

# Lion Shooting in Somaliland

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.

**T**HE best piece of lion tracking I ever saw lasted five full hours and is so memorable in several respects that I purpose to use it as an introduction to that general method of lion hunting.

Two of my men got badly mauled by a lion, so our camp had to stop where it was till they could be moved. After a time one of them was able to walk about with his arm in a sling, and the other was getting on well, so one night I decided to leave the big camp next day and go with two or three camels to some villages only a day's march away. Early the next morning Mahomed Noor, the headman, started with the camels. I stopped behind to get some breakfast. Just as we were going to follow, a camelman, who had gone up the river-bed close by to get some water, came running back to say that a lion had been down to drink at one of the shallow sand wells in the night. I started at once with Abdullah and two other trackers, telling my pony-boy to follow on as soon as he could get the pony saddled. When tracking, I have always found it the best plan to have the pony led some distance behind. The boy ought to have no difficulty in following the tracks of two or three men and a lion, and if the pony is kept close up, it is sure to stamp or blow its nose at the critical moment.

When we got to the well there was the spoor plain enough in the sand, but rather blurred by some rain which had fallen at daybreak. This made the tracking a little difficult after we left the river-bed, but when we had followed it slowly for some distance, we came to a place where the lion had lain down under a thick bush, evidently to shelter from the rain, as the spoor after this was quiet distinct on the top of the damp ground. This made us think we were in for a short track, for it must have been light when the lion went on again from here, and lions generally lie up shortly after the sun rises; but this day proved an exception, because it was cloudy and cool through the forenoon.

### Trailing the King of Beasts.

The spoor now led us along a sandy path, where we could follow it as fast as we could walk. When it turned off into the bush we quite expected to see the lion at any moment; but not a bit of it—he wandered about through endless clumps of mimosa and "irgin" bushes, as if he did not mean to lie up at all.

The track at last led us down a little sandy watercourse, which it followed for some distance. Up to this time we had had no real difficulty in making it out, but now came our first serious check. The nullah turned off along the side of a stony ridge, and, instead of going along it, the lion had turned up the hill. We had got the general direction that the lion had been going in, but this was no good to us, as on casting forward in the same line to the bottom of the other side of the ridge where there was some sandy ground, we could find no sign of his having passed in that direction. We spent some time hunting about, growing less hopeful as time went on. A man following a trail by sight certainly has an enormous advantage over a hound hunting it by nose, because time is of no particular object to him, and every direction can be tried in turn. After making out eastward we went back to the little water-course, and followed that down for some distance, hoping that the lion had turned down hill again; but here, too, we were disappointed, and gravitated back to where we had first lost the spoor. We

knew that the lion had not gone straight on, nor had he turned back; he must have gone along the top of the ridge and then crossed into other stony hills where it was hopeless to try to track him. Abdullah, who is never defeated, said there was a big river-bed further on in the direction in which the lion was going. It seemed a very slender chance, as he might have turned off anywhere in between, but it was the only one, so off we went. We were evidently in luck that day, for we had only gone about a quarter of a mile when we struck the spoor. The lion

the spine just in front of the withers; another quarter of an inch higher and it would have missed altogether. This lion was quite maneless, except for a few long hairs on each side of the neck, and his teeth were worn down quite short, so he was evidently very old. He was in very good condition, notwithstanding, but his stomach was quite empty, which accounted for his going so far before lying up. We had to stop at the mala camp for the night when we got there, and did not follow up our camels till the next day. I have described this track rather at length because it is a good example of

I tied up our two donkeys on the side of the camp, on the lions might come and after dark we were in the tent when there was a sound of something was attacking our donkeys. It was pitch dark, and we were in the direction of the sound before we discovered the attacking beasts were hyenas. I did not mind having a donkey taken by a lion, but I was not bargained for the poor animal being mauled by hyenas, so we went out to see

just out that the lion had come to the carcass. Some time after I awoke to find Abdullah bending over me, with my rifle in his hand. He was frightfully excited, and all I could get out of him was "Libah, sahib, libah!" ("Lion, sir, lion!") Jumping up I rushed out just as my companion fired two shots into the darkness. The first thing I saw when I got to where he stood was that a great piece of the skern round the camp had disappeared, leaving a broad gap. I could not for a moment think what had happened, and then it struck me that when the carcass had



