

## An Hour with a Bird-Doctor.

BY FRANK HOLMFIELD.

“**W**RING its neck!”  
Such was the “cure” at one time almost universally recommended in the case of some unfortunate feathered friend whose ailment seemed at all serious.

Human nature, however, is apt to rebel against a course of treatment that, if short, sharp, and sure, deprives us of a pet whose companionship would be sadly missed. And when it occurred to someone that the study of birds' ailments would form an interesting and, at the same time, a lucrative calling, lovers of all kinds of feathered beauties were delighted. Nowadays there is hope for almost all serious cases of injuries or ailments of birds. The professional bird-doctor, with his medicine case and surgical instruments—and also his little bill!—finds plenty to do in alleviating pain and curing disease.

Perhaps the busiest practitioner amongst ailing feathered pets is Mr. E. W. Little, of Blandford Street, W., who might boast of having, during a long and successful career, the most aristocratic of bird society as patients, for his practice largely lies throughout the residential quarter of which Park Lane forms the centre, and where the fashion of keeping winged pets has been growing steadily during the past decade or so. The sweetly warbling canary, the comical big-billed toucan, or the talking parrot may be

found nowadays in most West end houses. Indeed, not so very long ago there was some talk of holding a pet bird show, and it may be that during next season such a function will become an established institution, just as are cat and dog exhibitions.

The writer recently paid a visit to Mr. Little's surgery and operating-room in the interests of readers of *THE STRAND MAGAZINE*, and a most instructive hour was spent in witnessing the skilful treatment rendered by

London's busiest bird-doctor to a number of winged creatures, which included almost every feathered form to be seen as the pet of a home.

The ailments to which bird-flesh is heir are surprisingly numerous. Phthisis is the greatest and most insidious enemy to be dealt with. Parrots especially are liable to this terrible disease. Most of the birds of that species imported into England suffer from its attacks. Mr. Little made the surprising statement that out of every fifty parrots brought to this country only five manage to escape

the ravages of phthisis. It spreads like wildfire where birds are placed together in large numbers. Mr. Little related particulars of the hard case of an importer who lost £70 worth of birds owing to having inadvertently introduced into his establishment a parrot suffering from that disease. If treated in its early stages phthisis in birds is curable. Original from



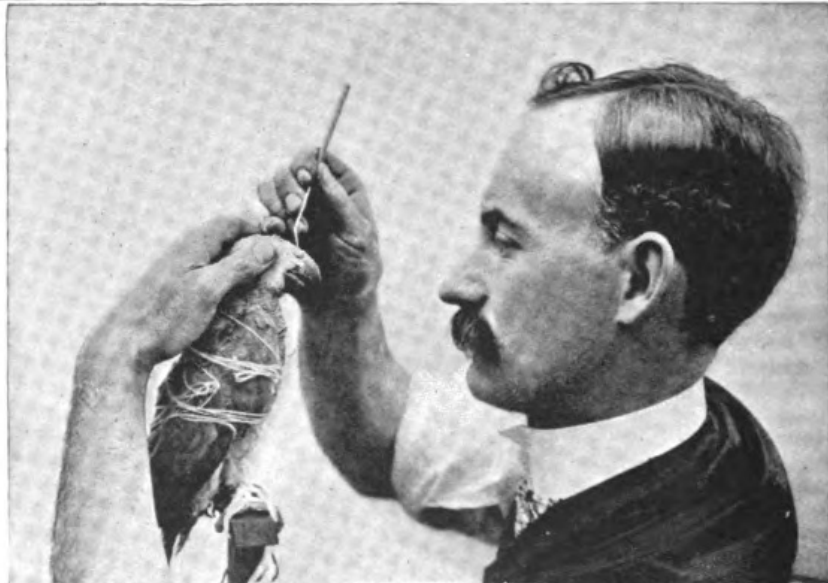
From a | GIVING A BIRD A DOSE OF MEDICINE. | Photo.



CLEANING A DUCK WITH OIL AFTER  
From a] AN OPERATION. [Photo.

Enteric is another scourge amongst birds, being very contagious, and to which seed-eating birds are particularly liable. Pet canaries are a constant source of worry, their delicate throats rendering complaints such as colds, asthma, and inflammation always ready to attack them.

The writer, amongst other interesting medicinal and surgical treatment, witnessed the



REMOVING A HORNY GROWTH FROM  
A PARROT'S BEAK.  
From a Photo.



From a]

GIVING A TOUCAN A PILL.

[Photo.

rather delicate operation of administering a pill to a refractory pet toucan, which had evidently made up its mind that it would *not* be doctored. Although this creature will swallow a grape whole in the ordinary way without, as it were, turning a feather, it seemed on this occasion to instinctively understand that the juicy fruit at first offered by the doctor contained something more sinister than seeds; and again and again, no matter how carefully the pill was concealed inside the grape, the sagacious

bird would not "bolt" it, but very gravely proceeded to eject the pill from its capacious beak and then swallow the grape, exhibiting at the same time an almost human expression of the eye, as though it would say, "You can't fool me!" Finally the doctor was compelled to resort to more ruthless measures by ramming the pill down the toucan's throat with

an instrument.





