

Chapter 6 OF THE WILD BOAR AND OF HIS NATURE

A wild boar is a common beast enough and therefore it needeth not to tell of his making, for there be few gentlemen that have not seen some of them. It is the beast of this world that is strongest armed, and can sooner slay a man than any other. Neither is there any beast that he could not slay if they were alone sooner than that other beast could slay him,⁶⁶ be they lion or leopard, unless they should leap upon his back, so that he could not turn on them with his teeth. And there is neither lion nor leopard that slayeth a man at one stroke as a boar doth, for they mostly kill with the raising of their claws and through biting, but the wild boar slayeth a man with one stroke as with a knife, and therefore he can slay any other beast sooner than they could slay him. It is a proud⁶⁷ beast and fierce and perilous, for many times have men seen much harm that he hath done. For some men have seen him slit a man from knee up to the breast and slay him all stark dead at one stroke so that he never spake thereafter.

⁶⁶ In spite of the boar being such a dangerous animal a wound from his tusk was not considered so fatal as one from the antlers of a stag. An old fourteenth-century saying was: "Pour le sanglier faut le mire, mais pour le cerf convient la bière."

⁶⁷ Proud. G. de F., p. 56, orgueilleuse. G. de F., p. 57, says after this that he has often himself been thrown to the ground, he with his courser, by a wild boar and the courser killed ("et moy meismes a il porté moult des à terre moy et mon coursier, et mort le coursier").

They go in their love to the brimming⁶⁸ as sows do about the feast of St. Andrew⁶⁹, and are in their brimming love three weeks, and when the sows are cool the boar does not leave them⁷⁰.

⁶⁸ Brimming. From Middle English brime, burning heat. It was also used in the sense of valiant-spirited (Stratmann).

⁶⁹ November 30.

70 G. de F., p. 57, adds: "comme fait l'ours."

He stays with them till the twelfth day after Christmas, and then the boar leaves the sows and goeth to take his covert, and to seek his livelihood alone, and thus he stays unthe next year when he goeth again to the sows. They abide not in one place one night as they do in another, but tfind their pasture for (till) all pastures fail them as hawthorns⁷¹ and other things. Sometimes a great boar has another with him but this happens but seldom. They farrow⁷² in March, and once in the year they go in their love. And there are few wild sows that farrow more than once in the year, nevertheless men have seen them farrow twice in the year.

71 A badly worded phrase, the meaning of which is not quite clear. G. de F. has "acoms and beachmast" instead of hawthorns.

72 Farrow. See Appendix: Wild Boar.

Sometimes they go far to their feeding between night and day, and return to their covert and den ere it be day. But if the day overtakes them on the way ere they can get to their covert they will abide in some little thicket all that day until it be night. They wind a man⁷³ as far as any other beast or farther. They live on herbs and flowers especially in May, which maketh them renew⁷⁴ their hair and t flesh. And some good hunters of beyond the sea say that in that time they bear medicine on account of the good herbs and the good flowers that they eat, but thereupon I make no affirmation. They eat all manner of fruits and all manner of corn, and when these fail them they root⁷⁵ in the ground with the rowel of their snouts which is right hard; they root deep in the ground till they find the roots of the ferns and of the spurge and other roots of which they have the savour (scent) in the earth. And therefore have I said they wind wonderfully far and marvellously well. And also they eat all the vermin and carrion and other foul things. They have a hard skin and strong flesh, especially upon their shoulders which is called the shield. Their season begins from the Holy Cross day in September⁷⁶ to the feast of St. Andrew⁷⁷ for then they go to the brimming of the sows. For they are in grease when they be withdrawn from the sows. The sows are in season from the brimming time which is to say the twelfth day after Christmas till the time when they have farrowed. The boars turn commonly to bay on leaving their dens for the pride that is in them, and they run upon some hounds and at men also. But when the boar is heated, or wrathful, or hurt, then he runneth upon all things that he sees before him. He dwelleth in the strong wood and the thickest that he can find and generally runneth

in the most covered and thickest way so that he may not be seen as he trusteth not much in his running, but only in his defence and in his desperate deeds.⁷⁸ He often stops and turns to bay, and especially when he is at the brimming and hath a little advantage before the hounds of the first running, and these will never overtake him unless other new hounds be uncoupled to him.