HE PLUNGED OFF WITH AN ANGRY



seemed now to have made up his mind as to his direction, for he kept on straight down the middle of the river-bed. The sun had come out from behind the clouds, and in places the sand was very deep, so that we were not sorry when at last the track led into a little island of bush in the great flat sand. There was no doubt the lion was at home, for on casting round no sign was perceptible of a track coming out. The island, raised a little above the river-bed, was formed of a mass of thick-tangled bush and creepers clustered round a few big trees. The water coming down the river after heavy rain had washed it roughly into the form of a triangle, the apex of which pointed up the river. From this point the sides widened out to the other end, which was about thirty yards broad, the whole length being somewhat under a hundred yards.

### Driving the Lion to Bay.

The shape made it an easy place to drive, for a little way out from the point one could easily command the whole of it. The lion was almost certain to break out of one of the sides towards the bush on the banks of the river-bed, in which case I should get an easy broadside shot. If we followed the track into the place, the noise we were sure to make would be very likely to get the beast on his legs, and he would sneak out at one side as we went in at the other, especially as the water had left a lot of dead sticks along the edges, over which it would be impossible to walk quietly. Abdullah also said that from the way he had wandered about this lion must be very hungry, and would sleep lightly. These considerations decided us to drive. I posted myself with Abdullah a few yards out from the point, and the other two men, having collected some stones, began throwing them in at the far end. Abdullah was right about this lion sleeping lightly; for at the first stone there was a growl and a crash in the bushes and then, for a minute or two, not a sound. The men started to walk down, one on each side, shooting and throwing in stones. I was watching them, and wondering what had happened to the lion, when there was a faint crackling just in front of us, and he appeared at the point of the island. Although we were standing within a few yards of him, and absolutely in the open, he did not see us.

He was facing straight towards us, and was so close that I did not like to fire at him as, on receiving the bullet, he would be very likely to plunge in the direction he was going and be into us; nor did I want him to come any closer; so, as he stepped down on to the sand, I moved my rifle up towards my shoulder to attract his attention. He saw the movement at once, stopped dead, and turned his head sharply towards us. For the fraction of a second I thought he was going to be startled into charging, but he plunged off to the left with an angry snarl at us over his shoulder. As he passed I pulled, and he skated along on his stomach and fell down a little ledge in the sand. This slewed him round, and he lay facing us, spread-eagled on the sand, evidently quite unable to move. All the life in him seemed concentrated in his eyes, which glared at us furiously. Another shot put him out of his misery. The first shot, a very bad one, had grazed

many similar days.

### Perils of the Man Eater.

My first experience in tracking lions was early in 1892, and the night before was rather an exciting one. After hunting elephants unsuccessfully for about a month, we were on our way south, when we arrived one day at some villages where the natives had been very much bothered by five lions which were said to be still in the neighborhood. A girl had been killed two days before, and an enormous amount of damage had been done among the sheep and cattle. The first day we camped there two of our party had shooting zerebas made at the village to which the lions generally came, and just before sunset they went off there.

opened. My donkey had a nasty bite in the leg above the hock, taken into the camp. The other was completely and must have been. We could not find a but we were pretty sure that two must have been if the lions did come key there would not of hitting them on a night, we pulled the carcass skern or fence round to prevent hyenas from tied a rope to one passing it over the fence to a heavy water barrel camp. We sat up for a few shots at hyenas went to bed, telling the

off with the hind had him ce. The bowelled instantly. hyenas. on, or ing that if the lions did come key there would not a chance of hitting them on a night, under the camp, and, it away, legs, and stened it inside the and got then we p to keep been dragged away the water barrel must have got hitched against the inside of the interlaced mimosa boughs and the whole lot had gone together. It was frightfully dark outside, and we stood peering out for some time without being able to distinguish anything; but after a few minutes we could hear something tearing at the flesh quite close by. We had a shot or two at the sound, and the beasts, whatever they were, went away. As at that time we knew nothing about lions, we were not quite sure that they were not hyenas after all; but Abdullah stuck to it they were lions, so we got our beds and lay down one on each side of the opening, just behind the fence to watch, hoping that the brutes would come back. Nothing further happened.

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