

# Illustrating Books with Photographs

By Stanley Clisby Arthur



With Illustrations by the Author

*EDITOR'S NOTE.—The illustrations shown with this article are a portion of those used in a larger size to illustrate a handsome quarto volume of jingle verses by Ella Bentley Arthur, entitled "Sonny Boy's Day at the Zoo," published by The Century Company of New York. The pictures are all copyrighted by The Century Company, and it is through their kindness that we are permitted to place them before our readers in this form. The book mentioned above contains some seventy-five similar, although larger, illustrations; not to mention a number of handsome initials such as the one used in the opening paragraph below. The volume, aside from its high educational value, is one that will delight the heart of any child, and our readers will be pleased with it as an example of what can be done in the matter of successfully illustrating a book by photography. The price of the book is quite nominal, ninety cents, we believe. It can be ordered direct from the publishers or through any bookstore.*



HY is photography not ranked as the principal illustrative medium of the day? This is a question that has been discussed considerably among those who are interested in making pictures by the aid of the lens and sensitized plate. It is only recently that photography has really come into its own and today it is one of the greatest forces in education and scientific research, while its right to be called one of the elements of Art is no longer seriously disputed. Likewise, it has had a most spectacular rise in the past half dozen years by completely revolutionizing the stage through the motion picture.

This seems, at a cursory glance, to be a basis upon which to work out a problem showing conclusively that photography can be made the illustrative medium of the future and to serve as a warning to the knights of brush and pencil that it would be well to

begin familiarizing themselves with the various aberrations and 'isms of lenses; the chromatic qualities of emulsions; rising and falling fronts, and similar deep mysteries of the photo craft. But the artists frankly ridicule the idea that photography will ever illustrate anything more than current news events, books of travel and an occasional calendar or two, while many photographers themselves admit the belief that photography will never become a force in illustrating fiction. They maintain that photographic art has its boundaries and that it can never, through certain physical limitations, invade the pictorial field of current fiction.

I, for one, cannot wholly agree with this viewpoint. A department head of the one of the largest publishing houses in this country (a firm that makes a specialty of fiction and gift books lavishly illustrated), while agreeing that pho-

tographic illustration has not yet been successfully demonstrated, wrote me, in answer to my query: "I doubt if the camera can ever supplant the brush and pencil, though progress in photography is so great and so rapid that it would be foolish to predict any limitations to the art."

An authority in another large publishing house replied, in answer to the same question: "I do not see why this plan (photography) may not be employed with success in the illustration of more and more books as time goes on, though, of course, this method of illustration will never replace the work of illustrators. Photography seems to be largely successful in books where outdoor illustrations are helpful. When it is a matter of careful character study, the artist's fine work comes in."

These two excerpts and opinions are characteristic of the attitude of publishers of books on this photographic illustration question. That books of travel, poetry, and technical works have been so illustrated; that such magazines as *The World's Work*, *The Garden Magazine*, *Country Life in America*, etc., are almost entirely illustrated by photography, shows that the cause is advancing; that a photograph is not a curiosity among the publishers, and all that they will need, to become converts to photographic illustrations of fiction, is a series of photographs that will truly illustrate.

The Editor of CAMERA CRAFT has asked me to write an article on illustrating books with photographs because of the fact that a juvenile book I illustrated in this manner was not only published by a leading house, but became a "best seller" as well. Juvenile books (I speak only of those that have become commercially successful) are difficult to write. There is an indefinable something in the favorite ones that defies successful imitation.

In the illustration of this type KANGAROO—THE GREAT JUMPER FROM AUSTRALIA of book the same difficulties are experienced, for those artists who can draw successfully for children are few and far between.

To make my viewpoint clear, I must, perforce, take my own book, "Sonny Boy's Day at the Zoo," for an example and explain how it was conceived and carried out so as to successfully invade this most difficult field. The start was made from one point that registers a strong vote for things photographic—realism.

