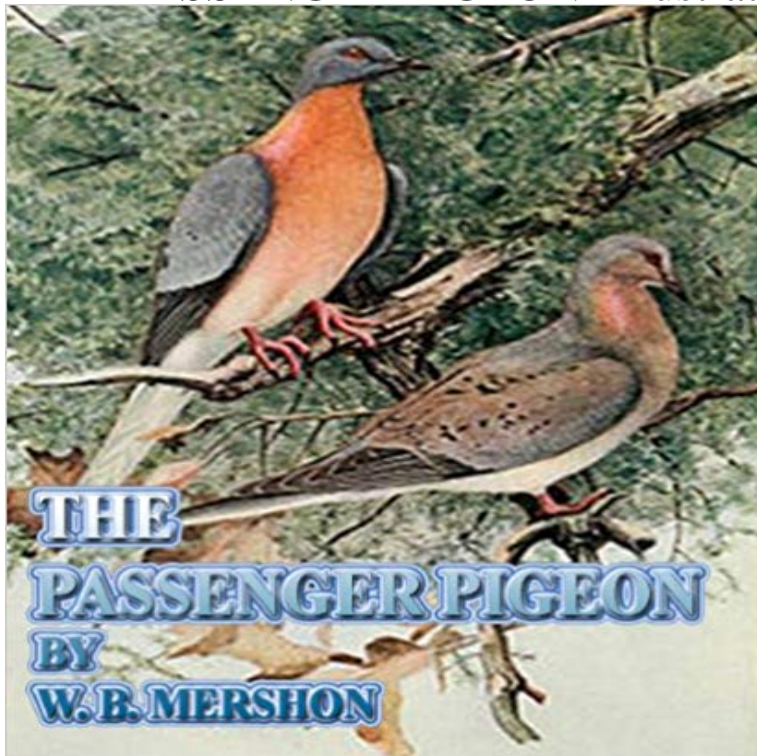


THE PASSENGER PIGEON- Illustrated



This e-book publication includes 11 illustrations. The images have been resized and optimized for a Kindle. A new table of contents with working links has been included by a publisher. This edition has been proof-read and corrected for spelling and grammatical errors. FOR the last three years I have spent most of my leisure time in collecting as much material as possible which might help to throw light on the oft-repeated query, What has become of the wild pigeons? The result of this labor of love is scarcely more than a compilation, and I am under many obligations to those who have so cheerfully assisted me. I have given them credit by name in connection with their various contributions, but I wish that I might have been able to give them the more finished and literary setting that would have been within the reach of a trained writer or scientist. I am merely a business man who is interested in the Passenger Pigeon because he loves the outdoors and its wild things, and sincerely regrets the cruel extinction of one of the most interesting natural phenomena of his own country. If I have been able to make a compilation that otherwise would not have been available for the interested reader, I need make no further apologies for the imperfect manner of my treatment of this subject. It is hard for us of an older generation to realize that as recently as 1880 the Passenger Pigeon was thronging in countless millions through large areas of the Middle West, and that in our boyhood we could find no exaggeration in the records of such earlier observers as Alexander Wilson, the ornithologist, who said that these birds associated in such prodigious numbers as almost to surpass belief, and that their numbers had no parallel among any other feathered tribes on the face of the earth; or that one of their roosts would kill the trees over thousands of acres as completely as if the whole forest had been girdled with an

ax. Audubon estimated that an average flock of these pigeons contained a billion and a quarter of birds, which consumed more than eight and a half million bushels of mast in a days feeding. They were slain by millions during the middle of the last century, and from one region in Michigan in one year three million Passenger Pigeons were killed for market, while in that roost alone as many more perished because of the barbarous methods of hunting them. They supplied a means of living for thousands of hunters, who devastated their flocks with nets and guns, and even with fire. Yet so vast were their numbers that after thirty years of observation Audubon was able to say that even in the face of such dreadful havoc nothing but the diminution of our forests can accomplish their decrease. Many theories have been advanced to account for the disappearance of the wild pigeons, among them that their migration may have been overwhelmed by some cyclonic disturbance of the atmosphere which destroyed their myriads at one blow. The big nesting of 1878 in Michigan was undoubtedly the last large migration, but the pigeons continued to nest infrequently in Michigan and the North for several years after that, and until as late as 1886 they were trapped for market or for trap-shooting. Therefore the pigeons did not become extinct in a day; nor did one tremendous catastrophe wipe them from the face of the earth. They gradually became fewer and existed for twenty years or more after the date set as that of the final extermination.

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