

A SNAPSHOT.

(Photo: E. Landor, Eating.)

CHAPTER XXIX.

CAT PHOTOGRAPHY FOR AMATEURS.

ALL lovers of the cat who are also amateur photographers must have seen with envious admiration the lovely cat pictures by Madame Ronner, the more racy and amusing sketches by Louis Wain, and the many beautiful photographs which so greatly enhance the instructive and pictorial value of this "Book of the Cat."

To the amateur wishing to take up this fascinating, though somewhat difficult, branch of photographic art, I venture to offer a few suggestions.

The subject naturally divides itself into two distinct branches—the commercial and the artistic. By the "commercial" I mean all photographs taken with the special aim of showing the shape and points of the cat from the fancier's, owner's, or purchaser's point of view. In the "artistic," I include all those pictures where the cat is used as a model only.

In either kind of work almost any sort of camera and lens will do, providing it will yield a fair definition and admit of rapid exposures. If one possesses a portrait lens

all the better. At all events use a lens which will give you good definition at a large aperture. A good make of roller-blind shutter is an important accessory, with a sufficient length of tubing to the pneumatic release to enable one to move about freely while holding the ball and to get close up to the cats while making either time or instantaneous exposures. The camera stand should be very firm and rigid.

I like best to work in the open air, my studio being the small open run of my cattery. If the light is too direct or strong I diffuse it by stretching light blue art muslin curtains above the table or stand upon which the cats are arranged. These curtains run with rings upon cords stretched from the boundary walls on each side, so that they may be moved in any way the lighting may require. For background a dark plush curtain will be found useful. Avoid figured backgrounds, as they detract from the value and crispness of the cats and accessories. An example of what I mean will be seen in my picture on page 158 of the present work,

where the feathers in the hat, one of the *motives* of the composition, are almost lost in the scrolls of the curtain used for background.

Three things are absolutely necessary to successful photography of cats for either commercial or artistic purposes—time, patience, and an unlimited number of good *quick* plates. Of all animals the cat is possibly the most unsatisfactory sitter should we attempt by force to secure the pose we desire. By coaxing we can generally get what we wish. Patience is the keynote of success. Before commencing, make up your mind as to what points you wish to show; then pose your cat gently and wait patiently until the pose becomes easy. She may jump down or take a wrong pose or go to sleep a dozen times or more, but never mind, give plenty of time. It is here where patience tells. Wait and coax until you see just what you desire, then release the shutter and make the exposure. At this point never hesitate or think twice—especially with kittens—or the desired pose may be gone, and will possibly cost you hours of waiting again to secure it.

Before photographing a cat for its general appearance or for any special points, it is essential to have it thoroughly groomed and got up as carefully as for show. Speaking generally, the coat of a long-haired cat should never be roughened; it altogether spoils the shape of the animal, and does not in any way improve the appearance of length, quality, or texture of the coat. In all cats where their markings are one of their chief points—such as tabbies and tortoiseshells, etc.—this roughening should be specially avoided. There is, possibly, one exception to this advice, and that is in the case of smokes, where it may be, and sometimes is, desirable to turn back a small patch of the fur to show the quality and purity of the silver under-coat. In such cases the turning back must be done only for this purpose, and in such a natural way as not to interfere with the general flow of the fur or the shape of the cat. In posing a cat, it is well to remember its faults as well as its good points, so that the former may be hidden

as much as possible and the latter displayed to the best advantage. Let us take this somewhat extreme example: A friend has a domestic pet—a so-called Persian, but with weasel head, long back legs and tail, large ears, small eyes, short coat, but some slight pretence to a frill. What can we do? To take him in profile will result in a very sorry caricature of the noble Persian; so we coax pussy to bend her back by sitting on her hind legs, and so partly hiding them as well as apparently shortening her back, inducing her also to curl her long and scanty tail round her feet. We brush out the ear tufts, if she has any, and press up the fur at the base of the ears, for this will tend to make them look smaller. Having placed the camera well in front of and nearly on a level with the cat, so as to foreshorten the nose and head, while showing what frill there is, a sharp squeaking sound will make pussy open her eyes to their full extent; we press the ball, the exposure is made, and we have secured a fairly presentable photograph of our friend's perchance charming pet, yet most indifferent Persian cat.

