

## HARE—continued

ever, says that they are endowed with a keen sense of smell, whereas G. de F. says *elle sent pou*.

Attention has already been called to the Duke of York's statement that "the hare hath great fear to run." This arose probably from the similarity of the words *peur* and *pouvoir* in the MSS., for it should read "hath great power to run," the principal MSS. which we have examined showing *pouvoir*. Verard in his first edition of G. de F. also has the same rendering as the Duke of York, to which Lavallée draws attention as being one of the many ludicrous mistakes in this edition (G. de F. xli.).

*Age of the Hare.*—The knack of telling the hare's age by the bone in the foreleg seems to have been better known in Plantagenet days than it is to-day. Daniel a hundred years ago writes in his "Rural Sports":

"The mode by which warreners distinguish the young rabbits, is by feeling the knee joints of the forelegs; when the heads of the two bones which form the joints are so contiguous that little or no space is to be perceived between them, the rabbit is old; on the contrary, should there be a perceptible separation between the two bones, the animal is young; and is more or less so, as the two bones are more or less separated" (p. 493).

"The Hare lives six or seven years, and comes to maturity in less than one; the young are known by the easy breaking of the under jaw bone and the same process will determine the age of rabbits. The feeling and situation of the joint of the foreleg as described when treating upon the rabbit, will show the young from the old Hare" (p. 450).

The following account of this curious bone, written by a distinguished surgeon in reply to a letter of inquiry I published in the *Field*, embodies so many interesting points that I have obtained his permission to republish the important portions of it in this place. "The difficulty there may be is due, not to the anatomy of the selected quadrupeds, which is plain enough, but to the vagueness of the description. If the Duke meant that dogs and rabbits have a bone in the foreleg before they are six months old, which they lose subsequently, it is not true. If he only meant that you can feel a bone more distinctly before they are six months old than afterwards, he is correct; but it is a pity he did not say so more plainly, and indicate the situation with a more precise description than 'in the forelegs next the sinews.' There are many sinews in the foreleg, and the assignment of pre-eminence to any one of them, like the decoration of St. Paul's, is largely a matter of taste. Personally I should be inclined to support the claim of the tendon of the extensor brachii (triceps) at the elbow to the distinction, as it is the most prominent sinew in the fore limb; but this cannot be the one referred to by the Duke, as the bone into which it is inserted, the olecranon, does not, in rabbits and dogs at any rate, show any material differences at the ages mentioned. So we must conclude that the sinews implied are those of the

wrist, or, as Daniel, in Mr. Grohman's reference, calls it, the knee. Of course, the stifle joint in the hind leg is what corresponds in quadrupeds to our knee, but the carpal joint or wrist is often called the knee, and here there is a bone which is more prominent in young dogs and rabbits than in old ones, and must be the one alluded to. If any one will slightly bend the carpal joint or wrist of a dog or rabbit he may feel in the hollow of the wrist, just behind the carpal pad or cushion, a little round bone, varying in size from a hemp-seed to a pea according to the size of the animal, freely movable when the joint is bent, but when this is straight the bone is immovable and attached to a rigid sinew occupying the middle line of the forearm. This is the pisiform bone, and the sinew is the tendon of the flexor carpi ulnaris. The bone is much more prominent in young dogs and rabbits than in old ones; in the latter, when the limb is straight and the tendon tense, the gap between the pisiform bone and the extremity of the ulna is bridged by the lateral ligament, and a careless observer might hardly feel the bone at all, but it is evident enough when the joint is flexed. The cause of the greater prominence of the pisiform bone in young animals is that the structures with which the bone is connected are imperfectly developed in early life. The tendon of the flexor carpi ulnaris is prolonged as a ligament to the base of the metacarpal bone of the little finger (or toe); there are two lateral ligaments connecting the pisiform with adjacent bones, and one of the muscles of the little finger (or toe), the abductor minimi digiti arises from the pisiform bone. When these structures are fully developed in the adult the pisiform bone becomes relatively less prominent, but whether this is a sign of any value in the determination of age I very much doubt" (*Field*, May 6, 1899).

That at least a few possess the knack of finding out whether it be an old or a young hare in this manner was proved by another letter called forth by this discussion, which I quote in part: "The statement that there is a small projecting bone in the foreleg which tells the youth of the animal is quite a correct one. My father, during a business and sporting experience extending over nearly fifty years, had hundreds of thousands of hares and rabbits through his hands, all of which had to go through this test for selection. His experience amongst sportsmen and sporting farmers (not a small one) was that such a test was quite unknown to them."

Our text calls the hare the most marvellous beast (p. 103). The reasons given being because she "fumeth or croteth and rowngeth and beareth tallow and grease." By "rowngeth" (Fr. *ronger*) it was meant that the hare chewed the cud, as by the ancients it was generally supposed that the hare was a ruminant. Although this is not the case, and the hare has not a compound stomach, nevertheless this belief showed a close observation of nature, for when a hare is

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seated she can bring up parts of her food and give it a second mastication.

