

Chapter 7 OF THE WOLF AND OF HIS NATURE

A wolf is a common beast enough and therefore I need not tell of his make, for there are few men beyond the sea, that have not seen some of them. They are in their love in February with the females and then be jolly and do in the manner as hounds do, and be in their great heat of love ten or twelve days, and when the bitch is in greatest heat then if there are any wolves in the country they all go after her as hounds do after a bitch when she is jolly. But she will not be lined by any of the wolves save by one. She doth in such a wise that she will lead the wolves for about six or eight days without meat or drink and without sleep for they have so great courage towards her, that they have no wish to eat nor to drink, and when they be full weary she lets them rest until the time that they sleep, and then she claweth him with her foot and waketh him that seemeth to have loved her most, and who hath most laboured for her love, and then they go a great way thence and there he lines her. And therefore men say beyond the seas in some countries when any woman doth amiss, that she is like to the wolf bitch for she taketh to her the worst and the foulest and the most wretched and it is truth that the bitch of the wolf taketh to her the foulest and most wretched, for he hath most laboured and fasted⁸⁵ for her and is most poor, most lean and most wretched. And this is the cause why men say that the wolf saw never his father and it is truth sometimes but not always, for it happeneth that when she has brought the wolf that she loveth most as I have said, and when the other wolves awaken they follow anon in her track, and if they can find the wolf and the bitch holding together then will all the other wolves run upon him and slay him, and all this is truth in this case. But when in all the country there is but one wolf and one bitch of his kind then this rule cannot be truth.

85 G. de F., p. 63, has: "Pource qu'il a plus travaillé et plus jeuné que n'ont les autres."

And sometimes peradventure the other wolves may be awake so late that if the wolf is not fast with the bitch or peradventure he hath left her then he fleeth away from the other wolves, so they slay him not so in this

case the first opinion is not true.

They may get young whelps at the year's end, and then they leave their father and their mother. And sometimes before they are twelve months old if so be that their teeth are fully grown after their other small teeth which they had first, for they teethe twice in the year when they are whelps. The first teeth they cast when they are half a year old and also their hooks. Then other teeth come to them which they bear all their life-time and never cast. When these are full grown again then they leave their father and mother and go on their adventures, but notwithstanding that they go far they do not bide long away from each other and if it happens that they meet with their father and with their mother the which hath nourished them they will make them joy and great reverence alway. And also I would have you know that when a bitch and a wolf of her kind hath fellowship together they generally stay evermore together, and though they sometimes go to seek their feeding the one far from the other they will be together at night if they can or at the farthest at the end of three days. And such wolves in fellowship together get meat for their whelps the father as well as the mother, save only that the wolf eateth first his fill and then bears the remnant to his whelps. The bitch does not do so for she beareth all her meat to her whelps and eateth with them. And if the wolf is with the whelps when the mother cometh and she bringeth anything and the wolf has not enough he taketh the feeding from her and her whelps, and eateth his fill first, and then he leaveth them the remnant, if there be any, and if there be not any left they die of hunger, if they will, for he recketh but little so that his belly be full. And when the mother seeth that, and has been far to seek her meat she leaveth her meat a great way thence for her whelps, and then she cometh to see if the wolf is with them, and if he be there she stayeth till he be gone and then she bringeth them her meat. But also the wolf is so malicious that when he seeth her come without food he goeth and windeth her muzzle and if he windeth she hath brought anything he taketh her by the teeth and biteth her so that she must show him where she hath left her food. And when the bitch perceiveth that the wolf doth this when she returneth to her whelps she keepeth in the covert and doth not show herself if she perceiveth that the wolf is with them, and if he be there she hideth herself until the time he hath gone to his prey on account of his great hunger, and when he is gone she brings her whelps her food for to eat. And this is truth.

Some men say that she bathes her body and her head so that the wolf should wind nothing of her feeding when she cometh to them, but of this I make no affirmation.

There be other heavy wolves of this nature, the which be not so in fellowship, they do not help the bitch to nourish the whelps but when a wolf and a bitch are in fellowship and there are no wolves in that country by very natural smelling he knoweth well that the whelps are his and therefore he helpeth to nourish them but not well. At the time that she hath whelps the wolf is fattest in all the year, for he eateth and taketh all that the bitch and whelps should eat. The bitch beareth her whelps nine weeks and sometimes three or four days more. Once in the year they are in their love and are jolly. Some men say that the bitches bear no whelps while their mother liveth, but thereof I make no affirmation. The bitches of them have their whelps as other tame bitches, sometimes more, sometimes less. They have great strength especially before (fore-quarters), and evil⁸⁶ they be and strong, for sometimes a wolf will slay a cow or a mare and he hath great strength in his mouth. Sometime he will bear in his mouth a goat or a sheep or a young hog and not touch the ground (with it), and shall run so fast with it that unless mastiffs or men on horseback happen to run before him neither the shepherds nor no other man on foot will ever overtake him. They live on all manner of flesh and on all carrion and all kinds of vermin. And they live not long for they live not more than thirteen or fourteen years. Their biting is evil and venomous on account of the toads and other vermin that they eat. They go so fast when they be void (are empty) that men have let run four leashes of greyhounds, one after the other and they could not overtake him, for he runs as fast as any beast in the world, and he lasts long running, for he has a long breath. When he is long hunted with running hounds he fleeth but little from them, but if the greyhounds or other hounds press him, he fleeth all the covert⁸⁷ as a boar does and commonly he runs by the high ways. And commonly he goeth to get his livelihood by night, but sometimes by day, when he is sore ahungred. And there be some (wolves) that hunt at the hart, at the wild boar and at the roebuck, and windeth as far as a mastiff, and taketh hounds when they can. There are some that eat children and men and eat no other flesh from the time that they be ached⁸⁸ (blooded) by men's flesh, for they would rather be dead. They are called wer-wolves, for men should beware of them, and they be so cautious that when they assail a man they have a holding upon him before the man can see them, and yet if men see them they will come upon them so gynnously (cunningly) that with great difficulty a man will escape being taken and slain, for they can wonder well keep from any harness (arms) that a man beareth. There are two principal causes why they attack men; one is when they are old and lose their teeth and their strength, and cannot carry their prey as they were wont to do, then they mostly go for children, which are not



