

Written for the Lady's Book.

GEMS AND REPTILES:

A N O L D S T O R Y I N A N E W D R E S S .

BY MRS. SEBA SMITH.

"O DEAR! what a naughty girl I am—I must be naughty, for nobody loves me, and nobody speaks kindly to me. My aunt and cousin tell me every day I live, I am the worst girl in the world. It must be so—and yet I don't know what it is that I do, so very bad."—Little Blanch looked round, for she thought somebody was close to her ear, and whispered "Nothing—nothing." But she must have been mistaken. There was no one in sight, and now she could only hear the wind kissing the little daisies, and laughing in the willows, and teasing the long slender branches, that stooped down to play in the fountain.

Blanch set the pitcher upon the green bank, and bent over to look down, down, into the clear waters, as they bubbled up in the shadow of the hill, and then trickled away over the pebbles, eddying round the roots of the old trees, and then sparkling away off in the sunshine, flashing and dimpling in the light, like some living, beautiful thing sporting in the meadow grass and the overshadowing trees.

Blanch began to feel quite happy, though she couldn't tell why—and then she looked down into the fountain, and saw her own eyes peeping up, and she laughed—and the girl in the water laughed—and both laughed together, 'till the old woods took up the chorus, and the hills and rocks sent it back again.

"O dear, what a noise I am making—and my aunt will be angry with me for staying so long."

Blanch looked once more into the water, but the little girl from beneath did not laugh this time; on the contrary, her face was quite pale and sad, and Blanch looked into her melancholy eyes 'till the tears gushed to her own, and fell into the water. The drops circled away in dimpling lines, growing larger and larger, and completely hiding the face of the little girl in the water.

Blanch rubbed her eyes, and looked again, for she saw something exceedingly beautiful, stirring the pebbles at the bottom of the fountain. She held back her hair with both hands, and looked down close and still, for there, right beside her own face, she saw a most lovely being, smiling, and holding up its small pale hands.

Blanch let her hair fall, 'till it almost blinded her eyes, and even dipped into the fountain, while she held out both hands to the little lady of the water.

"Thank you," said the beautiful creature, springing lightly to the bank, and smoothing her long curls, and smiling in the eyes of the little girl.

"You are a good girl, Blanch, and I mean to be your friend; that is if you are always good—for should you become sinful you couldn't look upon me, or I speak to you."

She said this in a low, sad voice, and the little girl thought she was then even prettier than when she smiled.

The lady sat still a while, plaiting the pretty flow-

ers that grew around into a coronal; for it is likely she knew the child was so curious to mark her strange dress, that she could hardly hear a word that might be said.

Blanch had heard of water nymphs, but she had been told they had sea-green skin and eyes, and hair hanging like the sea-grass all about their shoulders. She thought they must be very ugly, and was quite certain the beautiful creature beside her could not be one of these.

The lady's cheek and neck were of the pure colour of the inner lip of the ocean shell, growing of a brighter, and brighter hue, till just below the eye, it became of that rich beautiful tint, we find upon the shell as we look in, in, to its very heart. Then her hair was soft and bright, like long threads of amber, waving and glittering in the light. Her eyes were of the deep, deep blue, seen upon the surface of the muscle-shell, but so soft, so liquid in their loveliness and beauty, that Blanch thought she could never tire in looking at them. Her voice was like breathed melody; soft and murmuring, like the sound of the shell when held to a human ear.

She had a coronal of pearls about her head, and bracelets of the same upon her arms. Her robe was curiously wrought of exceedingly small shells, like gold and silver, all strung together. It was fastened at the shoulder with a large emerald, and her girdle was of amethysts and diamonds. Her sandals were of pearly shells, streaked with pink, the tellina I think, and were fastened with a fillet of the seaweed.

"You may call me Fontana, Blanch," said the lady, placing the chaplet of flowers upon the brow of the child.

Blanch smiled, and pulled the little daisies, for she couldn't just think what to say.

"Would you like some of these pearls, and diamonds, Blanch?"