From a

CHLOROFORMING A PARROT.

[Photo.]

The photographer has succeeded in snapping the scene, including the miserable expression of the toucan's eye, as though it had realized that the doctor had got the better of it, at last!

Another very refractory patient was a parrot that suffered from a horny growth over one of its nostrils. As soon as the doctor touched the bird it seemed to realize that something very unpleasant was about to happen, and it acted accordingly. It indulged in "the finest flow of language ever heard," and, as it had evidently received most of its lingual education on board ship, the language was certainly not of the kind usually indulged in in polite society. Its struggles were absolutely terrific. In the end the creature had to be wrapped around with a length of thin twine to prevent its mad wing-flapping. Then, after a good deal of persuasion on the part of the doctor, "Poll" allowed the operation to be performed, and she was carried out of the room shouting, "I want a bit o' bread!" "I want a bit o' bread!" together with remarks of a less Parliamentary nature.

Although Mr. Little does not care about employing chloroform, surgical cases frequently occur in which the use of that drug becomes very necessary. There is a certain risk in placing birds under its influence. To minimize that risk a special preparation has been introduced, and this has the effect of rendering the bird to be operated upon unconscious of pain, with a minimum danger of the drug proving fatal. We give an illustration showing how the anæsthetic is

administered to a valuable parrot, which was about to be operated upon for the removal of a tumour.

Canaries, being naturally fragile and nearly always delicate in our climate, are a class of patient to which the bird-doctor gives special study and attention. They form, as a rule, the larger portion of his *clientèle*, for, as drawing-room pets, they are by far the greater favourites of the winged world. The treatment accorded them has to be of the most delicate description, whilst the handling

of their bodies for various ailments is in itself an operation demanding the utmost care, as an inadvertent squeeze might cause their death. The affection showered by owners of canaries upon their little pets is often quite touching; many ladies making it a stipulation that they are present whilst any necessary operation is being carried out. Tears are shed freely on such occasions, and joy becomes manifest as soon as the poor little birdies are pronounced "out of danger."



PUTTING SPLINTS ON A CANARY'S BROKEN LEG.

We are enabled to reproduce the photograph of a treasured pet in the form of a canary whose leg had been broken by the fall of its cage from a first-floor window-sill to an area below. The difficulties in the



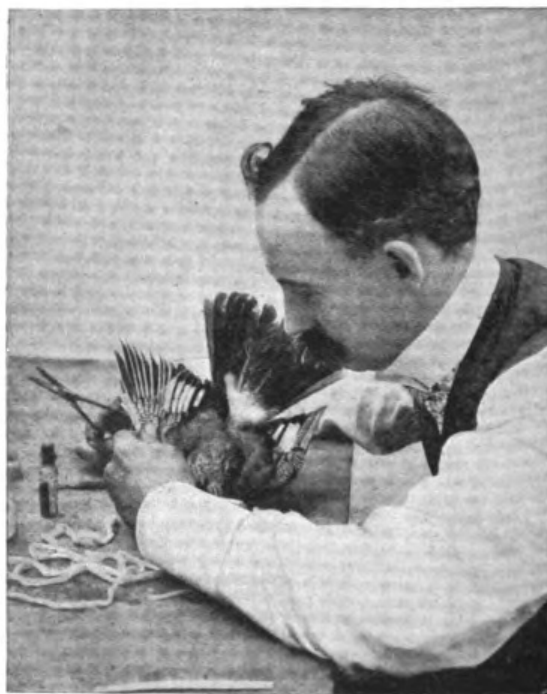
TAKING SCALES FROM A PIGEON'S LEG.  
*From a Photo.*

way of making a successful "splice" are enormous, the bird naturally pecking away at the splints or bandage until it loosened. But Mr. Little has solved the problem. His method is a professional secret, and we may not describe it. Yet the system he employs is so effective that the injured bird will not even attempt to remove the bandage, and the leg is thus allowed to become as sound as before the break. The instance of clever bird surgery shown turned out, fortunately, an excellent cure, and the canary is now as strong on its legs as ever. Here it may be said that the bones of the legs or wings of a bird are those which, by careful surgical treatment, may be set—a broken breast-bone is almost invariably a hopeless injury, to which the bird must succumb.

Cage birds are great sufferers from the overgrowth of claws, which if not seen to in time may result in permanent injury. In gripping the perches the points of overgrown claws are apt to scrape the lower part of the leg, causing sores which, in time, will render the bird a cripple. The doctor's assistance in good time prevents a great deal of unnecessary suffering.

A very delicate operation is the removal of old scales from pigeons' claws, but the process never fails to improve the appearance of a bird, especially when the pigeon is intended for exhibition at a show.

There are many other ailments and injuries which are treated from time to time by the bird-doctor, but we have given,



FIXING A BROKEN WING WITH WIRE.  
*From a Photo.*

perhaps, a sufficient number of instances to show that the existence of such a profession means the alleviation of much suffering amongst the denizens of the feathered world.