

Chapter 25 HOW A MAN SHOULD KNOW A GREAT HA...

Furthermore ye should know a great hart by the fraying (for if ye find where the hart hath frayed),¹⁷⁸ and see that the wood is great where he hath frayed, and he hath not bent it, and the tree is frayed well high, and he hath frayed the bark away, and broken the branches and wreathed them a good height, and if the branches are of a good size, it is a sign that he is a great hart and that he should bear a high head and well troched, for by the troching¹⁷⁹ he breaketh such high the boughs that he cannot fold them under him. For if the fraying were bare and he had frayed the boughs under him, it is no token that it be a great hart, and especially if the trees where he had frayed were small. Nevertheless men have seen some great deer fray sometimes to a little tree, but not commonly, but a young deer shall ever more¹⁸⁰ fray to a great tree, and therefore should ye look at several frayings. And if ye see the aforesaid tokens oftener upon the great trees than upon the small ye may deem him a great hart. And if the frayings be continually in small trees and low, he is not chaceable and should be refused. Also ye may know a great hart by his lairs. When a great hart shall come in the morning from his pasture, he shall go to his lair and then a great while after he shall rise and go elsewhere there where he would abide all the day. Then when ye shall rise and come to the lair there where the hart hath lain and rested, if ye see it great and broad and well trodden and the grass well pressed down, and at the rising when he passeth out of his lair, if ye see that the foot and the knees have well thrust down the earth and pressed the grass down it is a token that it is a great deer and a heavy (one). And if at the rising he make no such tokens, because that he hath been there but a little while, so that his lair be long and broad ye may deem him a hart chaceable. Also ye may know a great hart by the bearing of the wood, for when a great hart hath a high head and a large (one) and goeth through a thick wood, he findeth the young wood and tender boughs, his head is harder than the wood, then he breaketh the wood aside and mingleth the boughs one upon the other, for he beareth them and putteth them otherwise than they were wont to be by their own kind. And when the glades of the woods are high and broad then he may deem him a great hart, for if he had not a high head and wide he could not make his

ways high and large. If it happen so that ye find such glades and have no lymmer with you, if ye will know at what time this glade was made, ye must set your visage in the middle of this glade, and keep your breath, in the best wise that ye may, and if ye find that the spider hath made her web in the middle of them, it is a token that it is of no good time¹⁸¹ or at the least it is of the middle (of the noon) of the day before. Nevertheless ye should fetch your lymmer for so ye should know better. Also ye may know a great hart by the steps that in England is called trace. And that is called stepping,¹⁸² when he steppeth in a place where the grass is well thick, so that the man may not see therein the form of the foot, or when he steppeth in other places, where no grass is but dust or sand and hard country, where fallen leaves or other things hinder to see the form of the foot. And when the hart steppeth upon the grass and ye cannot see the stepping with your eyes, then ye shall put your hand in the form of the foot that hunters call the trace, and if ye see that the form of the foot be of four fingers of breadth, ye may judge that it is a great hart by the trace. And if the sole of the foot be of three fingers' breadth ye may judge him a hart of ten, and if ye see that he hath well broken the earth and trodden well the grass, it is a token that it is a great hart and a heavy deer. And if ye cannot well see it for the hardness of the earth, or for the dust, then ye must stoop down for to take away the dust and blow it away from the form of the foot until the time that ye may clearly see the form that is called the trace. And if ye cannot see it in one place, ye should follow the trace until the time that ye can well see it at your ease. And if ye can see none in any place, ye should put your hand in the form of the foot, for then ye shall find how the earth is broke with the cleeves of the foot on either side, and then ye can judge it for a great hart or a hart chaceable, as I have said before by the treading of the grass; and if leaves or other things be within the form that ye may not see at your ease, ye should take away the leaves all softly or the other things with your hands, so that ye undo not the form of the foot and blow within and do the other things as I have before said.¹⁸³ (After I will tell you how a man shall speak among good hunters of the office of venery.) First he shall speak but a little, and boast little, and well (work¹⁸⁴) and subtly, and he must be wise and do his craft busily, for a hunter should not be a herald of his craft. And if it happen that he be among good hunters that speaketh of hunting he should speak in this manner. First if men ask him of pastures he may answer as of harts and for all other deer, sweet pastures, and of all biting beasts as of wild boar, wolves, and other biting beasts he may answer, they feed, as I have said before. And if men speak of the fumes ye shall call fumes of a hart, croteying of a buck, and of a roebuck in the same wise of a wild boar and of black beasts and of