"Oh, they are very beautiful," said the child, "but I should have no time to play with them. Dear, dear, how long I have staid! Oh, my aunt *will* scold."—She took up the pitcher and was hurrying away, in great trouble, but Fontana detained her,

"You must not go yet, Blanch. I will see that your aunt doesn't scold you; so sit down and let us talk awhile."

Blanch was very loath to stay, but Fontana was so gentle, and promised so earnestly that all should be well, that at last she sat down again by the fountain.

"If you don't want pearls and diamonds, Blanch, what do you wish for? What shall I do for you? Shall I punish your aunt and cousin for treating you so ill?"

"Oh no, no," said the little girl very earnestly, "they treat me so because I am so very naughty. How could you think of such a thing? I'm sure I never did."

Fontana smiled, and kissed the cheeks, and eyes, and lips of the child.

"I love you dearly, Blanch, and do wish you could think of something I could do for you."

Blanch dropped her eyes, as if thinking earnestly; and then her face brightened all over with smiles, as she said,

"I wish you could help me to be good, so that my aunt and cousin, and every body, will love me—I should be quite happy then."

"What, don't you want to be rich, and ride in a coach, and have servants, and dress grandly—and then let your aunt and cousin be poor, and go with bare feet, just as you do?"

"Oh dear, no," said Blanch, turning quite pale, "how could you think of such a thing?"

"Well, let your aunt and cousin be rich, too, then wouldn't you like to dress grandly, Blanch?"

"Oh dear, I only want to be good, and be loved," said the poor girl, turning her head away quite sorrowfully.

Fontana took her in her arms, and kissed her many times, and Blanch felt the tears upon her cheek; she heard sweet far-off melody; the sky seemed brighter than ever, and she thought she must be dreaming, she felt so happy. Then the lady placed her upon the green bank, and when the child looked round, there was nothing to be seen or heard, but the birds singing in the trees, and the water leaping over the white pebbles.

"Oh dear, dear, my aunt will scold me," and she filled the pitcher and ran home just as fast as she could go.

Her aunt met her at the door, and had opened her mouth to utter hard words, and raised her hand to give her a blow on the ear, when the sight of the coronal upon the girl's head arrested her.

"Blanch, where did you get this? Was there ever any thing so beautiful!" and she tore it from the child's head, and held it to the light where it did look truly exquisite, for every little leaf, and bud, and flower, was made up of innumerable small gems of the purest water.

"Come in, child, and tell me all about it."

Blanch did tell every word, for there was something within, that told her she ought to tell the truth, and the whole truth. Sometimes her aunt laughed, and sometimes she frowned, but when she came to that part, where the lady would have given her fine clothes, and a coach to ride in, her cousin called her "a poor, mean spirited fool—so then you only asked to be good, you precious little fool, did you?" she said scornfully.

The tears came into Blanch's eyes, and fell upon her lap.

"What is that rolling about in your lap?" said Adeline. "I never saw such tears before; they don't soak in;" and the heartless girl shook them upon the floor. Sure enough, they rolled away, clear, brilliant diamonds, large as peas.

Adeline laughed and scrambled after them, and told Blanch to "cry away;" she liked such tears. But the little girl laughed as well as her cousin, and scrambled too for the diamonds, it made her feel so happy to see smiling faces.

"I will go down to the well, too," said Adeline, "and see if I cannot get something handsome."

She soon came back, flushed and angry; she declared there was nobody to be seen at the well, and

Blanch must have found the gems, and then have invented the story as an excuse for staying so long. She struck Blanch upon the shoulder, and shook her rudely.

"Don't be angry, cousin, you shall have all the pretty stones," cried the child, offering those she had picked up.

But she had no sooner opened her mouth to speak, than pearls, and diamonds, and all precious stones fell therefrom, and rolled upon the floor, and flashed, and sparkled in the sunlight, 'till the room seemed all paved with jewels.

For many days Adeline said nothing further about going to the well, for both she and her mother were so occupied in fastening the gems upon their dresses, that they had no time, even to scold poor little Blanch; and she was now the happiest child in the world—she smiled, and sang all day, and was so attentive to all the wants of her aunt and cousin, that she seemed to know what was desired even before they spoke. She wished, in the guilelessness of her young heart, that she only had a whole mine of jewels to give them, so thankful did she feel for gentle words and kind looks.

