

HUNTING AHEAD OF ROOSEVELT IN EAST AFRICA

On the Spoor of the King of Beasts

BY LORD DELAMERE

Foremost among the great hunting authorities of the English speaking world is Lord Delamere. He is credited with being the heaviest killer in the party which bagged the record number of African lions some few years ago. In East Central Africa his prowess is familiar to every native. Not long ago a locality beset with lions sent a delegation four hundred miles to call on Lord Delamere to ask him to come and wipe out the destroyers of their cattle. In this article he vividly contrasts the theory and practice of lion hunting in the region which Ex-President Roosevelt will invade.

TO get good sport in Somaliland the first thing is to get a good shikari. There are excellent men to be found with care and good luck, but a great many who are absolutely worthless.

In addition to others, I have always had one man, Abdulla Ashur, as head shikari. Besides being an agreeable companion, he is far and away the best finder of game I have ever seen in the country. His pluck is undeniable, and the only difficulty I have had with him is to prevent him going where I did not care to go myself. This may sound exaggerated praise of a native, but among other things he grappled a lion which had knocked me down, being severely mauled before he got the brute off, so that I naturally entertain a very high opinion of him. Owing to his skill in tracking I have only lost one wounded lion out of many that were hit, and that was not his fault, as the blood stopped almost directly and the ground was nothing but stones for miles. This speaks for itself, as any one who has shot lions knows how difficult it is to recover a wounded beast without dogs.

I only once had the help of dogs after wounded lions. We were camped down in the Haud among the Eldegal villages under Sultan Deria. One day I went out to try to get some meat for the natives, accompanied by a warrior called Hassan and his pony. I had just shot an oryx, and we were cutting it up, when the smallest Somali I have ever seen came running up to say he had just observed five lions asleep under a tree close by. This man belonged to the low-caste tribe of Midgans—people who do not live together in one tribe, but are scattered all over Somaliland in different villages, where they are chiefly engaged in killing antelope for meat, other Somalis, as a rule, thinking it below their dignity to do anything but go out occasionally on looting expeditions. Midgans are armed with bows and poisoned arrows, and each of them carries a knife. Until quite lately no other Somali would use a bow, but now it is quite a common thing to meet a native belonging to another tribe who has discarded his spears for a bow and quiver of poisoned arrows.

Shooting Lions with Poisoned Arrows.

Lions are occasionally killed by Midgans, but the poison on the arrows cannot be very strong, as frequently, after being sick two or three times, the lion seems to recover and get away. Captain Swayne gives an account of the way in which these Midgans hunt the oryx with their dogs. But to get on with my story. The little Midgan carried a bow nearly as long as himself, and was followed by about a dozen small native dogs with curly stumps and prick ears. These little curs were wonderfully broken. The man trotted off in front of us, and when he got near the place where he had seen the lions he simply put out his hand, and all the dogs lay down in a bunch and never attempted to follow on after us. Then we stalked carefully towards a big thorn tree rising above the bush. This was where the lions were said to be. The bush was very open, and when we came in sight of the tree the lions were just decamping. There were four of them, not five—an old lioness and three lions, perhaps not quite full grown, and with very little mane. Hassan had followed close behind on his pony, so I shouted to him to try and keep his eye on the lioness, and ran on myself with Abdulla after one of the lions. This one did not seem much inclined to run, and after a short burst I managed to get a bullet into him somewhere just as he disappeared into some thick bushes.

At that moment we caught sight of another lion trotting along parallel to us about 200 yards off. The wounded one was keeping up a continuous low growling in the bushes, so, thinking he would not get far away, we ran to cut off the other. He turned off when he caught sight of us, and we had a long, stern chase after him, as a result of which I was so blown I could not hit him, although he was lobbing along not more than 100 yards ahead. At last I did get a bullet into his flank. He at once turned, and, growling fiercely, came bounding a few yards towards us, as if trying to make up his mind to charge. Whether he would have done so or not I do not know, as my second barrel caught him on the point of the shoulder, bringing him on to his nose, and before he could recover himself I put in another bullet from my second rifle and finished him.

It is more than likely he would not have charged, as I have several times seen a lion make this kind of demonstration when slightly hit, more, I think, to try to frighten his assailant

than anything else. A lion that really means charging up comes quite silently, galloping very fast along the ground like a dog.

A Wounded Lion at Bay.

