



### Lethal Weapon

► IF YOU WERE to ask almost anyone who is acquainted with the tragedy of the passenger pigeon why that beautiful bird has been reduced from a primeval population of unknown millions to nothing at all, he would be very likely



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to answer at once, "Why, hunters' guns, of course!"

That would not be the correct answer at all. Unlimited massacres that went under the name of hunts did account for a great deal of the havoc, but they were not the only factor, not even the principal one. The pioneer's ax, not the hunter's gun, must bear the main responsibility.

The passenger pigeon was a woodland bird. It needed trees for nesting and for the gregarious roosting of its huge flocks. Even more it needed acorns and beechnuts for food. Longfellow takes note of this peculiar food habit in "Evangeline," where he speaks of the portentous flocks of pigeons "Darkening the sky in their flight, with naught in their craws but an acorn."

The pioneer was an enemy of the forest; or rather, he considered the forest an enemy of himself. It held land that he wanted to plow; it sheltered redskinned enemies who wanted to scalp him. So he swung his ax at the trunks of trees as he might have at the necks of stubborn foemen.

And when the pioneer stage gave way to the developmental (which often meant merely the exploitative), the early lumberman finished the job of sweeping the Eastern forests clean.

All of which meant death for the passenger pigeon. The felling of the trees robbed him of both home and food, and the multiplication of the human population at the same time increased the number of hunters who had never heard of bag limits. There may have been other factors at work, too, that we do not know about now, like epidemic diseases. At any rate, the passenger pigeon went, and went fast.

*Science News Letter, August 24, 1946*

#### AERONAUTICS

### First Flight of XB-36 Judged Excellent

► THE "X" now in the XB-36 designation of the Army's new giant bomber can be dropped soon, judging from the excellent performance in its first flight recently made. The "X" stands for "experimental."

It will stay until enough flights have been made so that all "bugs," if any, are located and corrected, and the plane is ready for production-line construction. The XP-84 Thunderbolt, the Army's newest jet-propelled fighter, has been in the air since early summer. The XS-1, designed for a trial to beat the speed

of sound, has undergone glider and diving tests in the air and is now being fitted with its rocket engines that will enable it to reach high altitudes in an atmosphere far too rare for the operation of other engines.

The XB-36, the big brother of the famous B-29, had undergone nearly two months of ground and taxi tests before it was given its first tryout in the air. Army officials pronounce the first test satisfactory. The plane remained aloft for 38 minutes, then settled safely to the runway in a performance that exceeded expectations.

The world's largest bomber is roughly 40% larger than the B-29. It is 163 feet long, has a wing-span of 230 feet, and a rudder height of over 37 feet. It is powered by six 3,000 horsepower Pratt and Whitney engines mounted on the trailing edge of the wing, three on each side of the fuselage. Each engine drives a three-bladed pusher-type propeller.

The XB-36 was built by Consolidated-Vultee Aircraft Company at Fort Worth, Texas. Design and construction were under the supervision of the Army Air Forces Materiel Command, Wright Field, Ohio. It carries a crew of 15 men, has an estimated range of 10,000 miles, and a bomb-carrying capacity of more than 30 tons.

*Science News Letter, August 24, 1946*

#### MEDICINE

### Paderewski Hospital Moves Back to Poland

► A GREAT Polish medical center, the Paderewski Hospital, which has been an institutional guest in the city of Edinburgh, Scotland, during the past five years, is now preparing to go home and do its share in the reconstruction of Poland. Its director, Dr. Antoni Jurasz, is in Washington, D. C., with a colleague, Dr. W. Koskowski, to report on a survey of the medical situation in their home country which they have just completed, and to discuss plans for the transfer of the hospital.

The Paderewski Hospital, which comprises a medical school and a research institution as well as a hospital and out-clinics, was established by the Paderewski Testimonial Fund, an agency of American Relief for Poland.

The hospital, during the war, provided medical care for thousands of Polish citizens in exile, including some overflow patients from Polish military establishments in Britain.

It is expected that (*See next page*)