

Chapter 14 OF RUNNING HOUNDS AND OF THEIR...

A running hound is a kind of hound there be few men that have not seen some of them. Nevertheless I shall devise how a running hound shall be held for good and fair, and also shall I devise of their manners. Of all hues of running hounds, there are some which be good, and some which be bad or evil as of greyhounds. But the best hue of running hounds and most common for to be good, is called brown tan. Also the goodness of running hounds, and of all other kinds of good hounds, cometh of true courage and of the good nature of their good father and of their good mother. And also as touching greyhounds, men may well help to make them good by teaching as by leading them to the wood and to fields, and to be always near them, in making of many good curées when they have done well, and of rating at and beating them when they have done amiss, for they are beasts, and therefore have they need to learn that which men will they should do. A running hound should be well born, and well grown of body, and should have great nostrils and open, and a long snout, but not small, and great lips and well hanging down, and great eyes red or black, and a great forehead and great head, and large ears, well long and well hanging down, broad and near the head, a great neck, and a great breast and great shoulders, and great legs and strong, and not too long, and great feet, round and great claws, and the foot a little low, small flanks and long sides, a little pintel not long, small hanging ballocks and well trussed together, a good chine bone and great back, good thighs, and great hind legs and the hocks straight and not bowed, the tail great and high, and not crompting up on the back, but straight and a little crompting upward. Nevertheless I have seen some running hounds with great hairy tails the which were very good. Running hounds hunt in divers manners, for some followeth the hart fast at the first, for they go lightly and fast and when they have run so awhile, they have hied them so fast that they be relaxed and all breathless, and stop still and leave the hart when they should chase him. This kind of running hounds men should find usually in the land of Basco and Spain. They are right good for the wild boar, but are not good for the hart, for they be not good to enchase at a long flight, but only for to press him, for they seek not well, and they run not well nor they hunt not (well) from a distance, for they be



accustomed to hunt close.

RACHES OR RUNNING HOUNDS IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

(From MS. f. fr. 616, Bib. Nat., Paris)

And at the beginning they have shown their best. Other manners of running hounds there are which hunt a good deal more slowly and heavily, but as they begin, so they hold on all the day. These hounds force not so soon a hart as the other, but they bring him best by mastery and strength to his end, for they retrieve and scent the line better and farther, because they are somewhat slow. They must hunt the hart from farther off, and therefore they scent the fues better than the other that goes so hastily without stopping until the time that they be weary. A bold hound should never complain or howl, unless if he were out of the rights. And also he should again seek the rights, for a hart flieth and ruseth. Commonly a bold hound hunteth with the wind when he seeth his time. He dreads his master and understands him and does as he bids him. A bold hound should not leave the hart neither for rain, nor for heat, nor for cold, nor for any evil weather, but at this time there be few such, and also should he hunt the hart well by himself without help of man, as if the man were always with him. But alas! I know not now any such hounds. Hounds there are which be bold and brave; and be called bold for they are bold and good for the hart, for when the hart comes in danger¹⁴⁵ they will chase him, but they will not open¹⁴⁶ nor quest while he is among the change, for dread to envoyse¹⁴⁷ and do amiss, but when they have dissevered¹⁴⁸ him, then they will open and hunt him and should overcome the hart well, and perfectly and masterfully throughout all the change. These hounds be not so good nor so perfect as be the bold hounds before said to most men for two reasons¹⁴⁹, that one reason is for they hunt not at men's best pleasure for they hunt nought but the hart, and the first bold hound hunts all manner of beasts that his master will uncouple him to. He opens always through all the changes, and a bold hound for the hart opens not for the hart, as I have said when the hart is amid the changes. He dreadeth where he goeth that men see him lest he do amiss or envoie, but men cannot always see him¹⁵⁰. Of this kind of hound have I seen many a one. There be other kinds of hounds which men beyond the sea call hart hounds, good and restrained hart hounds.¹⁵¹ They hunt no other beast but the hart, and therefore they are called hart hounds and bold hounds, for they be bold and good and wise for the hart; they be called restrained, because if the hart fall among the change they should abide still¹⁵² until the hunter come, and when they see their master they make him welcome, and wag their tails upon him,



