dragging the warrior after it, the warrior hanging on by the tail with his left hand, and fighting with sword in his right.

In the gardens about the houses, where Europeans live, lizards, from ten to twenty inches in length, are very numerous, and quite harmless, though they are not at all pleasant looking, and are called by the ugly name of bloodsuckers. They have rough, triangular-shaped heads, large, strong and sharp spines, or prickles, along the back, very long tails and glistening eyes. They are generally of a greenish drab colour, but sometimes of a bright green. Some of them can puff out the breast with wind, like a pouter pigeon, displaying the most beautiful colours, red, green, yellow, blue, violet and almost every shade.

These lizards sit among the leaves of flowers of trees and shrubs, watching for insects; and when the beautiful butterflies alight upon the flowers, the lizards spring upon them and eat them up. But, like people who are very sharp in catching others, they are very often caught themselves; for a small snake will come gliding silently along the branches and twigs upon which they are lying, seize them quickly, and notwithstanding their powerful struggles, hold them until they are dead, and swallow them. I once caught three snakes in a few minutes, which had swallowed lizards twice as heavy as themselves.

I think I hear you exclaim, "Oh, how could a slender snake, with its little neck, swallow a thing like a solid triangle, with sharp, hard spines along its back, and its skin covered with scales?"

The snake is very cunning, and manages the matter most cleverly. It does not begin at the thin tail end, hoping to get the mouth prepared to swallow the larger body. If it did, the prickles and scales would wound it very much. But it first seizes the nose, stretches its mouth and throat, and then draws in the head. The body and tail follow very easily, for the spines are all stroked down as they enter its mouth. The snake then lies along the branches, looking very uncomfortable, till the lizard is digested, bones, scales, prickles and all, unless—for the snake has enemies as well—a kite should spy it; for then the kite would pounce down upon it, and eat up snake and lizard too.

LIZARDS IN HOUSES.

"ONLY think," some of you will say, "of lizards getting into the houses. I am sure I should scream if I saw one!" Then you would do a very foolish thing, for they would come in in spite of your screaming. Besides, you would find out that they could befriend you. It is not pleasant, to be sure, when you put on your clothes, to find a cold lizard struggling next your skin to get out of the sleeve or leg, where it had made itself comfortable until you disturbed it; especially if, in its flight, it discharge a liquid that blisters you for a day or two. But you may learn to like them. Some are most beautifully spotted and marked, and of very pretty colours. Others are of the most delicate white or salmon colour, and very nearly transparent; so much so, that you can see through their sides what they have eaten, and when they have had a good meal. They eat moths of all kinds, mosquitoes, cockroaches, beetles and other annoying insects that abound in the houses in India. Sometimes they run upon the walls and ceilings, calling to each other with a smacking noise not unlike a rapid succession of very hearty kisses. At other times they take up