

forest aisles bespoke more birds hurled downwards to their deaths, and, at length, true darkness came, casting a dusky curtain over the whole wild scene. The laden trees grew quiet, the fluttering, broken bodies on the ground were stilled. And on the face of the man who still watched from the edge of the clearing was a look of wonder, not unmixed with awe.

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The passenger pigeon once inhabited a large range. From north central Canada and Hudson Bay it migrated as far south as the Gulf Coast, and west to the Great Plains, occurring all over the eastern and central parts of this country. The nesting grounds were mainly in the northern parts of the United States. In appearance, it was a beautiful bird; the slatey blue of the head and neck and duller hue of the upper parts shone with brilliant, metallic iridescence, while the reddish chestnut of the breast and underparts blended harmoniously with the whole. The tail was long and graduated, the outer feathers white, with black and chestnut markings toward the base. The common mourning dove of to-day is frequently confused with the passenger pigeon, but although similar in colouration, it is much smaller, and always shows a blackish spot behind the eye which was entirely lacking in its larger cousin.

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When a flock appeared it was the signal for the whole community to turn out, and gunners were much in evidence besides those with cruder weapons. Fields were baited with grain, and the birds repairing thereto met a slaughter which was fearful. As many as one hundred, and more, were often killed at a single discharge, and this continued as long as the ammunition lasted. As if this method was too slow, the birds were caught by huge nets which were set over baited areas, and sprung when enough pigeons had congregated beneath. This was much more effective than powder and shot, and the birds thus killed were packed in barrels and shipped to market. It is said that one concern who handled them used fifteen tons of ice in packing one shipment.

It will be readily seen from the foregoing accounts that there was some reason for thinking, as everyone did in those days, that it was impossible to exterminate the birds. And, except for one potent fact, the huge flocks would doubtless have existed for many years. This was the treatment which was accorded the pigeons on their breeding grounds. \* As in the migrations, the numbers which gathered together to nest were almost beyond belief. They could not but attract the widest attention, and when the fact could be put to commercial advantage, there were many who took what spoil they could.