While this was going on we could hear Hassan shouting in the distance, so now we ran off towards the sound. When we started the shouts seemed to be almost stationary, but as we ran they got further and further off till at last we could hear nothing. We then turned to go back for the wounded lion. As we got near the place where we had left him, we could hear a tremendous row going on, and men shouting, dogs barking, and the unmistakable grunts of an angry lion. Running up, we found the lion, with his shoulder broken, standing in a bush surrounded at a respectful distance by the little dogs. They kept up an incessant yapping, and every now and then the lion would make a drive at them, but they were much too quick for him with his broken shoulder, and were at him again directly he retreated to the bush. The little Midgan and one of my men were close by, yelling with excitement. As I walked up to try to get a shot without hitting one of the pack, the lion took no more notice of the dogs, but kept his eyes fixed on me. I never saw a lion look nastier, but I suppose his broken shoulder had sickened him, and I shot him without difficulty. The Midgan, after calling his dogs, had

light it. He was very unwell with fever at the time, and although he had two or three shots, he was so shaky he could not hit her, and at last felt so ill he had to give her up. His shikari told me the lioness was very much beat from being badgered about in the sun and he was sure we could find her. I owed her one for frightening Hassan, so we started at once, Hassan not coming, but sending a relation of his on the same pony. After a short ride we got to the place and found the tracks going into a long strip of high feathery grass. We cast all around and could find no tracks coming out, so decided to burn the patch. It was about 200 yards long and perhaps 50 broad. I could not command the whole of it, so I told the men to light it at the top and along one side, and Abdulla and I took up our station halfway down the other side, about 30 yards out from the edge. At the bottom end I put the warrior on the pony to see if the lioness broke that way. Almost directly the grass was lit a big spotted hyena blundered out and came within a few yards of us, but the great part of the patch was burnt before there was any sign of the lioness. Then I caught sight of her slinking along through the thin grass at the edge of the strip going towards the bottom end. She did not see us, as we were rather behind her and standing quite still.

mine was very nearly caught one day in the open. He was trying to round up a lion, and got rather too close to it on a tired pony. He only just got away. This same lion afterwards chased me and two or three of my men for quite a long time. Unless a pony falls down, I am sure there is nothing to be feared from a lion in the open, if one gives him a pretty wide berth, so as to get a start when he charges. As a rule the lion will give up the chase after 100 yards or so. This pony of Hassan's was about the best I ever saw in Somaliland. He would not put a price on it, because he said he could make quite a respectable income by making looting expeditions on its back, as it was so fast nobody could catch it.

Killing Camels to Save a Pony.

A year after this I met Hassan again, and asked him how his pony was. He said it was very well, but that he had very nearly lost it a short time before. He had been down in the waterless plain on a looting expedition with some other Eldegal warriors. After a successful raid they split up to avoid pursuit, and Hassan was on his way home driving some of the looted camels in front of him. It was a very dry year, and although it was the rainy season, he had been unable to find any water in pools to give his pony. The result was that having been ridden hard for two or three days with little or no water to

edge of the Marar Prairie, on a ban or open grass plain many miles in extent. This was the best place for lions it has ever been my luck to come across. Hardly a day passed that lions were not seen by one or the other of us, very often right out in the open, miles from any bush. It was cool, cloudy weather while we were there, and the lions seemed to do most of their hunting in the daytime. There were so many, and they were so bold, that the Somalis were quite nervous about walking through the bush in the daytime. Between us we shot 24 lions in this place in a little over a fortnight. Besides lions there was more game than I have ever seen anywhere else. Large herds of hartbeeste, oryx, and Sommering's gazelle were to be seen feeding in every direction. Besides this, in the open there were a good many ostriches and a few hunting cheetahs. In the bush at the back of our camps were Waller's gazelles, leopards, warthog, and innumerable dikdik and birds. In the rocky hills I saw several kllp-springers.

One morning my companion was roused by his natives, who told him that three lions were just crossing a strip of open ground within 100 yards of his camp. Before he was ready, two or three of the men jumped on ponies and galloped after the lions—three very fine males with manes—which were by that time making off.



but they had always led us on to some stony hills where we had lost them. This time the same thing happened again, so, thinking she would probably come back that night to finish the heifer, we decided to sit up for her. We therefore made an enclosure of thorns under a mimosa bush near by. The hat top of the bush came built up all around and one could hardly tell the whole thing was not a bush. In the front there was a hole to shoot through, and at the back we left an opening so that we could get inside. After this we returned back to camp, and in the evening after dinner went off again, taking my bedding on a donkey. This donkey was also to serve as a bait, for the natives had cut up and taken away the heifer. We tied the donkey by one foreleg, almost touching the fence of our zereba, and after shoving in my bedding, crawled in through the opening at the back. Two men who had come with us crammed this hole up with thorns, and then went away, talking loudly to make the lioness think that all was safe if she were anywhere near.

