

40. The greatness of the Khan's dominion; and how hostels are provided therein; and how news are carried to the lord.

This empire hath been divided by the lord thereof into number of strange beasts that he keeps. Among these were six horses, each of which had six feet and legs. And I saw two very great ostriches, and two smaller ones behind them, that had each two necks and two heads with which they ate; not to mention the wild men who were in the lord's garden, and women all hairy with long grey hair though of human form, which ate apples and drunk drinks such as were supplied to them by the lord's order. And among these were men not bigger than two spans, and these are called *Gomiti* (Cubits). And in the court I saw men with an eye in the forehead; and these were called *Minocchi* (Monoculi). And at that time there were presented to the lord a pair, male and female, which had a span length of body, with big heads and long legs, and no hands, and which fed themselves with the foot. I also saw a giant about twenty feet high who led two lions, one red and the other black; and another had in charge lionesses and leopards, and such like beasts, with which the lord went hunting stags, wild goats, wolves, boars, bears, and other wild animals.]

Though there is probably interpolation in this passage, and it has not therefore been introduced into the text, there are symptoms of genuineness about it. Even the sagacious Kublai, the second founder of the dynasty, had a passion for curiosities and sent envoys far and near to procure them. Nowadays if Napoleon III were to turn his attention to the collection of live monsters he would speedily have a very remarkable gathering, and the influence of the Grand Khan probably extended over a larger area of population than his. As regards some of the monsters mentioned by the writer above, parallels will easily occur to many. I have myself described in print "a woman all hairy", as remarkable as his, though possibly those "in the lord's garden" were only some kind of monkey. I recollect a tame hoolak or black gibbon at a station in India which "ate apples and drunk drinks supplied to it", and was universally called by the natives round the *Jangali Admi*, or wild man, which indeed is the literal meaning of our *Orang-otang*. And I remember, when a boy, seeing both the Siamese twins and the seven legs of Pin-cushion Jenny, a thorough-bred mare. Miss Biffin not only fed herself with her feet, but threaded her needle and did embroidery work therewith. As to the height of the giants and dwarfs, when very remarkable of their kind they make very exaggerated impressions upon everybody. It is not long since we have ceased to hear from respectable writers of elephants fifteen and eighteen feet high. The *Minocchi*, of course, I give up; they were doubtless factitious, if not fictitious, but the name is not like one that Odoric would give. The names he assigns generally represent some Oriental word; and this is probably an interpolation.

Live monsters are sometimes manufactured, as well as dead ones like