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THE GIRAFFE.

Of all the strange creatures to be seen in zoological gardens, none more remarkable than the giraffe, the tallest animal in the world. It was called the camelopard by the ancients, because it had long legs like the camel, and was spotted like the leopard; but it is not really like either animal, though it has some resemblance to the camel, as in the shape of its nostrils and upper lip it is more nearly allied to the deer; but its most striking peculiarities are all its own, and in general when it is unlike any other quadruped. The spots with which it is adorned are totally different to those of the leopard, being large, and of irregular shape, and are arranged in a geometric pattern along its sides. The small horns with which its head is armed are made of horn, like those of the ox or deer, but are of bone, and seem like a prolongation of the bones of the skull; they are terminated by a tuft of stiff bristles.

The singular shape of the giraffe is adapted to its habits of life; it



THE GIRAFFE.

feeds on the young branches and top shoots of the trees, and its long fore-legs and neck enable it to browse at a far greater height than any other animal.

In feeding it stretches up its neck, and with its long prehensile tongue, which it can protrude to a surprising distance, hooks down the tender shoots and leaves into its mouth. But the creature's peculiar form, though enabling it to feed on what it likes best, is sometimes the cause of its destruction. The fore-legs are so long that to reach the ground it has to stretch them wide apart, and bend down its back in a semi circle, and while drinking in this defenceless attitude the lion or leopard springs upon it, and overpowers it before it can recover itself. The giraffe is rather a timid animal, and as it runs with great swiftness it usually seeks safety in flight; but when hard pressed it will turn and beat off even the lion by striking out with its strong fore-hoofs. Its horns, too, though they are so small, are capable of inflicting severe injuries.