PASSING OF THE PASSENGER PIGEON

By EDWARD B. CLARK

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PRESUMABLY everybody knows by this time that there is a standing offer of $400 in cash for the man, woman, boy or girl who finds the nest of a wild pigeon (ectopistes migratorius), otherwise known as the passenger pigeon, and finds with it the nestling birds. In order to get the reward the person who makes the discovery must leave the nest and the birds unmolested and prove the truth of it by making a report and giving the scientists an opportunity to verify the case.

Magazine and newspaper articles literally by the thousands have been written about the disappearance of the wild pigeons which once, as it is always put, "darkened the sun with their flights." The members of the biological survey in Washington are specially interested in the subject of the disappearance of this bird of passage from its wild haunts. For years it has been hoped that nesting pairs might be found in some part of the country and that with proper protection the bird might be restored in part at least to its place in nature.

Recently there was a story published to the effect that the birds, wearied of the constant persecution which met them in the United States, had changed the course of their flight and had gone into Mexico and there were living peacefully and happily. This story proved to be absolutely without foundation. Still another tale was to the effect that the pigeons had gone into the heart of South America and there finding conditions pleasant were leading a non-migratory life. This tale also proved to be entirely fictitious.

In all parts of the southern states in the winter seasons there are people watching sharp-eyed for a glimpse of the bird that once was a common sight. In the summer sharp eyes of the north are constantly on the alert for the same purpose, but as yet no authentic report has been received that the bird of mysterious disappearance has revisited the scenes familiar through the centuries to its ancestors.

One of the scientists most interested in the search for the wild pigeon is Ruthven Deane, fellow of the American Ornithologists' union and president of the Illinois Audubon Society for the Protection of Wild Birds. Mr. Deane virtually has given up all hope that any living specimen of the passenger pigeon ever will be found, but he is as tireless today as ever in tracing reports of the bird's reappearance to their sources. The offer of $400 for the discovery of a nesting pair of the pigeons and their undisturbed nest comes from Clifton R. Hodge of Clark university, but $100 additional will be paid for the discovery of a pair of birds and their nest if found in the state of Illinois. The additional reward is the joint offer of Mr. Deane and, as I remember it, of Professor Whitman of the University of Chicago.

One of the most curious features of the search for the wild pigeon is the mistakes which are made constantly by men who years ago trapped the pigeons and were as familiar with their appearance as they were, and are today for that matter, with the appearance of the common robin of the dooryard. Reports have come in from all sections of the country of the reappearance of the pigeon, but on investigation it invariably has been found that the discoverers had seen nothing more nor less than the common wild dove (venaidura macroura), or mourning dove, which is so familiar a bird that it seems almost impossible that any man of the countryside could have failed to overlook it as his constant neighbor and could confuse it with its much larger cousin, the passenger pigeon of other days.

To give an example of how the search is conducted for the wild pigeon and how conscientious are the scientists in attempting to verify reports of its reappearance this one instance, taken from a hundred instances, may be noted. Recently a report from northern Michigan reached the president of the Illinois Audubon society that the passenger pigeon in very truth had reappeared in the vicinity of a club house frequented by fishermen and gunners, many of whom had known the pigeon well in the old days and who were certain that in this case they could not be mistaken as to the identity of the bird visitors.

It was a long journey to the northern Michigan club house, but an ornithologist undertook the trip believing in his heart that finally the passenger pigeon had been found, for he knew that the men who had made the report had been familiar with the bird in the old days and supposedly knew the appearance of its every feather. At the end of the journey he was told that the pigeons were there and he was led out to see them. They proved to be mourning doves, a bird common in nearly all parts of Michigan and in most of the states of the Union. The disappointment was keen, and keener in this case because this was one report which seemed to have about it every mark of truth.

When I was a boy I knew the wild pigeon fairly well. It was nothing like as abundant as it had been in the years gone by, but occasionally small flocks were seen in the vicinity of my birthplace in the foothills of the Adirondack mountains in central New York. I am sorry to say that I shot some of the birds before I fully realized the value of giving protection to a vanishing race. The mourning dove I know as well as I know the English sparrow, and I think that there is no chance of confusing in my mind respecting the identity of the dove and its bigger relative, the pigeon. It is possible, though I am not sure that such is a fact, that I saw the last wild pigeon reported in Illinois. Others may have been seen since that time within the borders of the state, but if so I have not seen their appearance reported.

At five o'clock on the morning of a late April day, fifteen years ago, I went into Lincoln park, Chicago, to look for migrating birds which had dropped down into the pleasure ground from their night flight in order to rest and feed. I had just entered the park when my attention was attracted to a large bird perched on the limb of a maple tree and facing the sun, which was just rising out of Lake Michigan. My heart gave a sort of leap for I recognized it instantly as the passenger pigeon, a bird of which I had not seen a living specimen for at least twelve years.