It was soon found, that jewels came from the mouth of Blanch, only when she returned a gentle reply to the harshness of others—her tears were gems only when they were the tears of compassion or of sorrow.

Adeline was making a lily, all of pearls—she hadn't quite enough to finish it. Half in earnest, half in sport, she gave Blanch a blow, saying, "Cry, child, I want some more pearls."

Blanch had never felt just so before; her face reddened, and she was about to make an angry reply, when she felt a dash of water all over her face. She stopped short, and looked about, but no one was near but Adeline. Then she thought of the sinful feeling within, and knew it must have been Fontana, that sprinkled the drops in her face. Blanch knew she had felt wrong, and she shed tears of penitence—they were pearls.

"Come, Blanch," said Adeline, "take the pitcher, and I will go down to the well with you—I like the lady's gifts vastly; and shall know better what to ask for than you did."

The child did as she was bid, stepping, with her little bare feet, lightly over the stones and brambles; and prattling all the way about the beauty, and dress of the lady, and wondering she had never seen her but once.

When they came to the fountain, all was still; the waters looked clear and cool, and they peered down, down, but nothing was to be seen, but white stones, rounded by the water flowing over them, and the small fish darting about in the sunshine. They sat down upon the bank, hoping the lady might appear. But she did not—no one approached, but a little old woman, with a lean wrinkled face, who came from the woods, leaning heavily upon a staff, for she was bent nearly double with age.

Both girls looked earnestly at her, till she drew near, and sank down upon the grass beside them.

"I am faint and weary, ladies—will you give me to drink from the fountain?" said the old woman, in a low, trembling voice,

Little Blanch descended the bank instantly, to do as she was desired—but Adeline cruelly spurned her with her foot, saying, "Get up, you old hag, I wouldn't give you a drink, not I."

The old woman glanced at the hard-hearted girl with a severe and searching look; and slowly rose from the ground. The old staff became a wand of ivory—the lean face became soft and round; the bent form erect and graceful, and the beautiful lady of the fountain stood before them. She was even more splendidly attired than before, and her look more sweet and tender,

“Dear, dear Fontana,” said Blanch, springing towards her. The lady took her to her bosom, and again, and again kissed her cheek; then the child heard yet again that low, sweet melody, as if the very air, and every thing about were full of it—again all was still—and now the two girls stood alone by the fountain.

“How strange,” said little Blanch, “when she is gone, I can hardly think I have seen any thing in reality—it seems so like a dream, or the pleasant thoughts I have when I am all alone.”

“Pretty well, too,” said Adeline; “she could only frown upon me”—she stopped short, for just then a small green lizard hopped from her mouth, and the terrified girls ran home fast as they could go.

Adeline struck Blanch, and said she had bewitched her; and every time she spoke, small snakes and toads darted from her mouth—then she would cry with horror and vexation, when bugs and spiders fell from her eyes.

Poor Blanch stood by, weeping and wringing her hands, and the pearls and precious stones rolled all about the room, for no one heeded them. She thought of a thousand things, but not one that had any prospect of relieving her cousin.

“Oh dear, dear, I wish Fontana were only here!” cried Blanch. She felt a slight sprinkle upon her face, and then she knew the lady must be near. Then she began to think Fontana very cruel to punish her cousin so, and wished she were only visible, and she would tell her so. All at once some one whispered close to her ear, and said,

“Are not pride, and anger, and cruelty, like lizards, and toads, and serpents?”

“Oh dear, dear, try to feel gentle, cousin Adeline; perhaps they come because you are angry.”

“Angry,” cried Adeline, stamping with her feet, “isn’t this enough to make any body angry? I wish I had hold of that old woman, and I would tear her all to pieces.”

Just then a large serpent sprang from her mouth, and both her mother and Blanch ran out of the house.