73 G. de F., p. 58, says wind acorns as well or better than a bear, but nothing about winding a man. See Appendix: Wild Boar.

74 From F. renouveler.

75 See Appendix: Wild Boar.

76 September 14.

77 November 30.

78 Despiteful or furious deeds. G. de F., p. 60, says that he only trusts in his defences and his weapons ("en sa défense et en ses armes").

He will well run and fly from the sun rising to the going down of the sun, if he be a young boar of three years old. In the third March counting that in which he was farrowed, he parteth from his mother and may well engender at the year's end.⁷⁹

79 As this is somewhat confused we have followed G. de F.'s text in the modern rendering.

They have four tusks, two in the jaw above and two in the nether jaw; of small teeth speak not I, the which are like other boar's teeth. The two tusks above serve for nothing except to sharpen his two nether tusks and make them cut well and men beyond the sea call the nether tusks of the boar his arms or his files, with these they do great harm, and also they call the tusks above gres⁸⁰ (grinders) for they only serve to make the others sharp as I have said, and when they are at bay they keep smiting their tusks together to make them sharp and cut better. When men hunt the boar they commonly go to soil and soil in the dirt and if they be hurt the soil is their medicine. The boar that is in his third year or a little more is more perilous and more swift and doth more harm than an old boar, as a young man more than an old man. An old boar will be sooner dead than a young one for he is proud and heavier and deigneth not to fly, and sooner he will run upon a man than fly, and smiteth great strokes but not

so perilously as a young boar.

80 From the French grès, grinding-stone or grinders.

A boar heareth wonderfully well and clearly, and when he is hunted and cometh out of the forest or bush or when he is so hunted that he is compelled to leave the country, he sorely dreads to take to the open country and to leave the forest,⁸¹ and therefore he puts his head out of the wood before he puts out his body, then he abideth there and harkeneth and looketh about and taketh the wind on every side. And if that time he seeth anything that he thinks might hinder him in the way he would go, then he turneth again into the wood. Then will he never more come out though all the horns and all the hollaing of the world were there. But when he has undertaken the way to go out he will spare for nothing but will hold his way throughout. When he fleeth he maketh but few turnings, but when he turneth to bay, and then he runneth upon the hounds and upon the man. And for no stroke or wound that men do him will he complain or cry, but when he runneth upon the men he menaceth, strongly groaning. But while he can defend himself he defendeth himself without complaint, and when he can no longer defend himself there be few boars that will not complain or cry out when they are overcome to the death.⁸²

81 G. de F., p. 60, has "fortress" instead of "forest."

82 After the word "death" a full stop should occur, for in this MS. and, singularly enough, also in the Shirley MS. the following words have been omitted: "They drop their lesses," continuing "as other swine do."

They drop their lesses (excrements) as other swine do, according to their pasture being hard or soft.

But men do not take them to the curée nor are they judged as of the hart or other beasts of venery.

A boar can with great pain live twenty years; he never casts his teeth nor his tusks nor loses them unless by a stroke.⁸³ The boar's grease is good as that of other tame swine, and their flesh also. Some men say that by the foreleg of a boar one can know how old he is, for he will have as many small pits in the forelegs as he has years, but of this I make no affirmation. The sows lead about their pigs with them till they have farrowed twice and no longer, and then they chase their first pigs away from them for by that time they be two years old and three Marches

counting the March in which they were farrowed.⁸⁴ In short they are like tame sows, excepting that they farrow but once in a year and the tame sows farrow twice. When they be wroth they run at both men and hounds and other beasts as (does) the wild boar and if they cast down a man they abide longer upon him than doeth a boar, but she cannot slay a man as soon as a boar for she has not such tusks as the boar, but sometimes they do much harm by biting. Boars and sows go to soil gladly when they go to their pasture, all day and when they return they sharpen their tusks and cut against trees when they rub themselves on coming from the soil. What men call a trip of tame swine is called of wild swine a sounder, that is to say if there be passed a five or six together.

⁸³ At this point G. de F., p. 61, adds: "One says of all biting beasts the trace, and of red beasts foot or view, and one can call both one or the other the paths or the fues."

⁸⁴ See Appendix: Wild Boar.