Then instantly I began to doubt and thought that my eyes must be mistaken and that the atmosphere was magnifying the bird and that what was before me was really a mourning dove. I drew closer and then I knew there was no possibility of deception. Before me was a beautiful specimen of the male passenger pigeon with the sun striking full on the burnished feathers of his throat. I stood within 15 yards of the bird for fully half an hour and then it left the maple and went in arrowy flight down the lake shore drive toward the heart of the city. I have often wondered since what was its fate.

Theodore Roosevelt is deeply interested in the outcome of the search for surviving members, if such there may be, of the passenger pigeon tribe. Mr. Roosevelt knew the bird when he was a boy and in his trips afield he always has kept a watchful eye open for a possible sight of a specimen of the species now feared to be extinct.

When Mr. Roosevelt was president of the United States he occasionally went to a wild spot in Virginia where he owned a cabin. He called the place Pine Knot. While there one day he saw what he believed to be nine wild pigeons. It would be perfectly proper today for a man who saw as many pigeons as this together to shoot one of them—one only—in order to prove beyond peradventure that the tribe still has existence. When one simply reports the appearance of a pigeon or of a flock of pigeons everyone doubts very naturally the truth of the tale, holding that the mourning dove has been again mistaken for its cousin bird.

President Roosevelt did not have a gun with him on the occasion of his meeting with what he thought were wild pigeons. If he had he probably would have shot one of them. He told no one except a few scientists and a few friends of his discovery. He knew as well as anyone else did that in the absence of the proof furnished by a bird in the flesh it would be said at once that he made the common error. No one knows positively today whether the nine birds which the president saw were or were not passenger pigeons. Every time that Mr. Roosevelt has been to Pine Knot since he has hoped for another sight of the birds which made him glad some years ago.

John Burroughs heard from his friend, Theodore Roosevelt, that the nine pigeons had been seen in Virginia. Burroughs believed the story because he knew how accurate an observer of nature his friend the president was and is. The stories of the pigeons in Virginia led Mr. Burroughs to make inquiries at once in the counties in New York state west of the lower Hudson valley in the old line of flight of the migrating pigeon armies of years ago. There the farmers and the country sports men told Mr. Burroughs that they had seen pigeons that spring, at least 1,000 of them, but that none of them had been shot. Mr. Burroughs was inclined to believe the report, for the men who made it were old-time sportsmen and supposedly knew the bird well. However, there is no positive proof today that the New York farmers and gunners were not just as much mistaken as were the old-timers who told the story of the return of the pigeons to the upper Michigan country.

In The Auk, a quarterly journal of ornithology published by the American Ornithologists' union, there recently appeared a paper by Albert Hazen Wright on "Some Early Records of the Passenger Pigeon." In this paper are reported some of the first accounts which ever saw print of the pigeon multitudes of the early days. When one reads them it seems almost incredible that a bird species which numbered its individuals almost, it would appear, by the million millions could ever disappear from the face of the earth.

The account of the great pigeon flocks which is most familiar to the people of the country is that written by John James Audubon, the naturalist. It seems from Mr. Wright's paper, however, that a century and a half before Audubon was born records were made of the immense numbers of the birds which were seen in America. The earliest writers called them turtle doves. Mr. Wright quotes from the Jesuit father, Le Jeune who in the year 1637 likened the American Indians to the pigeons. "Our savages are always saying; they resemble the migratory birds of their own country. In one season turtle doves are sometimes found in such abundance that the end of their army cannot be seen when they are flying in a body."

Mr. Wright found another reference to the immense numbers of the pigeons in the writings of another Jesuit father in the year 1671. The observation was made at Cayuga lake in New York state. "Four leagues from here I saw by the side of a river within a very limited space eight or nine extremely fine salt springs. Many snares are set there for catching pigeons, from seven to eight hundred being often taken at once." Another father of the church in the latter part of the seventeenth century writes of the passenger pigeons of the St. Lawrence country: "Among the birds of every variety to be found here it is to be noted that pigeons abound in such numbers that this year one man killed 132 at a single shot."

Within the last five or six years reports have come of the reappearance of the pigeon in Missouri, Oklahoma, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and Virginia and perhaps from some other states. In no instance has proof been adduced that the real passenger pigeon, the bird of the old time, was the species seen. The disappearance of the flocks which once covered the sky as with a cloud is one of the mysteries of nature. Man's persecution of course had much, if not everything, to do with the annihilation of the species, but it would seem that something else, disease perhaps, must be held accountable at least in part for the dying out of a noble race of feathered game.