My little son was born just outside the gates that shut in the great wild animal collection of the New York Zoological Park, better known as the Bronx Zoo. Perhaps his earliest impressions were of being wheeled in his perambu-



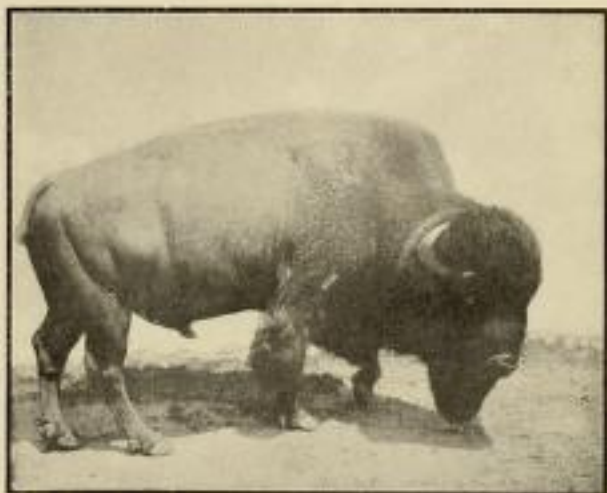


## ILLUSTRATING BOOKS WITH PHOTOGRAPHY

bulator past the bars behind which fierce animals stared curiously at his among his puffs and laces; and when he grew to the age where he could voice his sentiments, he demanded daily to be taken to the wonderful playground where he was making friends and comrades of such creatures as the average child holds in awe.

It was while watching the joy that our own little son took in his intimate companionship with these various animals that Mrs. Arthur, who wrote the rhymes for the "Sonny Boy" book, and I conceived the idea of bringing the zoo to the children (reversing the old formula of Mohammed and the mountain) who were not so fortunately situated as our own boy, and who could not behold this wonderful menagerie with their own eyes.

"Sonny Boy's Day at the Zoo" was the result. It was not a new idea. Many books have been published of zoos and children who visited them. They have all been profusely illustrated by brush and pencil. Some, from a zoological standpoint, were good; others had pictures by artists who drew largely on their imagination, and the results frequently showed forms of animals that were grotesque in their misconception. Many of these drawings were evolved—like the old professor's elephant—from the artist's inner consciousness.



BUFFALO—THE MIGHTY BISON OF THE AMERICAN PLAINS



CAMEL—THE DESERT ANIMAL FROM ASIA



TIGER—THE STRIPED JUNGLE CAT OF ASIA

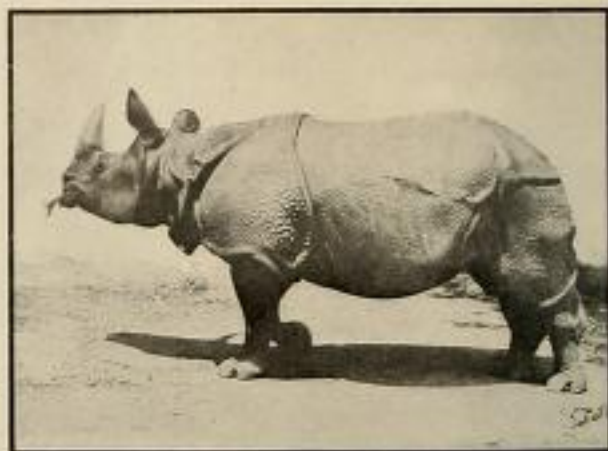
I feel that the instantaneous hit "Sonny Boy" made was due to the realistic note it struck. The Sonny Boy of the book was a real youngster; the zoo was real; the wild animals were real, and there was no surer way to record these

realities than by the camera, therefore the pictures were real. Sonny Boy was photographed in front of thirty of the different wild beasts and birds; each of the animal subjects was separately pictured, while a head of each animal was used as an initial piece, and the verses written.

Having registered our idea in tangible form, we proceeded to market it. Prior to submitting the "dummy," I endeavored to learn from publishers how such a book would be received. The mention of the word "photographic" did not arouse any great degree of enthusiasm among those who are engaged in the publishing business. One to whom I outlined the scheme declared the illustration of such a book, especially a child's book, was a commercial impossibility as it would not be attractive. (I recently mailed him a copy of the holiday number of the Literary Digest, which placed "Sonny Boy" first among the forty best books published for children.)

Other publishers declared that the expense of preparing such a volume would be undertaking too great a risk, as the outcome was purely a financial gamble. These experiences are mentioned merely to show that there is a preconceived notion against the employment of the camera in the field I have invaded.