Years passed away, and Blanch had become an exceedingly handsome maiden, with a skin like the embrace of the rose and lily, and eyes clear, soft and blue. She was still gentle and loving, like a little child, with a smile always ready for a cheerful look, and a tear for a sad one. Some thought it goodness alone, that made her so beautiful; others thought it the kisses of the lady of the fountain, for she still sometimes appeared, when Blanch was sad or unhappy, and spoke words of hope and consolation.

Adeline too, had grown a tall, proud girl, with large black eyes of glittering brightness, and a step like a queen. There were yet times when the reptiles sprang from the mouth of the violent girl, in her moments of pride or irritation. Sometimes amidst the splendour and triumph of a ball, she would be obliged to retire in the greatest confusion, for pride, and envy, and malice, would bring the reptiles to her throat.

Blanch still wept her pearls and spoke all sorts of precious things, and the fame of the two girls spread far and wide. Many came to see them, hoping they might witness things so very strange. But the girls didn’t speak gems or reptiles just to please strangers, they came unbidden, indicating always the exact state of their hearts.

In spite of the reptiles Adeline had many suitors, for her beauty was of the noblest kind. She contrived to keep Blanch out of sight, and so obscured in old uncouth garments, that her beauty was only noted by those who observed her closely, or saw her often.

So Adeline had all the lovers, and all the company to herself; and poor Blanch wore old clothes, and worked all day for her aunt and cousin. She gave them all her jewels, and tried to make them look beautiful whenever they went to the grand balls and parties, to which they were invited; while she staid at home, and did all the work, and then got nothing in return but blows and harsh words.

In this way, though Blanch was much talked of, very few had seen her.

At last, a gentleman commenced building a delightful little cottage close to the dwelling of the two girls. The gardens were arranged with the greatest taste, and bowers with vines and shrubbery of every kind, and ponds filled with fish, and brooks with rustic bridges thrown over them, made all seem the work of enchantment.

Adeline did nothing but arrange her dress and jewels, and play upon her harp close to the window where the stranger directed the labourers; and when he would look up and smile, or present her flowers, she was good-natured all day.

Blanch was delighted, and tried very hard to make her cousin look beautiful; and did just as she was bid, which was to keep out of sight of the strange gentleman. Blanch thought it an easy matter to do this, for she didn’t much like his looks, and thought him not half so elegant as a young servant she sometimes saw in the garden attempting to arrange the flowers, and to transplant them; but he was so awkward, spilling the earth and breaking the pots, that she couldn’t keep from laughing to see him work—then the master would appear, and scold and rave, and Blanch would find her eyes filling with tears in spite of all she could do.

She one day told Adeline she thought the servant much handsomer than the master, and there was that about him, that appeared much more noble.

Adeline was indignant, and said she was no judge, and many other things that proud, love-sick girls are apt to utter—but her mother seemed much pleased with the idea; thought it might be so, and winking to her daughter declared Blanch was quite in love, and it would make an excellent match.

Blanch hadn’t thought of this, and she blushed and hung down her head.

Every day now her aunt and cousin tried to throw her in the way of the young servant, and even were at some pains to dress her and arrange her hair, that she might look becoming. Adeline, it is true, was too much occupied with the master to pay much attention to the affairs of the servant, only so far as to encourage his advances, for she thought this a fine way to dispose of her poor cousin, by degrading her into a marriage with a menial.

Poor Blanch was greatly distressed at all this ma-

nœuvring, and grew every day more pale and gentle, and a great deal more beautiful too; for love always softens, as well as exalts the style of beauty.

She sometimes wished she had never seen him, for she couldn't help looking through the lattice where the vines grew thickly, to see him at his work amongst the flowers, and he would sometimes look up, too, and she was certain he was growing pale and melancholy; and she thought it not unlikely that he might be in love with her cousin Adeline, and growing sad because there could be no hope for him. And Blanch wept in holy compassion for the poor, young servant.

So she took her pitcher in her hand, and went down to the fountain. She wept a long time, she could hardly tell why. Fontana came and kissed her cheek, and wiped her tears with gossamer muslin. Blanch saw that she smiled faintly, and looked quite sad, so she tried to talk of pleasant things.