wolves ye shall call it lesses, and of hare and of conies ye shall say they crotey, of the fox wagging, of the grey the wardrobe, and of other stinking beasts they shall call it drit, and that of the otter he shall call sprainting as before is said. And if men asketh of the beasts' feet, of the harts ye shall say the trace of a hart and also of a buck, and that of the wild boar and of the wolf also they call traces beyond the sea. And that of the stinking beasts that men call vermin, he shall call them steps as I have said. And if he hath seen a hart with his eyes, there are three kinds of hues of them, that one is called brown, the other yellow, and the third dun, and so he may call them as he thinketh that they beareth all their hues. And if men ask what head beareth the hart he hath seen, he shall always answer by even and not by odd, for if he be forked on the right side, and lack not of his rights¹⁸⁵ beneath, and on the right¹⁸⁶ side antler and royal and surroyal and not forked but only the beam, he shall say it is a hart of ten at default,¹⁸⁷ for it is always called even of the greater number. And every buck's tines should be reckoned as soon as a man can hang a baldrick or a leash¹⁸⁸ thereupon and not otherwise. And when a hart beareth as many tines on the one side as on the other, he may say if he be but forked that he is a hart of ten, and if he be troched of three he is a hart of twelve, if he be troched of four he is a hart of sixteen, always if it be seen that he hath his rights beneath as before is said. And if he lack any of his rights beneath he must abate so many on the top, for a hart's head should begin to be described from the mule¹⁸⁹ upwards, and if he hath more by two on the one side than on the other, you must take from the one and count up that other withal, as I shall more clearly speak in a chapter hereafter in describing a hart's head. And if it be so that the hart's trace have other tokens than I have said and he thinks him a hart chaceable, and men ask what hart it is he may say it is a hart of ten and no more. And if it seem to him a great hart and men ask what hart it is, he shall say it is a hart that the last year was of ten and should not be refused. And if he happen to have well seen him with his eye or the before said tokens, so that he knoweth fully that it is as great a hart as a hart may be, if men ask him what hart it is, he may say it is a great hart and an old deer. And that is the greatest word that he may say as I have said before. And if men ask him whereby he knoweth it, he may say for, he hath good bones¹⁹⁰ and a good talon and a good sole of foot, for these four¹⁹¹ things makes the trace great, or by fair lairs or the grass or the earth well pressed or by the high head,¹⁹² or by the fumes or else other tokens as I have said before. And if he see a hart that hath a well affeted (fashioned) head after the height and the shape and the tines well ranged by good measure, the one from the other, and men ask him what he beareth he may answer that he beareth a great

head and fair of beam, and of all his rights, and well opened; and if a man ask him what head he beareth, he shall answer that he beareth a fair head by all tokens and well grown. And if he see a hart that hath a low head or a high, or a great, or a small, and it be thick set, high and low and men ask him what head he beareth he may answer he bears a thick set head after his making, or that he hath low or small or other manner whatever it be. And if he see a hart that hath a diverse head, or that antlers grow back or that the head hath double beams or other diversities than other harts commonly be wont to bear, and men ask what head he bears, he may answer a diverse head or a counterfeit (abnormal), for it is counterfeited. And if he see a hart that beareth a high head that is wide and thin tined with long beams, if men ask what head he beareth, he shall answer a fair head and wide, and long beams, but it is not thick set neither well affeted. And if he see a hart that hath a low and a great and a thick set (head) and men ask what head he beareth, he may say he beareth a fair head and well affeted. And if men ask him by the head whereby he knoweth that it is a great hart and an old, he may answer, that the tokens of the great hart are by the head, and so the first knowledge is when he hath great beams all about as if they were set as it were with small stones, and the mules nigh the head and the antlers, the which are the first tines, be great and long and close to the mule and well apperyng (pearled) and the royals which are the second tines, be nigh the antlers, and of such form, save that they should not be so great; and all the other tines great and long and well set, and well ranged and the troching as I have said before, high and great, and all the beams all along both great and stony, as if they were full of gravel, and that all along the beams there be small vales that men call gutters, then he may say that he knows it is a great hart by the head.

178 The words in brackets are omitted in our MS. but are in the Shirley MS. and in G. de F. p. 132.

179 The tines at top. See Appendix: Antler.

180 Ever more is here a mistake; it should be never more. G. de F. says: "Mes jeune cerf ne froyera ja en gros arbre" (p. 132). Also in the Shirley MS.

181 Not of "good time" means in the old sporting vocabulary an old track, not a recent one.

182 G. de F. calls the track of deer on grass "foulées," from which the modern "foil," "stepping on grass," is derived.

183 A whole line is missing here in our MS. The words in brackets are taken from the Shirley MS. It runs: "Aftter I wal telle yowe a man howe he shal speke amonge good hunters of y offyce of venerye."