difficult to take for they need not carry them about but only eat them. And the child's flesh is more tender than is the skin or flesh of a beast. The other reason is that when they have been acharned (blooded) in a country of war, where battles have been, they eat dead men. Or if men have been hanged or have been hanged so low that they may reach thereto, or when they fall from the gallows. And man's flesh is so savoury and so pleasant that when they have taken to man's flesh they will never eat the flesh of other beasts, though they should die of hunger. For many men have seen them leave the sheep they have taken and eat the shepherd. It is a wonderfully wily and gynnous (cunning) beast, and more false than any other beast to take all advantage, for he will never fly but a little save when he has need, for he will always abide in his strength (stronghold), and he hath good breath, for every day it is needful to him, for every man that seeth him chaseth him away and crieth after him. When he is hunted he will fly all day unless he is overset by greyhounds. He will gladly go to some village or in a brook, he will be little at bay except when he can go no further. Sometimes wolves go mad and when they bite a man he will scarcely get well, for their biting is wonderfully venomous on account of the toads they have eaten as I have said before, and also on account of their madness. And when they are full or sick they feed on grasses as a hound does in order to purge themselves. They stay long without meat for a wolf can well remain without meat six days or more. And when the wolf's bitch has her whelps commonly she will do no harm near where she has them, for fear she hath to lose them. And if a wolf come to a fold of sheep if he may abide any while he will slay them all before he begins to eat any of them. Men take them beyond the sea with hounds and greyhounds with nets and with cords, but when he is taken in nets or cords he cutteth them wonderfully fast with his teeth unless men get quickly to him to slay him. Also men take them within pits and with needles⁸⁹ and with haussepieds⁹⁰ or with venomous powders that men give them in flesh, and in many other manners. When the cattle come down from the hills the wolves come down also to get their livelihood. They follow commonly after men of arms for the carrion of the beasts or dead horses or other things. They howl like hounds and if there be but two they will make such a noise as if there were a route of seven or eight if it is by night, when the weather is clear and bright, or when there are young wolves that have not yet passed their first year. When men lay trains to acharne (with flesh) so as to take them, they will rarely come again to the place where men have put the flesh, especially old wolves, leastways not the first time that they should eat. But if they have eaten two or three times, and they are assured that no one will do them harm, then



sometimes they will abide. But some wolves be so malicious that they will eat in the night and in the day they will go a great way thence, two miles or more, especially if they have been aggrieved in that place, or if they feel that men have made any train with flesh for to hunt at them. They do not complain (cry out) when men slay them as hounds do, otherwise they be most like them. When men let run greyhounds at a wolf he turns to look at them, and when he seeth them he knoweth which will take him, and then he hasteneth to go while he can, and if they be greyhounds which dare not take him, the wolf knows at once, and then he will not hasten at his first going. And if men let run at him from the side, or before more greyhounds which will seize him, when the wolf seeth them, and he be full, he voideth both before and behind all in his running so as to be more light and more swift. Men cannot nurture a wolf, though he be taken ever so young and chastised and beaten and held under discipline, for he will always do harm, if he hath time and place for to do it, he will never be so tame, but that when men leave him out he will look hither and thither to see if he may do any harm, or he looks to see if any man will do him any harm. For he knoweth well and woteth well that he doth evil, and therefore men ascrieth (cry at) and hunteth and slayeth him. And yet for all that he may not leave his evil nature.

86 G. de F., p. 66, has "evil biting."

87 He keeps to the coverts.

88 Acherned, from O. Fr. *acharné*, to blood, from chair, flesh.

89 Needles. See Appendix: Snares.

90 *Aucepis* (Shirley MS.). G. de F., p. 69: *haussepiez*, a snare by which they were jerked from the ground by a noose.

Men say that the right fore foot of the wolf is good for medicine for the evil of the breast and for the botches (sores) which come to swine under the shoulder.⁹¹ And also the liver of the wolf dried is good for a man's liver, but thereof I make no affirmation, for I would put in my book nothing but very truth. The wolf's skin is warm to make cuffs or pilches (*pelisses*), but the fur thereof is not fair, and also it stinketh ever unless it be well tawed.⁹²

91 This should be "jaw." G. de F., p. 70, has *maisselles*, i.e. *Machaires*.

92 Prepared. Tawing is a process of making hides into leather-somewhat

different from tanning. There were towers and tanners.



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