

## Bird Conservation in Labrador\*

BY

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IN the latter part of the eighteenth century, in the time of Cartwright, water birds swarmed along the coast of the Labrador peninsula. The Eskimos and the Indians, the polar bears and the raptorial birds served but to keep the bird colonies in healthy condition. White man is more systematic in his methods and more thorough, especially when stimulated by the expectation of financial gain, and, if conservation is not practised, he will eventually exterminate the creatures of his quest. This was true in the case of the buffalo and the passenger pigeon and the same fate awaits many other beasts and birds.

In Audubon's day the despoilers of Labrador bird rookeries plied their trade without let or hindrance. Audubon, in his visit to the southern coast in 1833, was filled with horror on observing their cruel methods and their ruthless destruction of his beloved bird life. He writes:

"See yon shallop, shyly sailing along; she sneaks like a thief, wishing, as it were, to shun the light of heaven. Under the lee of every rocky isle some one at the tiller steers her course. \* \* \* There rides the filthy thing! The afternoon is half over. Her crew have thrown their boat overboard, they enter and seat themselves, each with a rusty gun. One of them sculls the skiff towards an island, for a century past the breeding-place of myriads of Guillemots, which are now to be laid under contribution. At the approach of the vile thieves, clouds of birds rise from the rocks and fill the air around, wheeling and screaming over their enemies. Yet thousands remain in an erect posture, each covering its single egg, the hope of both parents. The reports of several muskets loaded with heavy shot are now heard, while several dead and wounded birds fall heavily on the rock, or into the water. Instantly all the sitting birds rise and fly off affrighted to their companions above, and hover in dismay over their assassins, who walk forward exultingly, and with their shouts mingling oaths and execrations. Look at them! See how they crush the chick within its shell, how they trample on every egg in their way with their huge and clumsy boots. Onward they go, and when they leave the isle, not an egg that they can find

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\*Advance chapter of "In Audubon's Labrador," by Dr. C. W. Townsend. Published by permission of the author.