The hare and rabbit have little or no fat, but what they do possess is called grease. Twici says: *Il porte grease* (pp. 1 and 21).

"She has teeth above in the same wise as beneath" (p. 103) is another of the peculiarities noticed in our text, which shows that the difference in dentition that distinguishes the hare from all other rodents had been remarked. Instead of two incisors in the upper jaw, the hare has four, having two small rudimentary incisor teeth behind the two large front ones, and five or six molars in the upper jaw, with two incisors and five molars in the lower jaw (Brehm, ii. p. 627; Cornish, "Shooting," ii. p. 153).

It is difficult to know why the hare was considered a "melancholy" beast, and how this curious reputation was kept up during the whole of the Middle Ages. It was thought that eating the flesh of the hare rendered one also subject to melancholy. G. de F. does not mention this, and altogether his book is comparatively free of such superstitions, but he says the flesh of the hare should not be given to the hounds after a day's hunting, as it is indigestible: *quar elle est fastieuse viande et les jet vomir* (p. 210). Therefore, when rewarding the hounds they should only have the tongue and the kidneys, with some bread soaked in the blood of the hare.

In an entertaining chapter by Du Fouilloux on the *Properties of the Hare*, among other things we read: "The hare first taught us the use of an herb called wild chicory which is very excellent for those which are disposed to melancholy, she herself is one of the most melancholy beasts that are and to heal her own infirmities she goeth commonly to sit under that herb" (Turb. p. 160).

When Falstaff complains of being as melancholy as a "gib cat" or "lugged bear," Prince Henry continues the similes with, "What say'st thou to a hare or the melancholy of Moorditch?" (*Henry iv.* Act i. sc. 2).

The hare was considered an animal of evil omen, as well as the partridge, and to meet either as one started in the morning to harbour a stag would be a prophecy of a bad day's sport (Du Fouilloux, p. 22 v.).

The superstition that witches frequently assumed the shape of a hare, and thus led the hounds a useless chase, finally vanishing before them just as they hoped to take her, is easily accounted for by the marvellous way a hare doubles and foils, and after a succession of jumps, will squat under some tufts of grass or other cover, entirely baffling the hounds that are hunting her, and disappearing as if by magic.

For such a small animal the hare has from time immemorial excited much interest, and the enthusiasm of all who took part in the chase of her is also shown in our MS., for it considers the hare the "King of all beasts of venery, for

all the blowing and all the fair terms of venery come of the seeking and the finding of her."

In spite of this assertion we do not seem to have a greater choice of words employed in this chase than in that of any other beast which our forefathers hunted. Besides the hunting cries with which we deal under that heading, we have the following technical terms, which have been summarised by Manwood (pp. 175-176):

The hare was a beast of venery, of the forest, and of the warren.

Killing or hunting a hare was trespass in venison, and punished as such with fines and outlawry.

The first year the hare was called a leveret, or according to our text a kindle, the second a hare, and the third a great hare.

A brace of hares, or leash of hares.

A hare is seated or formed.

The hare is cased or stripped, the hare is started.

A hare beateth or tappeth.

A hare goeth to buck.

The tail is called the scut.

The dung, crottels or crotties.

The fat of the hare was called grease or tallow.

When she is in the plain field, "she soareth."

When she turns to deceive huntsmen, "she doubleth." When she runs in highways where her footing may be perceived, "she pricketh"; and in the snow, it is called "tracking." Pointing was also a term for the footprint of the hare. The reward given to the hounds at the end of the chase was termed the hallow. The muse was the path the hare makes for herself in fields or through hedges.

According to some of the early authorities the season of the hunting of the hare was open all the year. According to Manwood, from Michaelmas to Midsummer.

The "relief" of the hare originally meant her arising to go to her pasture, from the French *relever*. Later it came to mean the feeding of the hare; for instance: "A hare hath greater scent and is more eagerly hunted when she relieves on green corn"; and: "She goes to relief in the cornfields" (The Complete Sportsman, pp. 83, 86); and: "The Huntsman may judge by the relief and feed of the hare what she is." This latter seems almost as if the word had again changed its signification and was used to denote the dung (Blome, p. 92).

The hare probably owed her popularity not only to the fact that she had for many centuries no competitor such as the fox (for the sport a fox could afford was not discovered till comparatively recent times), but also for the excellent and easily obtainable sport she afforded. In the words of Markham, it "is a chase both swift and pleasant, and of long endurance, it is also sport ever readie and equallie distributed, as well to the wealthie farmer as the greates gentleman. It hath its beginning contrarie to the stagge or bucke, for it begins at Michaelmas when they end, and is out of date after April when they come first in season" (B. iii. p. 8).