THE STURGEON.

The writer of an excellent treatise on fish tells us that the sturgeon is styled "royal" on account of his rarety; but his title is of much more definite origin. To be sure, he shares it with the porpoise and dolphin, both of which were accounted great dainties in the Middle Ages, when no English table of the first order was thought to be royally spread without them. They were served at a magnificent banquet prepared for Richard II.; they figured at the wedding supper of Henry V., and at the Coronation feast of Henry VI. Queen Elizabeth was extremely fond of them, boiled or roasted, and made into puddings or pies, the "seasoning" of which demanded a marvellous miscellany of ingredients in obedience to the canons of taste then prevailing.

The Crown has a very ancient claim upon the whale, porpoise, dolphin and sturgeon, when captured in certain circumstances in England. This still forms a part of the Royal prerogative ,and is protected by a statute passed in the reign of Edward II. But the fish must be secured within three miles of our shores, or "in creeks or arms of the sea; for if taken in the wide seas they belong to the taker." So little culinary value, however, now attaches to the sturgeon in this country, that his "royalty" is little more than an antiquarian curiosity. That in ancient times he should have been accounted "excellent above his fellows" is not perhaps to be wondered at. But the great choice of fish which Nature and modern science enable us to command has created a more fastidious national taste. The Greeks and Romans rendered high honours to the sturgeon: the latter sent it to table garnished with flowers and to this day a small one served in jelly is a much appreciated dish in Rome. In Berlin, also, it is greatly esteemed, and choice fish of from thirty to forty pounds weight sometimes realise as much as £5 or £6 each. These are brought alive from the Dwina, by Archangel and St. Petersburg, to Berlin; their less valued relatives of the Volga being generally reserved for home use. The flesh strongly resembles veal, and no method of cooking it is better than that recommended by Ude—"roast it thoroughly before the fire. and baste with plenty of white wine." It was in this fashion that Izaak Walton treated his large pike, which thus became "a dish too good for any but anglers, or very honest men." The great Careme recommends champagne, which most modern connoisseurs would now put to a very different use. But in spite of every assistance from the cook, royal sturgeon is not accounted a lordly dish in England; and even the delicious soup which it undoubtedly makes it almost unknown to our national palate.

Whether we are more nice than wise in this respect is an open question. Doubtless, if the sturgeon were again made a fashionable dish, he would by leaps and bounds attain to something of his old renown. But nowadays no great lady of the land orders "sturgeon-pie and rosemary mead to breakfast." Like the pike, however pleasant to the taste, the sturgeon is not so lovely an object to the eye, which the magician of the kitchen now seeks to capture. It would be unfair, in point of appearance, to compare either with the salmon or trout, perhaps two of the most beautiful fish that swim. Tough fighters as these are in the water, when once brought to bank they seem to suggest a feeling of happy acquiescence in their destiny. The look of either betrays a natural affinity with the grid or the fish-kettle. They were clearly made to be eaten, and they look just as good as they are. As much can hardly be said for the sturgeon and pike, which—well enough in their way—are felt to be "not everybody's money." But here intervenes the accomplished chef, who tells of the wonders he can work with the former, if only he is fortified with a little encouragement, and—a few kitchen "extras." He speaks of the sturgeon cutlets with which some of the Parisian artists still know how to delight their American patrons, and which even a famous English epicure pronounced "supremely excellent." A learned authority on gastronomy says that the plagiarism of writers on cookery can be tracked for at least 400 years, "as a wounded man by his blood." It is certainly easy to trace the progress of the sturgeon during that interval, and to note how substantially similar are the recipes for treating him to those relied upon by our ancestors. Of the thirty or forty different ways of dealing with the fish in France. few are strictly modern, and several have been practised for ages. As might be expected, Careme's method is by far the most expensive and complicated, and the dish named "Esturgeon a la Napoleon" is not to be lightly taken in hand. After expending three bottles of champagne upon his preparatory education, the fish as presented at table is an obvious excuse for a super-adulatory sauce, which itself requires the adventitious aid of crayfish, truffles, carps' tongues, and mushrooms. Alas! poor sturgeon. In England he has at least stood upon his merits. We have roasted, baked or boiled him for centuries; and it is almost pathetic to find how the laborious compilers of cookery books still condescend to details in reference to a fish which fashion has declared obsolete. Franactelli gives us at least one honest recipe, but of course he cannot refrain from the stereotyped alternative known to civilisation as "another way." But his sturgeon soup is really excellent, and ought to be much better known.

To find under the heading of "royal" sturgeon a reference to "smuggled" sturgeon, is rather suggestive of an infringement of Crown rights But it is only a novel method of evading the baker's fee. Alexis Soyer tells his more humble readers that, when sending a piece of meat to the bakehouse on a stand in a dish, it is easy enough to smuggle a piece of sturgeon underneath, with a little chopped shallot to the usual covering of potatoes. The notion seems queer enough to be original, and would be almost laughable but for the authority who suggests it. And even thus backed one can hardly escape from the doubt whether each of the viands will retain the integrity of its own flavour. Or will the result be a little mixed? It is an enigma which one is more disposed to "give up" than to put to the proof.—"The Globe."

An elderly gentleman was strolling in the East End when a woman rushed up to him. "Oh, sir, will you please come at once! There's three brutes of men jumping on a poor organ-grinder."

"Is he a big organ-grinder?" queried the old gentleman calmly.

"No, no, sir, quite a little man. Oh, come at once, or it will be too late!"

"I don't see why I should interfere," replied the old gentleman. "If he's a small man the three men don't need my help."

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"You say you were in the saloon at the time of the assault referred to in the complaint?" questioned the lawyer.

"I was, sor," replied the witness.

"Did you take recognizance of the barkeeper at the time?"

"I don't know what he called it, sor, but I took what the rest did."

"Boo-hoo, boo-hoo!" cried the little boy.

"What is the matter?" asked the kind lady.

"My farvers been be-beating me."

"Well, cheer up, my little man; most fathers have to beat little boys at times, if they are naughty."

"But you don't know my farver. He ain't like other farvers. He's in the brass band, and beats the big drum. So it hurts ever so much more!"

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A Bishop, who was travelling through the wilds of Canada, stopped at a log-cabin to have a rest. "Are there any Episcopalians about here?" he asked the woman who lived in the cabin. "Well, sir, I hardly know," she said with hesitation. "The man did kill something yesterday in the barn, but whether it was one of them things or not I cannot say!"

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To-day's story.—The census-taker in an American township visited an Irishwoman's house. One of the questions asked was: "How many males have you in this family?" The Irishwoman replied, "Three a day, sir!"