After looking about for some time I made out the lioness slinking along behind our bush. She would not come up to the donkey, but lay down some way off under a bush. There was no hole on that side, so I could not shoot with any certainty; and at last, needing sleep, I lay down, telling Abdulla to keep his eye on the lioness, and wake me if there was any chance of a shot. I had not slept long when he touched me, at the same time putting his hand over my mouth to prevent me calling out on being suddenly awake. I got up on my knees, looking out of the hole, but for a moment I could not make out anything.

It was a lovely night, but even by the brightest moonlight a lion is not a very easy thing to see. There was an open glade in front of the donkey, and at last, standing out in the open, I saw two lions. They seemed as if they could not make out why the donkey did not run away and stood quite still looking at him. As I watched they suddenly started, and came racing towards us side by side like two enormous dogs. When the lions got up to the donkey they did not seem to stop their rush, but donkey and lions all went down with a crash together. How they actually knocked him over I did not see, as at that moment I drew back my head involuntarily, because, although we were absolutely safe inside a mass of mimosa thorns, the whole thing felt unpleasantly close. When I looked out again I could easily have touched one of the lions, which was standing with its forepaws on the donkey and its hind quarters within a few inches of our fence. The other lion was standing on the far side looking me straight in the face; but I am sure he could not see me, as the moon was right in his eyes, making them shine as if they were night.

I could only see his head, as the other lion's body gave the one nearest me a shot. There was very little of him to be seen except his hind quarters, but he was so close I was sure the bullet would drive right through him.

Quick Shooting in a Crisis.

As the rifle came up to my shoulder it touched a branch, which seemed to make a crack like a pistol shot, and the lion turned half round to see what it was. At the same moment I fired, and he fell, rolling over and over against the fence, and roaring loudly, thinking that in his struggles he might carry away some of our zereba. I gave him two more shots to finish him. As I shot the second time, the other lion, which had run back a few yards, came and stood close to the donkey, looking straight towards us. I pulled at his chest directly I was

loaded. He plunged forward, hitting the corner of our zereba, then swerved off, and we heard him crash into a bush, where we found him stone dead in the morning. The bullet had gone through his heart. These two lions were very fine specimens. One had a thick, almost jet black mane, the other had a lighter mane, but for a wild lion very thick. There is no doubt these were the lions seen the day before, as the next day, riding over to visit the other camp, I followed their back trail to within a mile of the spot. They were in the best of condition, but empty, so that may account for their boldness.

Shortly before this I shot three times at a lion which was eating my donkey. The night was as dark as pitch. The lion took very little notice of the two first shots, although one of them hit the donkey in the ribs. The third shot was a very lucky one. The bullet hit the donkey in the stomach, and, going through, caught the lion at the junction of the neck with the chest, killing him on the spot. One would think that a 577 rifle bullet would frighten any lion. This one had killed and eaten a sheep the night before, taking it from the same village where I sat up for him.

The two foregoing stories would seem to show that a large percentage of the lions killed in Somaliland are shot at night over a bait. This is not really so, as it is quite a chance if a lion passes the place where you have a donkey tied up. Night shooting, to my mind, is a thing to be avoided, except now and then as an experience. It generally means a very disturbed night, especially if there are any hyenas about, and in the morning you are not fit for a hard day's work. Occasionally by bright moonlight it is very interesting, but if circumstances admit of lions being killed by day, it is rather like shooting a bear in a fine pig-sticking country to kill a lion over a bait at night. Sometimes it is the only chance you have of getting a lion, either because you are moving camp next day, or because the country is unsuitable for tracking. Under the circumstances you are bound to try it.

I have never myself shot more than two lions in one night, but a man whom I met in the country showed me the skins of four he had shot when sitting up over the dead body of an elephant. It was very dark or he might have got any number, as he told me he was shooting most of the night, and that in the morning there were tracks of many lions all round the carcass.

