CAPITULUM VIII.—OF THE FOX AND OF HIS NATURE

THE fox is a comon beest and perfore me nedeb not to telle of his makying for per be but fewe gentilmen bat ne han sey some he hathe many suche condicions as be wolf for be foxen1 of the fox bereb as longe as the bicche of be wolf bereb her whelpes some tyme moore and sumtyme lasse saf þat þe foxen fox whelpeþ vndir þe erthe moore the vixen fox whelpeth under the earth deeper than depe pan pe bitche of the wolf doop. The doth the bitch of the wolf. The vixen of the fox ffixen of the fox is a saute² ones in be yeere she goeth a clicqueting² once in the year. She has a venohab venemous bytenge as a wolf and his lif is no mous biting like a wolf and their life is no longer lenger than a wolfes lif with grete payn men take than a wolf's life. With great trouble men can be fox namely be fixen whan she is with welpes take a fox, especially the vixen when she is with for whan she is wib whelpes and is hevy she whelps, for when she is with whelps and is heavy, holdith hur euermore nye her hoole for sumtym she always keeps near her hole, for sometimes she she welpeth in a faus hoole and sumtyme in grett whelpeth in a false hole and sometimes in great burberies and somtyme in holowe trees and perfore she draweth euermore nye her beries and 3if she here draweth always near her burrow, and if she hears eny thing anoon she goob perynne or eny houndes anything anon she goeth therein before the hounds may come to hure she is a fals beest and a malicious can get to her. She is a false beast and as malicious as a wolf, The huntynge for be fox is faire for as a wolf. The hunting for a fox is fair for the good be good crie of be houndis bat followen hym so cry of the hounds that follow him so nigh and with nye and wib so good a wille alway bei senter of so good a will. Always they scent of him, for he hym for he fleb by bik spoies and also for he flies through the thick wood and also he stinketh stinkely euermore and with gret payne he wil leeeue evermore. And he will scarcely leave a covert (sic) a couert whan he is perinne he takep not when he is therein, he taketh not to the plain (open) playn contre for he tresteth not on his rennyng country for he trusteth not in his running neither nepere in his defence for he is to feble and 3if he in his defence, for he is too feeble, and if he does, do it shal be by verey strength of men and it is because he is (forced to) by the strength of houndes and euermore more he shal holde be men and hounds. And he will always hold to Couert and 3if he may not keuere hym but with covert, and if he can only find a briar to cover hima brere 3it will he keuere hym with that and whan self with, he will cover himself with that. When he seeth pat he may not dure than he good to the he sees that he cannot last, then he goes to earth the erthe, where he may next eny fynde the which he knoweth wel and ban may men digge hym out men may dig him out and take him, if it is easy and take him so pat he be in esy digging but not digging, but not among the rocks.4 If greyhounds amonge roches4 and 3if greihoundes zeuen hym mony

CHAP. 8.—OF THE FOX AND OF HIS NATURE

THE fox is a common beast and therefore I need not tell of his making and there be but few gentlemen that have not seen some. He hath many such conditions as the wolf, for the vixen of the fox bears as long as the bitch of the wolf bears her whelps, sometimes more sometimes less, save that rows and sometimes in hollow trees, and therefore she nearest he can find which he knoweth well and then

¹ Also spelt Ffixen, probably from G. Füchsin. See Appendix: Fox.

² From F. sauter, in heat; the term in the modern text is used by Turbervile (p. 188).

FOX HUNTING "ABOVE GROUND" WITH RACHES OR RUNNING HOUNDS This is probably the oldest existing detailed picture of this sport, so called to distinguish it from fox drawing or fuelles er les implins ploin.

³ G. d. F., p. 72, says, "because the hounds hunt him closely." 4 Our MS. only gives this one chapter on the fox, while Gaston Phœbus has another: Comment on doit chassier et prendre le renard. In this he gives directions as to earth-stopping, and taking him in pursenets, and smoking him out with "orpiment and sulphur and nitre or saltpetre." He says January, February, and March are the best months for hunting, as the leaf is off the trees and the coverts are clearer, so that the hounds have more chance of seeing the fox and hunt him closer. He says that one-third of the hounds should be put in to draw the covert, and the others in relays should guard the boundaries and paths, to be slipped as required. Although this is a Frenchman's account of foxhunting, we have no reason to believe that the fox was treated at that period better by English sportsmen, for until comparatively recent times the fox was accounted vermin, and any means by which his death could be encompassed were considered legitimate, his extermination being the chief object in hunting him, and not the sport. A good run with foxhounds in the days of Henry IV. and Henry V. would have been more accidental than wished for, and by means of nets placed round the coverts and relays of greyhounds and other hounds, placed without the boundaries of the woods which were being drawn, poor Reynard stood little chance of fair play, and if he tried to steal away was most likely chopped close to covert, or knocked on the head with a hunting-pole as he struggled in the meshes