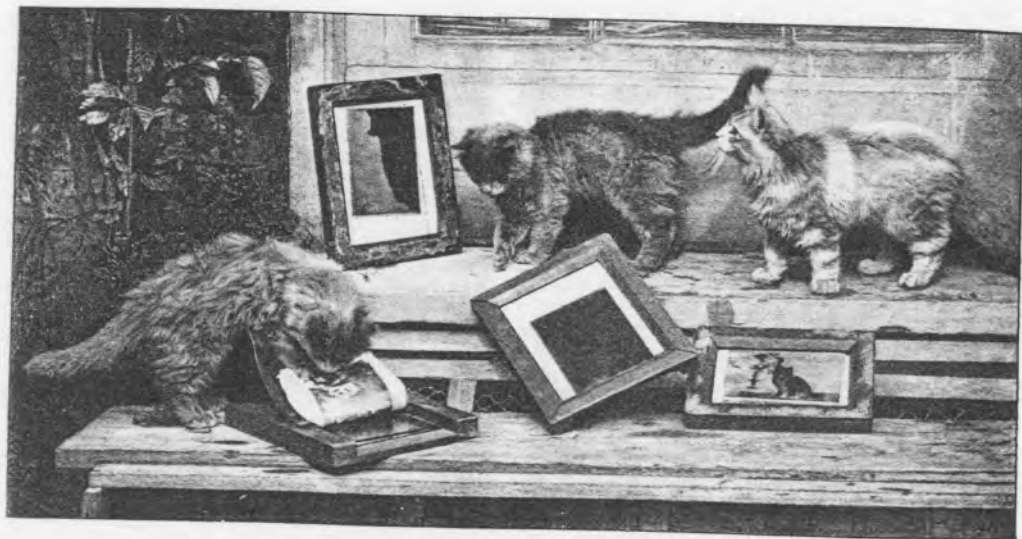
A few good examples of cats taken for the purpose of showing points should prove useful, especially to the novice, and many such examples are to be found in this present work on the cat—for instance: p. 29, "Litter of Siamese Kittens"; p. 100, "Champion Jimmy"; p. 138, "Star Duvals"; p. 139, "Omar"; p. 145, "A Perfect Chinchilla"; and p. 150, "Dossie." With these examples and the many others that are to be found scattered through the pages of "The Book of the Cat," the would-be photographer of the cat for her show points should have little difficulty in setting up a standard to work to, and by patience and perseverance succeed in attaining it.

Turning now to the more artistic side of cat photography, we find our real difficulties begin, for in photographing for the showing of points we seldom have to deal with more than one cat at a time. It is when we attempt deliberately to pose two or more cats or kittens, to carry out a preconceived idea, that our real troubles begin, and also that the

patient skill of the amateur wins its best reward. Looking through the pages of "The Book of the Cat," we find many good examples of how the cat should be used in picture making. The reproductions of Madame Ronner's charming pictures show how they may be handled with palette and brush; but, alas! here we photographers labour under an immense disadvantage. However artistic our taste, however good and pretty our intended composition may be, we cannot, as the artist with pencils and brushes can, make individual sketches of pussies in the different positions needed and bring them together in the finished picture. Whether we use two or more cats, they must each be kind enough to take the pose we desire simultaneously; hence our

and so hope to make a picture. Accident does occasionally present us with something worth having, but far more often it offers us results only fit for the waste-paper basket.

Before commencing, be sure you have an *idea* to work out in your picture, and of the lines you hope to follow in giving it expression. If possible, make a rough sketch—no matter how rough—of this idea, showing the position not only of the cats, but also of the accessories needed. Be careful to keep the composition simple and not to overcrowd it. This sketch will greatly assist you in arranging your picture and posing your cats. Before you attempt to pose the cats it is absolutely necessary that all accessories should be fixed so that they cannot be knocked over, or the cats



AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS.

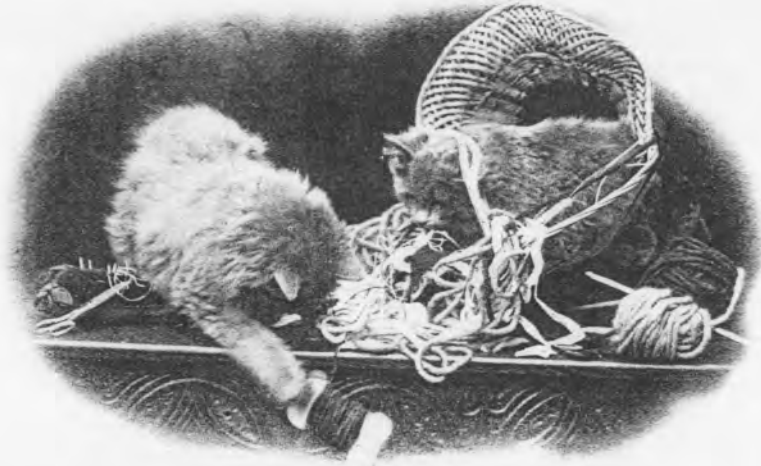
(Photo: Mrs. S. F. Clarke.)