When the "dummy" was only partially completed it was shipped by express to the Century Company, to whom we were unknown, for we felt that if the book had any merit at all it would work out its own destiny. It was accepted and published the following Fall on a very satisfactory royalty basis, and as a



RHINOCEROS—THE THICK-SKINNED BEAST FROM INDIA



"SONNY BOY" AND THE DINGO, THE LITTLE WILD DOG OF AUSTRALIA



"SONNY BOY" WATCHING THE EAGLE, THE AMERICAN NATIONAL EMBLEM

result, the issuance of "Sonny Boy" has proved a very nice financial investment for all parties concerned. This is mentioned to show that there is something





THE KING OF BEASTS—THE BIG CAT FROM AFRICA

more than an "artistic success" involved, and material things do count in this commercial age.

It may be argued that the very motif of the "Sonny Boy" pictures make them distinctive and in a very different class from the sort of illustrations that are required for the general run of fiction, and that photography has been tried and found wanting in numerous other instances. But this does not disprove the fact that success may still lie ahead along other and even more ambitious lines for the determined photographic worker, and I cannot help but feel that the success of my own little book registers a step forward, at least.

It is becoming a noticeable fact that a number of the leading magazines, notably some of the recent numbers of the *Cosmopolitan*, are beginning to use photographic illustrations for articles and short stories that compare very favorably with other pictures in these periodicals; that the illustrated weeklies long ago broke away from the custom of having pictures of the big news events of the month made by wash drawings and are now using photographs; the *Country Gentleman* uses many photographs for its covers; and that the large manufacturers who catalogue their products make use of photographic illustration reproductions almost exclusively.

The worker who seeks to accomplish results along these lines must do a great deal of experimenting; he must expect success only after repeated failures;

he must learn through practical tests to select the proper apparatus, and to settle mooted questions to his own satisfaction by practical experiments. The discovery of previously unknown facts and truths in the course of his work, with no precedent to guide or warn, will make the character of such an investigation novel. The number of persons capable, through experience and by intelligent pictorial work, to fit themselves as camera illustrators has, until the present, been remarkably small, but today we are emerging from the chrysalis stage of being a nation of kodakers to that of pictorialists and under these circumstances much should be accomplished.

Individuality must express itself in photography as in every other artistic line. There are no hard and set rules in, for instance, the photography of animals, by which means I illustrated "Sonny Boy's Day at the Zoo." The animal pictures were selected from about two thousand wild animal negatives I made, which goes to show that zoo photography is by no means a simple matter. Not that there was any particular danger in going into a cage with these creatures, especially as a stalwart keeper stands by your side with a stout pick handle grasped in his right hand, but the animals have to be induced to "pose." One who has ever tried to make a hippopotamus "look pleasant, please," knows the meaning of hard work.

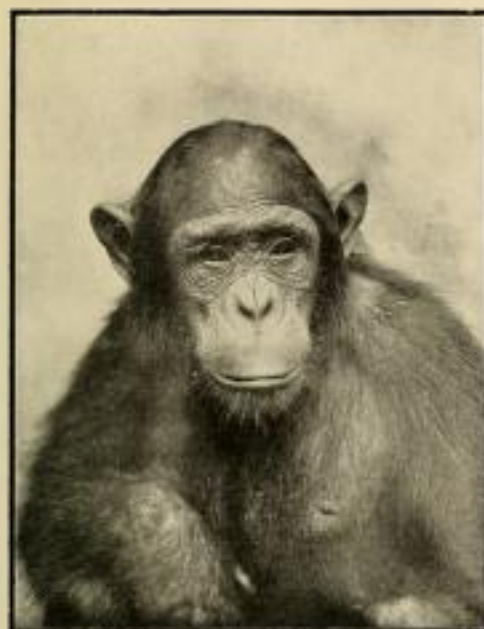
I got splendid negatives of some of the animals the very first try; others were finally secured after much difficulty, and I exposed numberless plates on the llama, the axis deer and others before satisfactory negatives were obtained. The big grey timber wolf persisted in licking the lens of my camera, and cuffing his ears made him more affectionate. What particular sweetness my Cooke had I have never been able to fathom, but I do know it needed a lot of polishing after every endearing demonstration by Lobo. The wart hog conceived a weird fascination for my shoes and would make a sudden dive toward them every time I had him set in his characteristic attitude of kneeling. Other animals paid not the slightest attention to my entrance into their corral until I produced the camera, and then they immediately reverted back to the startled creatures of the wilds.

