

to seaward, they then, by means of ropes and pulleys, lift the movable bottom of the chamber, and easily secure the fish.

Gmelin has related, in a very lively way, the solemn fishing which takes place at the beginning of winter, in the neighbourhood of Astracan, when these fish have retired into vast caves under the sea-shore, which form their winter quarters. A great number of fishermen assemble, over whom are placed a director and inspectors, who possess considerable authority and influence; every kind of fishing is prohibited in the places known to be the haunt of the husos; a numerous flotilla of boats are in readiness; every thing is prepared as it were for an important military operation; all approach in concert and with regular manœuvres the asylum in which the fish are concealed, the slightest noise is severely interdicted, so that the most profound silence everywhere prevails. In an instant, at a given signal, a universal shout rends the heavens, which echo multiplies on every side. The astonished husos, in the greatest alarm, rush from their hiding places, and are taken in nets of every kind, prepared to intercept them.

The huso fishery is of great importance, principally on account of the caviar prepared from the roe of these fishes, and the isinglass that is made from their air-vessel. The former is much in demand amongst many nations, as the Russians, Turks, &c.; the Greeks particularly make it almost their sole food during their long fasts, and the latter is almost universally an article of commerce. The common sturgeon furnishes the same articles, as do other fishes also.

The next kind of fishes that migrate for the purpose of spawning, which I shall notice, is one, which, though it falls far behind the sturgeons in size, exceeds them infinitely in numbers and dispersion, and in the vast supply of food with which it furnishes the human race; it will readily be seen