greater difficulty. However, the illustrations on pages 1, 37, 49, 88, 128, 199, and many others indicate the wide field open to the photographer with a little taste and vast patience. In this class of photography it is of no use to go to work in a haphazard fashion, snapshotting our cats in all kinds of positions, trusting to mere luck to yield something worth keeping; then to give a sounding title to it,

will get frightened and be useless as sitters for a long time to come. That cats are nervous should never be forgotten, and any chance of startling them strictly guarded against. When your background, table, and accessories are all in their places, put your camera in position, arrange the picture on the ground-glass, and see that you get all well within the size of the plate; it is safer to have the picture

on the ground-glass a little smaller than the plate will allow, as, if one tries to get it to its utmost size, one may find in developing that one of the models has moved back on the table an inch more, perhaps, than calculated upon, and as a result have half a cat on one

The rough sketch of the cat in the basket was first prepared, and the brush attached to it in such a manner that it would move freely up and down for about an inch or so; then it and the rest of the accessories were *firmly* arranged upon the table. The cat in the



PLAYING AT WORK.

(Photo: Mrs. S. F. Clarke.)

side instead of a whole one. The background, however, should be large enough to fully cover the ground-glass. Focus the foreground and nearer accessories, stop down to F. 8, set the shutter to about $\frac{1}{30}$ to $\frac{1}{60}$ second (according to light and nature of subject), insert the slide containing the rapid plate, draw the flap *under* the dark cloth, and if at all windy tie this last to the camera. Now you are ready for the cats and a suitable moment of light.

As I have already remarked, I do my photographing out of doors. I therefore choose a bright warm day, when there are plenty of fleecy clouds about; so that by taking advantage of their position in front of the sun, and by the help afforded by my muslin curtains, I am able to modify the harsh contrasts incidental to working in broad daylight.

"The Artist" (page 128) was, perhaps, one of the most difficult subjects I have attempted. Without apparent life and go such a subject would be worthless.

basket was then made to take her place, but keep in she would not; as soon as the brush moved to attract the artist paw, out she would jump; so for the time she was allowed to run, until the artist was posed and an endeavour made to infuse life into him by moving the brush. But it was "no go"; sit down he would, until the introduction of a feather woke him up. His companion was then slipped into the basket; but, alas! success was not yet. For about two hours we had to begin over and over again, when at last the pose of both kittens was obtained simultaneously and the picture taken in $\frac{1}{60}$ of a second. Such a subject with the kitten tamely sitting at the handle of the brush would not in any way have realised my intention.

I must again point out the great convenience, especially in this class of work, of the extra length of tubing, which allows you, while holding the release in one hand, to pose your models with the other, and then expose without the

fatal loss of time that would be entailed by having to step back to the camera or by giving the word to an assistant.

A subject suggestive of a picture will often turn up when least expected and, at the time, impossible to take. I always make a note of these, and they come as a basis for future use and to be worked out at leisure. "Thieves" (page 79) was suggested by noting the fondness of two of my kittens for melon, "Amateur Photographers" by a group of kittens playing round some photo frames put out to print, and "Mischief" (page 88) by a frolicsome kitten overturning a small bottle of ink and playing with the little black pool.

Isochromatic plates should be used in all cases where there are mixed colours in the cats' furs, as in tortoiseshells, brown tabbies, etc. ; mixtures of red, black, and yellow cannot be truly rendered with ordinary plates. The only extra precaution necessary in their use is *absolute* freedom from actinic light in the dark room. Double ruby glass in the window, or, if artificial light is used, an extra thickness of red tissue paper round the developing lamp, will answer the purpose and make everything safe. With this little extra care, nice crisp negatives are obtained, while the relative value

of the red, yellow, and black seen in our furry friends are well defined in the resulting picture.

Cats used as models should, if possible, be in the pink of condition—the prettier the model the more pleasant the picture. The best time to photograph a cat is about one hour after a light meal. Immediately after a meal most cats want to wash and sleep. A hungry cat or kitten makes the worst of sitters ; its thoughts are too much turned towards the inner man. Never overtax your cats, give them plenty of rest during a sitting, and never lose your temper and attempt by force to secure a pose ; it only frightens the cats, and can never result in satisfactory work. Time and patience should always in the end achieve what you desire.

Artistic photography having been for some years a pleasant and recreative hobby with me, I can assure my friends who keep cats for pleasure, and those who find pleasure in the camera, that by uniting the two hobbies they will discover a field of enjoyment and artistic possibilities which neither pursuit alone can afford. To all such the preceding notes are offered as humble finger-posts, indicating rather than assuring the road to success.

LUCY CLARKE.



IN THE STUDIO.

(Photo: Mrs. S. F. Clarke.)