Hours were spent on different subjects, for animals cannot be successfully photographed by promiscuous snap-shooting, and working through the bars is next to impossible, for the creature upon which you focus your lens simply will not stand in the right spot. You have to be where you can approach or back off as you please; maneuver your subject to the right or left, and select the pose when the resultant image will show that you are photographing a quadruped; a three-legged animal is not a vagary of Nature, it merely shows up the photographer.

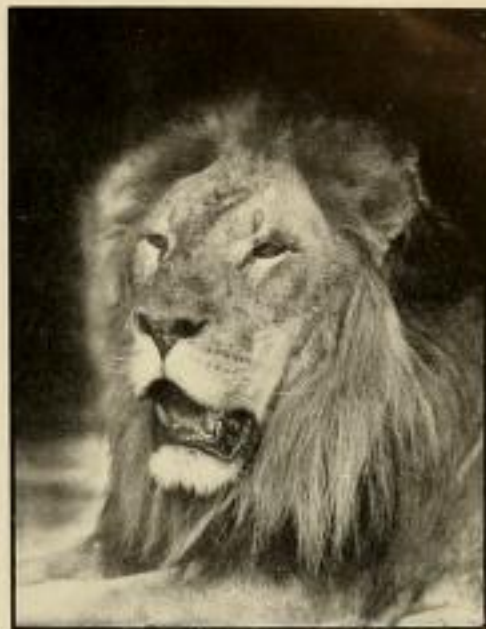
My equipment was a reflecting type of camera and I doubt if successful animal photography can be accomplished with any other style. The one I employed was a 4x5 Hall Mirror camera, selected for the hard usage the metal box will stand either on hot, humid days or when the temperature is below zero; and, without a single instance of shutter binding, my instrument has seen continuous service for over four years in both the snows of the north and the grilling climate of the lowlands of Louisiana.

The lens through which the "Sonny Boy" illustrations were taken was a





"BALDY"—THE CHIMPANZEE



"OLD MONARCH"—THE LION

Cooke, f-6.3 anastigmat, six and one-half inch focus. I like to use a short-focus lens, one that will give plenty of detail even when used wide open, for such a negative can afterwards be enlarged or "fuzzygraphed," if such a course of treatment to a perfectly good photograph is desired. My zoo exposures did not call for the one fifteen-hundredths of a second the focal plane shutter is capable of doing, for better results in animal photography can be obtained on the low speeds. The lion, tiger, panther and a few others were photographed in covered cages at one-tenth of a second, the camera being held in the hands.

For plates I used no particular brand, Stanley, Vulcan, Seed, Sigma, Barnett and Imperial all being given a chance to prove their worth. Since the time I made the zoo pictures, I have become a convert to the use of non-filter plates, using the Imperial brand almost exclusively. Those having non-halation qualities are to be preferred, the slight difference in cost being amply justified by the improved quality of the result. Being a devotee of the tank system, all my zoo negatives were so developed, with Duratol. The prints supplied the engraver were also developed in this excellent agent and on Professional Cyko, glossy; a few negatives demanded a harder emulsion, and on these normal and contrast Cyko were employed.

In most of the single poses of the animals, the bars showed back of the subjects, and, so as to make the animal the predominant figure, the negatives were opaqued and clouds printed in. This was not only because it improved the pictorial quality, but also because of the educational feature that I felt must be strongly presented in a book of this kind.

The making of "Sonny Boy's Day at the Zoo" was a pleasant task and its success is merely proving an incentive towards future work. That the illustration of books by photography is only in its infancy, the developments in the next five years will prove conclusively.

# CAMERA CRAFT

A Photographic Monthly

---

Edited by FAYETTE J. CLUTE

---

VOLUME XXI

January to December, 1914, Inclusive

CAMERA CRAFT  
PUBLISHING CO.  
413-415 Call Building  
San Francisco, California