"How I love you, Blanch," said Fontana; "you must have all you desire. What shall I do for you?"

"Smile upon me, dear Fontana; there is no one else to love me—and when you smile I am quite happy."

There was a rustling in the bushes—Fontana had disappeared, and the young servant stood beside her.

Blanch, hardly knowing what she did, darted away, but the stranger seized her hand, and begged she would stay just for a moment.

"I know you are unhappy, Blanch; I have often seen you weep, and even now, I heard you say there was no one to love you. I love you, Blanch, more than I can express—"

His voice trembled, and he pressed her fingers to his lips. Blanch looked up, and the kind, earnest look of the stranger, and the gentle tones of his voice, so wrought upon her young heart, all unused as it had been to kindness and sympathy, that she covered her eyes with her hand, and burst into tears.

They were not pearls; they were the natural tears of a young and trusting heart.

All at once she remembered that her cousin was waiting for the water; and disengaging her hand she ran home, leaving, in her agitation, the pitcher at the fountain.

When she reached the house, both aunt and cousin were at the door, angry at her long absence—for the stranger of the cottage had that very morning made proposals of marriage, and Adeline was impatient to arrange her toilet in the most captivating style.

"Where is the pitcher, you idling hussy?" they both cried in a breath.

"I left it at the well," replied Blanch, trembling, and blushing.

"Left it at the well!" said Adeline, striking her on the face.

Blanch hesitated, but she felt the drops upon her face, and knew she ought to confess the truth. So she told all.

Adeline's anger gave way to the triumph of malice, for she was delighted to think Blanch would marry the servant of her own husband. So while she talked, the toads and snakes sprang from her mouth, but the family were so used to them, that they took no notice of them.

Poor Blanch only covered her face with her hands, while the pearls fell from between her fingers, and dropped amongst the grass at the threshold.

At this moment the young servant appeared at the door, bearing the pitcher of water; and he looked as if he knew just what it meant, when he saw the pearls and reptiles all about.

For many days nothing was seen of the young stranger, and poor Blanch grew quite pale and despirited. Adeline was in high spirits, she ridiculed Blanch, teased and scolded her all in a breath, and then when she wept, she laughed, and said she should have the more jewels for her bridal. Blanch disliked Adeline's lover more and more every day; for though she thought he might be rich, he seemed low-bred and vulgar, and as ignorant as any dolt about. And then he was so loaded with finery he must at the very best be a conceited coxcomb. But as long as her cousin was pleased she had no right to say a word.

The day for Adeline's marriage arrived, and after Blanch had dressed her cousin, and done all the work she could do, before the arrival of the guests, her aunt took her and thrust her down into an old cellar, half filled with mire and water, that she might not be seen by any of the company.

Adeline looked splendidly, with her proud beauty, and magnificent attire. The ceremony was just over, when they all heard the sound of carriage wheels and the trampling of horses. The bridegroom looked from the window, and was the first to go out and kneel to the stranger. All was awe and amazement. The guests had just time to observe the splendour of the carriage, and the rich livery of the servants, and the six snow-white steeds, when a gentleman richly dressed in velvet and cloth of gold, entered the room.

"Where is Blanch?" he inquired, looking sternly round.

"Blanch is dead," replied the aunt solemnly.

"Dead?" repeated the stranger, turning pale, while the bridegroom stared with astonishment.

"Dead!" he again repeated, "it cannot be; ho, here, search the house," he cried to his servants.

The bridegroom would have gone too, but Adeline haughtily detained him.

The aunt rose in great rage. "I demand, sir, by what right you order my house to be searched."

"The right that the king has over the lives and property of his subjects," replied the stranger with great majesty. Then removing the plumed cap, and velvet cloak, the young servant of the new cottage stood before them. Every head was uncovered, and every knee bent in the presence of the king. Adeline and her mother turned pale. The king went on.

"The fame of the goodness and beauty of Blanch had reached even to our palace, and I came here disguised as a servant, that I might learn the truth. I find the half has not been told me, and I have now come to claim her for my bride."

