

The harpoon down-fall, and its distribution in Africa.

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Summary.

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| 1. Distribution. | 4. Constructional details of spears thrown from trees. |
| 2. Constructional details. | |
| 3. Spears thrown from trees. | 5. Resumé. |

1. Distribution.

My original intention was to draw special attention to the different methods of arranging this kind of trap. This, however, turned out to be impossible for the reason that in most cases the descriptions were too deficient. The trap we are here concerned with is mainly used for elephant and hippopotamus, but even for rhinoceros, buffalo, antelopes and crocodile. The spear employed is suspended from a tree-branch, or, if there is not a suitable one at hand, from a pole or the like fixed up horizontally between two trees in such a way that the spear, weighted with a heavy log, is placed directly above the path by which the quarry is expected to come along. Where no suitable trees are available, it will be necessary to plant an upright post on either side of the game-path, the harpoon then being suspended in the way indicated. The idea is that this is to strike the head or neck of the animal that passes below it and springs the trap, when death soon results. In cases where the spear only strikes the back (the spine expected), it will take some time until there has been sufficient loss of blood to cause the collapse of the animal. This may, however, take place only after a very protracted interval, and then eventually give rise to litigation. Of the Pygmies of the Ituri forest it is related that they got involved in sharp disputes, and even wars, when an elephant had died in some district other than that in which it had been wounded¹.

Starting with West Africa, we find that the harpoon down-fall occurs among the Hausa² and Ankwe³, as well as in Porto Novo and Lagos⁴. In the latter two places it is employed for crocodiles, and as a crocodile trap it is known "surtout entre le Dahomey et Lagos"⁵. In Liberia it is occasionally

¹ T. A. BARNES: A trans-African Expedition. J. A. S. 1925, p. 270.

² A. TREMEARNE: The Ban of the Bori. London 1914, p. 203.

³ A. TREMEARNE: The Tailed Headhunters of Nigeria, London 1912, p. 59.

⁴ A. GRUVEL: L'industrie des pêches sur la côte occidentale d'Afrique. Paris 1913, p. 92.

⁵ A. GRUVEL: Ibid., p. 94. Prof. LINDBLOM has drawn my attention to this work.