He Was Too Wise

Dr. Harvey W. Wiley, the government's food expert, said at a recent dinner in Washington:

"But in our search for pure foods we may go too far. Thus a lady entered a grocer's the other day and said:

"Have you got any currants?"

"The clerk, a college graduate, replied:

"Yes, madam, we have very fine Corinths, or small dried grapes from the Greek town of that name—currants, you know, is the corrupted form. How many will you have?"

"None at all if they are corrupted," muttered the lady, "I belong to a pure food league."

"I suppose so," said the Englishman.

"I suppose so. Very sensible, too. There's nothing like foreign travel to improve the mind and—er—lighten a heavy heart."

A Theory.

"Why is it necessary for people who become performers to begin taking music lessons at a very early age?"

"Because if they wait till their musical sense is developed they won't be able to stand the sound of their own practicing."

Why Their Mourning Garb?

Englishman Gets Explanation As to Reason for Traveling Americans Wearing Black.

The liner pitched wildly in the winter storm, and an Englishman in the smoking room, as he gravely wiped a cup of overturned coffee from his shirt bosom, said to an American:

"I have traveled a great deal, and I have met a great many Americans in my travels, and what puzzles me is why so many of you wear mourning."

The American, who was in mourning himself, said:

"We don't at home."

"No," said the Englishman, "I know you don't at home. That's why I am puzzled. For, when you travel, the greater part of you travel in black."

"Well," said the American, as he flicked with his black-edged handkerchief some ash from his black pantaloons, "I don't mind telling you, sir, that in my case it is a legacy from an aunt that I am traveling on. All my life it has been my ambition to do Europe, but I'm only a clerk, just a $16 clerk, and the European proposition always looked impossible. But as soon as I inherited this legacy, I set aside $500 for a European tour, and here I am. Maybe, sir, the many Americans in mourning that you have noticed abroad are in the same case as myself."

STATE NEWS

Maple Rapids.—William J. Cusick, who mysteriously disappeared from the old farm home of his parents, near Hubbardston, Ionia county, about fifteen years ago, and who had not since been heard from by his relatives, has been located at Eureka, Cal. Cusick's parents died and he was sought far and wide that the estate might be settled. He was finally located through a Catholic priest at Arcata, Cal. Cukick is regarded as eccentric and some doubt is expressed as to whether he will return to assist in probating the estate.

Ann Arbor.—The meeting of the guild committee of the Baptist state convention and the trustees of the local Baptist church in this city was held, and while differences of opinion were admitted by those who attended, it is claimed that none of these differences was heated and that there were no sore spots when the meeting was over. They unanimously approved the resolution to the effect that the best interests of the church and the guild demanded that the work of both organizations should come under one head.

Grand Rapids.—Pale with fright, and with blood streaming from a cut over his left eye, Eugene Epsey, a night clerk in the Philabaum hotel, ran into the police station and told a story of having been held up and robbed of $21.65 in the hotel office by two masked men. The young man was closely questioned by the officers and as he was forced to repeat his story forgot some of the details. He was finally accused of stealing the money and confessed and told where he had hidden the money.

Muskegon.—Mary Matteo, a fifteen-year-old Italian girl, was assaulted and seriously injured by Paul Creazzo, another Italian, of twenty-one years. Miss Matteo was in a grocery store when Creazzo entered and started an argument, and becoming angered at some of the girl's replies, grabbed her and commenced to choke her. He also pushed her down and then kicked her in the neck. An officer was called, but before he arrived the man fled. Later he gave himself up.

Grand Rapids.—Anthony Carmack, an inmate of the Soldiers' Home, is on trial in the federal court here charged with violating the government liquor laws. The offense with which he is charged is that of preparing and selling a tablet, which, if dissolved, made an intoxicating drink. The contention of the prosecutor is that Carmack did a thriving business in Mecosta county and other "dry" territory last summer.

Olivet.—One of the largest horticultural meetings ever held in Eaton county was the round-up of fruit growers here. Representations of the fruit growing interests of Eaton, Barry and Calhoun counties were present, and spraying and the general care of orchards and small fruits were the chief topics discussed.

Grand Rapids.—His leg crushed by a falling tree, Henry Eberhardt, aged fifty, crawled more than half a mile from the woods to the highway, where he became unconscious and was found by a passerby. When a physician arrived he found that the leg had been fractured three times below the knee.

Cadillac.—Fears are entertained by Will Corwin of this city as to the safety of his brother, Elasco Corwin, aged sixty, who has not been seen or heard from in a month, when he left for Grand Rapids and Niles. He hasn't appeared at either place.

Bay City.—Walter Cooper and Ignatz Ratczak were found guilty in the circuit court of highway robbery. The two men invited a Syrian woman, who was peddling through the country, to ride with them. She accepted and they took from her $50 in cash and a quantity of cheap jewelry.

