

CHAPTER X: AN EXTRAORDINARY MONSTER

THE next island had a wall all round it. When they came near the shore, an animal of vast size, with a thick, rough skin, started up inside the wall, and ran round the island with the swiftness of the wind. When he had ended his race, he went to a high point, and standing on a large, flat stone, began to exercise himself according to his daily custom, in the following manner. He kept turning himself completely round and round in his skin, the bones and flesh moving, while the skin remained at rest.

When he was tired of this exercise, he rested a little; and he then began turning his skin continually round his body, down at one side and up at the other like a mill-wheel; but the bones and flesh did not move.

After spending some time at this sort of work, he started and ran round the island as at first, as if to refresh himself. He then went back to the same spot, and this time, while the skin that covered the lower part of his body remained without motion, he whirled the skin of the upper part round and round like the movement of a flat-lying millstone. And it was in this manner that he spent most of his time on the island.

Maldun and his people, after they had seen these strange doings, thought it better not to venture nearer. So they put out to sea in great haste. The monster, observing them about to fly, ran down to the beach to seize the ship ; but finding that they had got out of his reach, he began to fling round stones at them with great force and an excellent aim. One of them struck Maldun's shield and went quite through it, lodging in the keel of the curragh; after which the voyagers got beyond his range and sailed away.

In a wall-circled isle a big monster they found,
With a hide like an elephant, leathery and bare;
He threw up his heels with a wonderful bound,
And ran round the isle with the speed of a hare.
But a feat more astounding has yet to be told:
He turned round and round in his leathery skin;
His bones and his flesh and his sinews he rolled
He was resting outside while he twisted within!
Then, changing his practice with marvellous skill,
His carcase stood rigid and round went his hide;
It whirled round his bones like the wheel of a mill
He was resting within while he twisted outside!
Next, standing quite near on a green little hill,
After galloping round in the very same track,
While the skin of his belly stood perfectly still,
Like a millstone he twisted the skin of his back!
But Maldun and his men put to sea in their boat,

For they saw his two eyes looking over the wall;
And they knew by the way that he opened his throat,
He intended to swallow them, curragh and all!

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