

season has been calculated at 1,300,000, affording the value of £16,000 in isinglass, and £40,000 in caviare. Of the common sturgeon, the number captured amounts to 300,000, yielding in isinglass £6,500, and in caviare £10,000.

Late in the autumn, and during the winter, a second fishery of the great sturgeon is carried on. Large holes are cut in the ice, for the introduction of the apparatus of lines and hooks, and the fish, when caught, are sent off direct, in a frozen state, to Astracan, by means of sledges.

Some years ago it was calculated that the spring and winter fisheries of the great

sturgeon produced annually 103,500 fish, which afford 30,000 pounds of isinglass, and 414,000 pounds of caviare.

The common sturgeon of our seas sometimes attains to an enormous size; one recorded by Pennant, which was caught in the Esk, weighed 460 pounds; and in 1802, a specimen, eight feet long, was caught in a weir below the castle of Shrewsbury, and weighed 190 pounds. The mouth of the sturgeon is destitute of teeth, and it is said to feed principally on mollusks, and various soft substances it may find at the bottom of the water. The under side of the snout is garnished with four barbules or feelers.

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## MY FIRST LION HUNT.



HERE were five Dutchmen and ourselves, seven in all. We started at daybreak, and made for the spot where the two horses had been killed. It was one of those mornings in South Africa when a thick fog precedes

a very hot day. We reached the dead horses—or rather what was left of them, for there was nothing remaining but the backbones and heads—just as the sun had risen. The mist was so thick that the rays of the sun made a complete halo round you for about twenty yards distant, and beyond that distance you could see nothing. This made it the more critical, as the lions had only left the carcasses just as we got to the spot. We could tell this by the sparkling dew having just been knocked off the grass and not replaced by the heavy mist. We counted the spoor or trace of seven lions, and could not tell at what moment we might come up with them, for we could ride at a fast walk on their track. All at once we came to a deep gully, about eight feet deep and twenty or thirty feet wide; into this gully the lions

had jumped, and we had to follow the spoor by riding on the bank above. These gullies are numerous in that part of the country, and are formed by the heavy rain or thunderstorms; they continue for some miles on the flat grounds, starting from the foot of hills or mountains. We knew that this gully must soon terminate, as we were then approaching Tea-bus, or Tea-canister Mountain, so called from its likeness to that article of furniture of the Dutch shape.

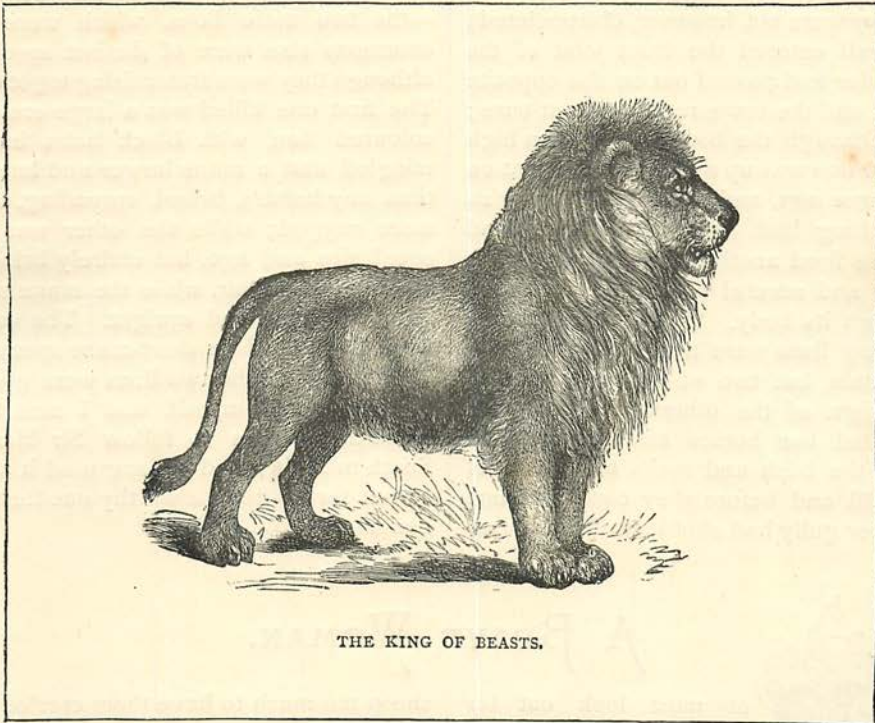
When we had got to within about 200 yards of the termination of the gully, and close to the mountain, out jumped the seven lions—two males, two lionesses, and three cubs. They walked majestically away from us, rather to the right, so that we had to continue to the head of the gully before we could get at them, and the lions were then about 150 yards from us, and a little scattered, a great black-maned lion being on the left. Old Dederick Putter, who had been appointed captain of the hunt, told us to dismount hastily, which we did; the horses were then turned with their tails to the lions, and were held by the bushmen after-riders, while we formed up between the



lions and horses, the Dutchmen telling us that if the lion charged us and we did not kill him we were to retire through or between the horses, whereupon the lion would spring on a horse.