Ionia.—The Ionia school board has adopted strong resolutions approving the bill now before the state legislature putting a ban on high school sororities. The local board urges the passage of the bill in the strongest manner possible.

Carsonville.—Collected gas caused a range explosion in the home of Roy Lee. The stove had been filled with soft coal and the family were in an adjoining room eating breakfast when the explosion took place, which completely demolished a compartment on the range and blew an iron kettle through the kitchen roof.

Ann Arbor.—President Hutchins is sending out a letter to all alumni of the University of Michigan asking them to use their influence to prevent the passage of pending legislation which, he says, would seriously cripple the university should it become law. This is the bill by which the legislature proposes to raise the tuition fees for students from outside the state to a figure which, President Hutchins asserts, will be prohibitive for such students.

Jackson.—Mass meetings here signalize the opening of the spring campaign between the "wets" and "drys." Judge A. Z. Blair of Adams county, Ohio, famous for his recent crusade against saloon selling, spoke at Masonic temple for the "dry" faction.

Cadillac.—Miss Kittie Stevens, a Grand Rapids singer, came near dying from poisoning. Miss Stevens' voice went back on her in a vaudette theater and the gargle she used was found to contain poison, some of which she swallowed accidentally, she said.

Port Huron.—Death came suddenly to Mrs. Clifford Macklow at the residence of her friend, Mrs. George Plaisted, 1831 Eleventh avenue, whom she was visiting. Mrs. Macklow, who formerly resided in this city, came here from her home in Pontiac on Saturday to visit her sisters, Mrs. Richard Wilson and Mrs. James Ludlow.

Coldwater.—Frank G. Shields pleaded guilty of taking criminal liberties with a five-year-old girl and was sentenced to two and a half years to ten years with five years recommended.

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Dr. Derby's Kidney Pills—25 and 50 cents at drug stores or we will supply you if your druggist hasn't them. Address Derby Medicine Co., Eaton Rapids, Mich.

Railroad and Dancing.

Stuart C. Leake, who has a lot to do with managing a big railroad in Richmond, Va., is noted as one of the best dancers in the south.

One night something went wrong with the brahch of the road over which Leake has supervision.

"Where in thunder was Leake?" asked the president of the road next morning.

"Leading a German," said the general manager.

"Which," commented the president, "was a dirty Irish trick."—Popular Magazine.

A Card.

We, the undersigned, do hereby agree to refund the money on a 50-cent bottle of Greene's Warranted Syrup of Tar if it fails to cure your cough or cold. We also guarantee a 25-cent bottle to prove satisfactory or money refunded. Your Druggist, My Druggist, Any Druggist in Michigan.

Cause and Effect.

"Where is Bill today?"

"Bill is sick in bed."

"What's the matter with him?"

"Well, you know that girl of his thinks he doesn't use tobacco. Yesterday he was hurrying around the corner and he ran right into the girl. He had a chew in his mouth."

"Yes, yes; go on."

"There were two things to do—hurry by or swallow."

"Well?"

"Bill talked to her for five minutes."

Where Surgery Fails Short.

Surgery, said Simeon Ford, at a dinner in New York, "accomplishes wonders nowadays. Hearts are sewed up; the appendix is removed; the large intestine is done away with. But—"

The noted humorist smiled.

"But will the time ever come when surgery will be able to remove the cheek of a young man or the jaw of an old woman?"—New York Sun.

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Read not to contradict and confute, not to believe and take for granted, not to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider.—Bacon.

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Thousands of Consumptives die every year. Consumption results from neglected cold on the lungs. Dr. Bell's Pine-Tar-Honey Oil will cure these colds. Just rub it into the chest and draw out the inflammation.

Barmaids in South Australia.

South Australia is suffering from a barmaid famine. Two years ago barmaids were abolished in that state by act of parliament. No more would be legally engaged, but those already employed could remain on condition that they registered themselves.

There are now only 400 of them left, and the competition for their services is such that their wages have jumped from 25 shillings to £3 a week. The hotels that have had to employ barmen report a considerable change for the worse in their receipts.

Professional Foresight.

"That fellow has a fearful nerve," said the dealer in firearms.

"Who is he?"

"An alienist. He says he will give me a commission on his business if I will hand his card to every insane person who comes in and buys a revolver."

Those days are lost in which we do not good; those worse and lost in which we do evil.—Cromwell.

The breath of scandal is responsible for much breezy conversation.

COLDS

Munyon's Cold Remedy Relieves the head, throat and lungs almost immediately. Checks Fevers, stops Headache and Pains of the nose, takes away all aches and pains caused by colds. It cures them and eliminate Coughs and prevents Pneumonia. Write Prof. Munyon, 53d and Jefferson Sts., Phila., Pa., for medical advice absolutely free.

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