The servants returned, but could find nothing of Blanch. Aunt and daughter tried to suppress their exultation.

At this moment the door softly opened, and Fontana appeared leading in Blanch, pale and trembling, but more beautiful than ever. She was dressed in robes of the most magnificent material, and diamonds glittered upon her brow and girdle, and pearls encircled her arms and neck.

Fontana laid the hand of Blanch within that of the king, who knelt to receive it, while the fair girl blushed and cast down her eyes.

"Thus," said the lady, "are the good sometimes rewarded even in this life."

Then turning to Adeline and her mother, she said, "I leave you to the punishment prepared in your own hearts—to the envy, and malice, and hatred, that torture more than the fiends of darkness."

The same priest, who had married Adeline to the servant of the king, performed the ceremony for Blanch, and her royal lover.

Fontana pressed the bride to her bosom, and Blanch heard again that sweet, low melody, as the beautiful lady of the fountain disappeared.

We need not say that Blanch was gentle, and loving, and good, when she became a queen. Her subjects almost adored her, and the king used playfully to say, "They were dutiful subjects to him, only from love to his wife."

Blanch did all in her power to make her aunt and cousin happy, and even sent for them to court; but their evil dispositions produced so much disorder that the king banished them to the cottage he had built beside their old dwelling. Blanch often wept for them, and sent them many proofs of her kindness and remembrance.

Written for the Lady's Book.

THE RIVER, THE RIVER!

BY DR. J. K. MITCHELL.

THE river, the river!
It flows on for ever,
By many a mouth,
Far, far to the south,

It pours its wild flood to the ocean for ever!

From the hills of the west,
From the eagle's wild nest,
From the lakos of the north,
His vast waters break forth,
And gather and gather to swell the great river.—

Tho' the pines frown in snow
Where his spring-waters flow,
Yet the lemon and lime
Bless the warm sunny clime,
Where meets Mississippi the ocean for ever.

Chorus.

The lone Indian and deer
On his wild cliffs appear,
Where the frowning old wood
Shades the deep boiling flood,
As foams o'er the rapids the white roaring river;

While in climes far below,
Where the orange trees blow,
Stately cities are seen,
On the shore smooth and green,

And image themselves in the broad glassy river.

Chorus.

The fierce Indian's canoe
Cuts the lone waters thro',
As he hears in the dark,
New to him, the wild bark,
Of the steamer that ploughs to its sources the river;

With the flame on her brow,
And the foam 'neath her prow,
And hoarse thundering sides,
On, the meteor-ship glides,
And casts her fierce glare on the far flashing river.

Chorus.

The great rivers of earth
Love the clime of their birth,
And the flowrets that blow
At their sources, still glow,
Where ocean is waiting their waters to gather;

But to him leap the rills,
From the North's icy hills,
And to him flow the brooks
Where the burning sun looks
On fruits and on blossoms that flourish together.

Chorus.

Father Time he grew gray
As he watch'd the decay
Of the woods of the East,
'Till their loneliness ceas'd,
And slowly was peopled each famous old river;

But 'twas here in a day,
That, like storm-clouds, away
Pass'd the wildness and gloom,
Lone and dark as the tomb,
And millions and sunshine were bright on the river.

Chorus.

Aye, the woodsman, whose stroke
The wild echoes awoke,
Of the dark woods, now sees,
Where he fell'd the old trees,
Fair towns on the banks and white sails on the river.
Mighty river then on,
With the wealth of each zone,
Bearing swiftly with thee
To the full freighted sea
The tribute of virtue and freedom for ever!

Chorus.

Great river, great river!
Flow, flow on for ever:
And still may'st thou be,
From thy hills to the sea,
The home of the free, and the bless'd of THE GIVER!

[The Music, which is original, will be published soon.]

EVERY wanton and causeless restraint of the will of the subject, whether practised by a monarch, a nobility, or a popular assembly, is a degree of tyranny.

THE last argument of the poor, whenever they have recourse to it, will carry more, perhaps, than persuasion to parliament, or supplication to the throne.