and will by-piss the way and the bushes, but in England men make them not so. These be good hounds of our land, but not so good as the bold hounds aforesaid. They be well wise, for they know well that they should not hunt the change, and they are not so wise as to dissever the hart from the change, for they abide still and restive. These hounds I hold full good, for the hunter that knows them may well help them to slay the hart. None of all these three kinds of hounds hunt at the hart in rutting time, unless it be the good bold hound,¹⁵³ which is the best of all other hounds. The best sport that men can have is running with hounds, for if he hunt at hare or at the roe or at buck or at the hart, or at any other beast without greyhound¹⁵⁴ it is a fair thing, and pleasant to him that loveth them; the seeking and the finding is also a fair thing, and a great liking to slay them with strength, and for to see the wit and the knowledge that God hath given to good hounds, and for to see good recovering and retrieving, and the mastery and the subtleties that be in good hounds. For with greyhounds and with other kinds of hounds whatever they be, the sport lasteth not, for anon a good greyhound or a good alaunte taketh or faileth a beast, and so do all manner of hounds save running hounds, the which must hunt all the day questeying and making great melody in their language and saying great villainy and chiding the beasts that they chase. And therefore I prefer them to all other kinds of hounds, for they have more virtue it seems to me than any other beast. Other kind of hounds there be the which open and jangle when they are uncoupled, as well when they be not in her fues (on their line), and when they be in her fues they questey¹⁵⁵ too much in seeking their chase whatever it be, and if they learn the habit when they are young and are not chastised thereof, they will evermore be noisy and wild, and namely when they seek their chase, for when the chase is found, the hounds cannot questey too much so that they be in the fues¹⁵⁶. And to rente and make hounds there are many remedies. There be also many kinds of running hounds, some small and some big, and the small be called kenets, and these hounds run well to all manner of game, and they (that) serve for all game men call them harriers.¹⁵⁷ And every hound that hath that courage will come to be a harrier by nature with little making. But they need great nature and making in youth, and great labour to make a hound run boldly to a chase where there is great change, or other chases. Hounds which are not perfectly wise take the change commonly from May until St. John's tide (June 24th), for then they find the change of hinds. The hinds will not fly far before the hounds, but they turn about and the hound sees them very often, and therefore they run to them with a better will, because they keep near their calves the which cannot fly, therefore they hunt them gladly; and commonly

when the harts go to rut, hounds hunt the change, for the harts and the hinds be commonly standing in herds together, and so they find them and run to them sooner than at any other time of the year. Also the hounds scent worse from May until St. John's time than in any other time of all the year, for as I shall say the burnt heath and the burning of fields taketh away the scent from the hounds of the beasts that they hunt. Also in that time the herbs be best and flowers in their smelling, each one in their kind, and when the hounds hope to scent the beast that they hunt, the sweet-smelling of the herbs takes the scent of the beast from them.

145 Danger of his being lost to the hounds.

146 Challenge-i.e. the noise the hounds make on finding the scent of an animal.

147 Get off the line.

148 Separated him from the other deer.

149 From here to the middle of the 13th line on the next page the text is copied from the Shirley MS., the scribe who wrote the Vespasian B. XII. MS. having made a mistake in his transcript, copying on folio 65 the folio 64, which therefore appears twice over, to the exclusion of the matter here copied from the Shirley MS.

150 This sentence is difficult to understand without consulting G. de F. (p. 110), who says: "as the hound does not challenge when the stag is with change, one does not know where he is going unless one sees him, and one cannot always see him."

151 G. de F.: "cerfs baus restifz" is the name which he gives these hounds.

152 G. de F. adds: "and remain quite quiet."

153 "Le chien baud," G. de F., p. 111. See Appendix: Running Hounds.

154 The text of the MS. differs from G. de F., who says if one hunts stags "ou autres bestes en traillant sans limier" (drawing from them without having first harboured them with a lymer), and does not say "without greyhounds"; p. 111.

155 G. de F. has here: "Ils crient trop en quérant leur beste quelle que soit," p. 111.

156 "The hounds cannot challenge too loudly when they are on the line."
G. de F.: "Chien ne peut trop crier," p. 112.

157 From Mid. Eng. *harien*, *harren*, to *harry* or worry game. See
Appendix: *Harrier*.



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