APPENDIX

HOW A MERU BIRD TRAP IS MADE

First of all, a number of twigs some 18 inches long, the tops of which are too weak to tempt a bird to perch on them, are procured. These are fixed in the ground close together in a circle which has a diameter of about 15 inches. In the fence so formed, a doorway of some 8 inches is left, as an entrance for the bird.

Next, three tough, thin, flexible rods are required, each long enough to admit of being bent into a half-circle, so that when the ends are fixed into the ground the crest of the archway so formed is about on a level with the top of the fence.

These rods are fixed in the ground, one in front of the opening and one on either side of it, as follows. The first rod is bent to form a half-circle, and fixed firmly in the ground in front of, and close up to, the opening which forms the entrance to the enclosure, as shown in the photograph. A stiff, straight stick is placed on the ground between this and the fence, so that the ends touch the feet of the archway and project beyond them for a couple of inches.

The second rod is fixed on one side of the entrance, as
shown in the photograph, by first passing one end of it outside the arch already formed and inside the horizontal stick at its feet, which it touches, the end of the rod being pushed down into the ground at about a third of the distance between the feet of the first archway; the rod is then bent over in the form of a half circle, the loose end being firmly fixed in the ground among the fence twigs.

The third and last rod is secured in a similar way on the other side of the entrance, as shown in the picture.

When this is done it will be found that the entrance rod will be inclined towards the fence as much as is required, and the three arches will be rigid.

The next part of the contrivance consists of a fairly stout but flexible sapling, about 7 feet long, which is driven
well into the ground at the back of the fence, exactly opposite the gateway, and about 5 feet from it.

To the top of this is tied a piece of string, which is then pulled over the central archway until the sapling is in a bow shape over the trap. While in this strained position the point where the string touches the crown of the archway is noted, and here the string is firmly tied round a thin piece of stick, some 6 inches long, at about an inch from one end of it. This piece of stick is then pulled down behind and under the crown of the entrance arch, and the end of it to which the string has been tied is placed against the outside of the crown of the arch. Holding the string taut in this position with one hand, a cross-piece of about 9 inches is momentarily held with the other hand low down against the arched rods at each side of the entrance. The tip of the lower end of the stick to which the string is attached is then placed outside and against this short cross-piece so that it grips it and holds it in position by the great strain on the string attached to the sapling. The string does not end where it is knotted to the 6-inch stick, but is continued in the form of a running noose, which is made into a large loop and spread out over the open space round the 9-inch cross-piece, so that the bird will not go through the opening into the trap without first hopping on to the cross-stick. A suitable bait of bird food is placed inside the doorway, and the trap is then ready for action. The moment the bird perches on the cross-stick the latter drops down, and the sapling at the back being then released flies up with great force, pulling the noose tight on to the bird at the same time. The speed with which the sapling springs back is generally enough to kill the bird outright, as it is dashed against the crown of the entrance arch rod while in the tight embrace of the noose.
This trap is apparently quite successful in the wilds, but I very much doubt if our civilised birds with plenty of food about would let themselves be caught in a contrivance of this description, except, perhaps, in winter, with snow thick on the ground.

This device is given in detail to show the ingenuity and cleverness of the native, who constructs the entire trap with a few sticks and a string made out of the fibre plant. It also shows that he is a keen observer, and knows how to take advantage of the foolishness of a bird, which prefers to enter through a complicated doorway rather than fly in at the open top.
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