

SPEARING STURGEON.

HOW THE SPORT IS FOLLOWED IN SAN FRANCISCO BAY.

From the San Francisco Bulletin.

With the exception of the great Canadian rivers, San Francisco Harbor can boast of a larger variety of big fish than any other sheet of water on the continent. The sloughs in the vicinity of Newark and Alviso, on one side of the bay, and San Mateo and Redwood City, on the other, abound in sturgeon, but it is only this year that the fertile brain of the sportsman has devised a new and interesting means of capturing them, which has raised them to the level of game fish. It is the most exciting pastime that the amateur can indulge in, slaying the sturgeon as he should be slain, with keen spear and a tub of clear line behind it, and a strong arm to send the barb well home. It has just enough of danger in it to make the harpooner's pulses quicken when he poises himself for the throw, and his crew rest anxiously on their oars to await the result of his aim. The English sturgeon is mentioned in British books as a royal fish, and, though he differs from his California brother, taking him with the spear may rightfully be entitled a royal sport. Those who would try their skill with the sturgeon must provide first a good spear. Now, having his spear, if he has never cast one, a little practice to get the hang of the weapon will be useful. When he becomes accustomed to the balance, and finds that he can make a pretty accurate cast at 15 or 20 feet, he may look out for his line. A quarter-inch strong cotton, about 150 feet in length, will be the thing, and this must be stretched and restretched till not a kink remains and it is as smooth and flexible as a silk pocket-handkerchief. An ordinary lance or two to give his fish the *coup de grace* may be added to the outfit. A tub in which to coil his line is indispensable, and this coil must be as clear and carefully laid down as a sailor's "Sunday Flemish" on the quarter-deck. A good, heavy Whitehall boat, with two oarsmen, the tub with the line placed nearly amidships, the line led through a well-greased bucket in the nose of the boat, the spearman standing with his weapon in the bow, a cleat to make the line fast to where the fish gives any slack, and the sturgeon-fisher is ready for his prey. From now until August or the middle of September is the season for sturgeon. They can be found at about half flood on the weather shore of the sloughs and estuaries of the bay in shallow water. At the mouth of Alviso Slough they lie in great abundance, the back fin out of water, and the difficulty in this locality is for the spearman to cast his iron without getting into one. When on the ground the spearman must direct his rowers to pull along gently—no splashing or talking. When within 10 or 12 feet he launches his weapon, and the sturgeon, with one preliminary wallow, darts away, while the line, fake after fake, spins out of the tub. When the bow oar takes a turn with the line, the party can give any steam-boat on the bay big odds and distance it. Sometimes the fish, if badly hurt, eases up after a mile or so, and then if the fight is all out of him the lance will put an end to his troubles. A light axe to cut the line in case the sturgeon shows an inclination to take the party out the Golden Gate is a necessary part of the spearman's tackle, but a mile or less will nearly always give him enough of it. Sturgeon from 100 to 300 pounds, and the stingaree, a flat-fish which also runs very large, may be killed in this manner.

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