I have once or twice sat up over a dead animal. This way of getting lions is only likely to be successful when there are many hyenas about, as they make such a noise that they will attract any lion that may come past within a reasonable distance.

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Dene-Holes.

These curious well-like excavations, found in Kent and Sussex, are popularly supposed to belong to the time of the Danish rule in England, says the Youth's Companion. They are invariably about three feet in diameter and seldom less than 60 feet deep. Ingress and egress were provided for by means of rude ladders or hide ropes. Various explanations have been offered to account for their existence—some supposing them to have been places of refuge; others that they were connected with secret forms of worship, still others that they were dug for the extraction of chalk and flint. A. J. Phillip, in a recent study of the subject, advocates the view that the holes were made to serve as silos, or granaries. They are found close together in groups, corresponding with the habit of various tribes of clustering in restricted areas.



WITH A SAVAGE SNARL HE CHARGED DIRECTLY AT THE THICKET WHERE I WAS CONCEALED.

run on after us, and had come on the wounded lion. We skinned this beast, and the little Midgan rather amused us, as he got so very much annoyed because his dogs would not eat some great chunks of raw lion-flesh he cut off and offered them. We were on our way to skin the other lion when we met Hassan looking rather sorry for himself. He said that the lioness had trotted quite quietly at first, and he had brought her round in a circle towards the place where he had left us, riding alongside of her, and shouting to let us know where he was. Unluckily she crossed the track of the wounded lion, and after smelling at the blood she became perfectly unmanageable, making off at a gallop and charging him whenever he got in front to try to turn her. At last she had gone into the thick bush on some hills, where he had lost her. When we had skinned the other lion we made a cast to try to pick up the fourth, but could make nothing of him—I never got this lion, although he killed one of our donkeys the next day.

Badgering an Angry Lioness.

We had not been back in camp very long when my companion came in, saying he had run across a lioness in the hills, which he was sure was the one we had seen, as she was very angry. She had run into some long grass, and had charged out towards his men, when they were going up to

drink, the pony got beat, and at last lay down, about 20 miles from the wells they were making for. No amount of stick would get it on its legs again, and Hassan was in despair. He knew there were no villages at the wells where he could get vessels in which to carry water back to the pony, and it seemed as if nothing could be done to save it. At last he thought of a plan. Driving the camels at top speed to the wells, he gave them as much water as they could drink, and hurried them back again. He found the pony where he had left it, in a very bad way, but immediately proceeding to kill and cut open the camels, he took the water out of their stomachs and gave it to the pony, which revived sufficiently to struggle to the wells. After a few days' rest it completely recovered. Hassan added that he could very soon get some more camels, and that he would rather have cut the throats of a hundred than have lost his pony. This story shows a great deal of resource in a native, but the life of a Somali leads makes him wonderfully quick at finding a way out of a fix of this kind. It was very lucky the pony was not killed by lions or hyenas while Hassan was away.

Just before Hassan's pony was nearly caught by the lioness we had a pony killed by lions, the man on his back escaping rather cleverly. At that time we had two separate camps, six or seven miles apart, each of them on the

The natives meant to try and keep them engaged till the hunter had time to get his rifle and cartridges and catch them up. The lions were galloping among scattered mimosa scrub, making for the thick bush beyond, and with an object in view a lion can gallop at a very fair pace in the cool of the morning. One of the men got a start of the others and was rapidly overhauling the lions, when he lost sight of them for a moment. He galloped up to the bush where he had last seen them, and as he rounded it, one lion came at him from behind and the other two from the front. They had got sick of running and had waited for him. The native did a very clever thing. There was no chance of getting away by galloping, as he was regularly hemmed in, so, half checking the pony, he put his heel on its wither, and jumped right into the middle of a mimosa bush. Almost as he jumped the lions knocked the pony over, and when my companion came up he found them eating it, taking no notice of the dismounted men close by. The first shot hit one, and while he was following it up the other two gave him men the slip. These two lions were decidedly out of luck, as I got them the same night.

Approaching Big Game in Jungle.

That morning a lioness killed a heifer close to my camp. I had already seen her tracks several times,

HUNTING THE DANGEROUS AFRICAN BUFFALO

The next of this absorbingly interesting series is by H. A. Bryden, one of the most fearless and reckless of African hunters. In this article Mr. Bryden tells of the perils of hunting this four footed demon of the African jungles.