184 The word "work" has been omitted. "Et bien ouvrer subtilement" (G. de F. p. 134).

185 Brow, bay, and tray tines. See Appendix: Antler.

186 In Shirley MS. it is "left."

187 Instead of this original passage G. de F. says: "For if he had on one side ten points and on the other only one, it should be called summed of twenty" (p. 135).

188 G. de F. has "spur" instead.

189 Burr, mule, from the Fr. meule.

190 Dew claws.

191 According to Shirley MS. and the sense, the "iiii" should be omitted.

192 G. de F. (p. 136) says: "Ou belles portées"-portées being the branches, and twigs broken or bent asunder by the head of the deer, termed "entry" or "rack" in mod. Eng.-Stuart, vol. ii. 551.

After I will tell you how ye should know a great wild boar, and for to know how to speak of it among hunters of beyond the sea. And if a man see a wild boar the which seemeth to him great enough, as men say of the hart chaceable of ten, he shall say a wild boar of the third year that is without refusal, and whenever they be not of three years men call them swine of the sounder, and if he see the great tokens that I shall rehearse hereafter he may say that he is a great boar. Of the season and nature of boar and of other beasts, I have spoken here before. And if men ask him of a boar's feeding, it is properly called of acorns of oak's bearing, and of beechmast, the other feeding is called worming and rooting of the roots out of the earth that feed him. The other kind of feeding is of corn and of other things that come up out of the land, and of flowers and of other herbs; the other kind of feeding is when they make great pits, and go to seek the root of ferns and of spurge within the earth. And if men ask whereby he knoweth a great boar, he shall answer that he knoweth him by the traces and by his den, and by the soil (wallowing pool). And if men

ask whereby he knoweth a great boar from a young, and the boar from the sow, he shall answer that a great boar should have long traces and the clees round in front, and broad soles of the feet and a good talon, and long bones, and when he steppeth it goeth into the earth deep and maketh great holes and large, and long the one from the other, for commonly a man shall not see the traces of a boar without seeing also the traces of the bones, and so shall he not of the hart, for a man shall see many times by the foot, that which he will not see by the ergots, but so shall he not see of the boar. What I call the bones of the boar, of the hart I call the ergots, and the cause that a man shall not know as well by the ergots of the hart as by bones of the boar is this, for the bones of the boar are nearer the talon than those of a hart are, and also they are longer, and greater and sharper in front. And therefore as soon as the form of the traces of his foot is in the earth, the form of the bones is there also, and commonly a great boar maketh a longer trace with one of his claws than with the other in front or behind, and sometimes both. And when a man seeth the tokens before said greater, he may deem him greater, and the smaller the trace, the smaller the boar. The sow from the boar ye may know well, for the sow maketh not so good a talon as a right young boar doth. And also a sow's claws are longer and sharper in front than a young boar's. And also her traces are more open in front and straighter behind, and the sole of the foot is not so large as of a young boar, and her bones are not so large nor so long, nor so far the one from the other as those of a young boar, nor go not so deep in the earth, for they be small, and sharp and short, and nearer the one to the other, than a young boar's. And these are the tokens by the which men know a young boar so that he be two year old from all sows, by the trace, for that say I not of the young boars of sounder. And if men ask him how he shall know a great boar by his den, he may answer that if the den of the boar be long and deep and broad, it is a token that it is a great boar so that the den be newly made and that he hath lain therein but once. And if the boar's den is deep without litter, and if the boar lie near the earth it is a token that it is no fat boar. And if men ask him how he knoweth a great boar by the soil, then may he answer that commonly when a boar goeth to soil in the coming in or in the going out, men may know by the trace, and so it may be deemed as I have said by his wallowing in the soil. Nevertheless some time he turneth himself from the one side upon the other, and up and down, but a man shall evermore know the form of his body. Also sometimes when the boar parteth from the soil, he rubbeth against a tree, and there a man may know his greatness and his height. And some time he rubs his snout and his head higher than he is, but a man may well perceive which is of the chine and which is of the head. For

Commented [Ma1]:

by his leses, that is to say what goes from him behind, nor by other judgment a man cannot know a great boar unless he see him, save that he maketh great leses, and that is a token that he hath a great bowel, and that he be a great boar, and also by the tusks when he is dead, for when the tusks of a boar be great as of half a cubit or more and be both great and large of two fingers or more and there be small gutters along both above and beneath, these be the tokens that he is a great boar and old, and of a smaller boar the judgment is less. And also when the tusks be low and worn, by the nether tusks it is a token of a great boar.

193 G. de F. (p. 139) says if "le senglier gise près de la terre, c'est signe qu'il ait bonne venoison," so our MS. is evidently wrong when it says "it is a token that it is no fat boar."