When we were all ready he directed a young Dutchman, a nephew of his, named Streydom, to fire a shot, not at but to the left of the left-hand male lion. The ball struck the ground about forty yards from the noble beast and raised the dust.

farmer immediately sat down, and, with his elbows resting on his knees, waited till the lion was within about sixty yards, when he pulled trigger and the ball entered one of the brave beast's eyes. The lion bounded into the air, making a spring to the front, and then a second one, which brought him to our very feet, where he was dispatched by several shots. The lion's face was perfectly covered with the brains that oozed out of



THE KING OF BEASTS.

The lion made one spring at the spot, and was seen clutching the air in the utmost rage; but without one moment's delay he turned on us, and, lashing the air with his tail, came towards us, alternately making short springs and crouching. We stood with our rifles ready and the finger almost on the trigger. The captain told another young Dutchman to take aim and fire at his own time, while we all stood in reserve. This young

the bullet-hole; and the other eye was so covered that I attribute our safety partly to that circumstance.

During this time those who had fired were rapidly re-loading; and it is well that this was done, for without any further provocation the second male lion, a large brindled one, with a short, upright mane, at once turned and came on to attack us. The horses were much frightened, and kept turning about, but



we were too intent watching the lion to prevent it. This time old Dederick turned to me and said, "Englishman, it is your turn to fire first." I thereupon stepped three paces to the front and stood waiting for the noble brute. I allowed him to come rather nearer, and he was about forty yards distant when I fired; and I should possibly have allowed him to take another short spring first had it not been that the Dutchman kept saying,

Schiet! schiet! Allemagtig Engelschman, schiet."

They were not, however, disappointed; my ball entered the front joint of the shoulder and passed out on the opposite flank, and the brute rolled over at once; but although the bone was broken high up the lion was up again in a moment on his three legs, and came on bounding as if nothing had happened. My friend Crause fired another ball into the lion's head, and several other bullets passed through its body. By this time the remaining lions were near the foot of the mountain, but two of the cubs were to the right of the others. We at once mounted our horses and cut them off from the bush and rocks at the foot of the hill, and before they could get into another gully had shot them from horse-

back, without much danger to ourselves, making a bag of four killed, which was not considered bad sport even in those days.

The next thing was to skin the lions, which the after-riders did in the most expert manner; but none of the horses would allow the skins to be put on them to be carried home, except my old trooper, who did not so much as wink his eye, having considered it, I fancy, a rather good field-day.

One thing struck me as very curious—the two male lions, which were of enormous size, were of distinct species, although they were fraternising together. The first one killed was a large cream-coloured lion, with black hairs intermingled, and a mane larger and longer than any horse's, broad, spreading, and more ragged; while the other was of equal size and age, but entirely brindled and of one colour, while the mane was short, scrubby, and upright. The cubs were, I think, of the short-mane species.

The skins of the two lions were given to Crause and myself, and I sent the black-maned one to follow Sir Harry Smith to India; and he long used it as a carpet for his tent, a worthy one for the lion-hearted old soldier.



## A BRAVE WOMAN.

"You must look out for the sheep, wife. These warm days will bring the bears out of their dens. They will be ravenous, and like as not they will break into the yard and carry off some of the sheep. I saw bear-tracks up the mountain this morning."

"Well," said Mrs. Pope, "they needn't expect to get any of our sheep. If they come prowling round here, I'll drive them off in some way. We need the

sheep too much to have them carried off by bears."

"I wish you understood using the gun, wife. When I am gone, I worry about leaving you and the baby all day alone. The woods are so near, I can't help thinking some wild animals may come down from the mountains and attack you."

"You needn't fear about that," answered Mrs. Pope. "To be sure it is lonesome with neither man nor dog about. I presume I should feel safer if I understood handling a gun, but I don't