

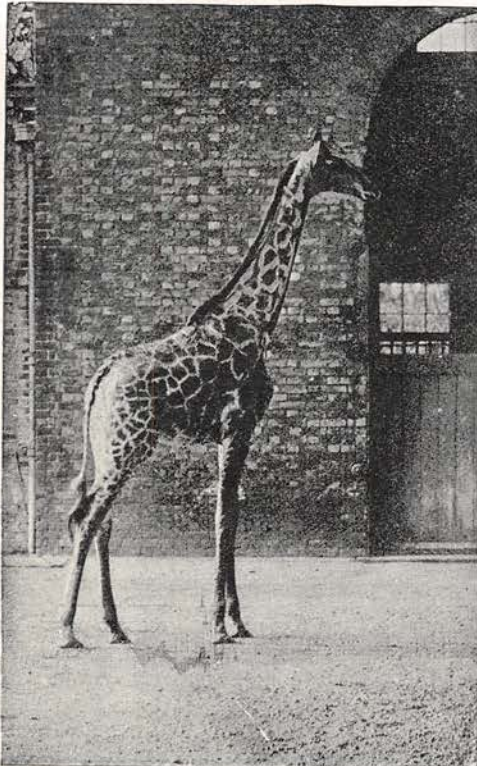
# ON GIRAFFES GENERALLY.

BY GAMBIER BOLTON, F.Z.S.

*Illustrated from photographs taken by the Author.*

“GIRAFFES,” wrote the American schoolboy, “is interesting critters, for their drinks do them real good, as they take such a powerful long time treacling down their throats.” But even putting this aside, the arrival of the new and rare South African giraffe at the Zoological collection in Regent’s Park, and the enormous price (£800) paid for her and four antelopes make the subject of giraffes in general a particularly interesting one just now.

For nearly sixty years the Zoological Society were able to make a very fair show of these quaint-looking creatures, but one by one they dropped off until at last only the old male shown in our illustration was left, and three years ago he too joined the great majority, leaving the tall giraffe house and roomy paddock to be tenanted only by such



“DAISY.”



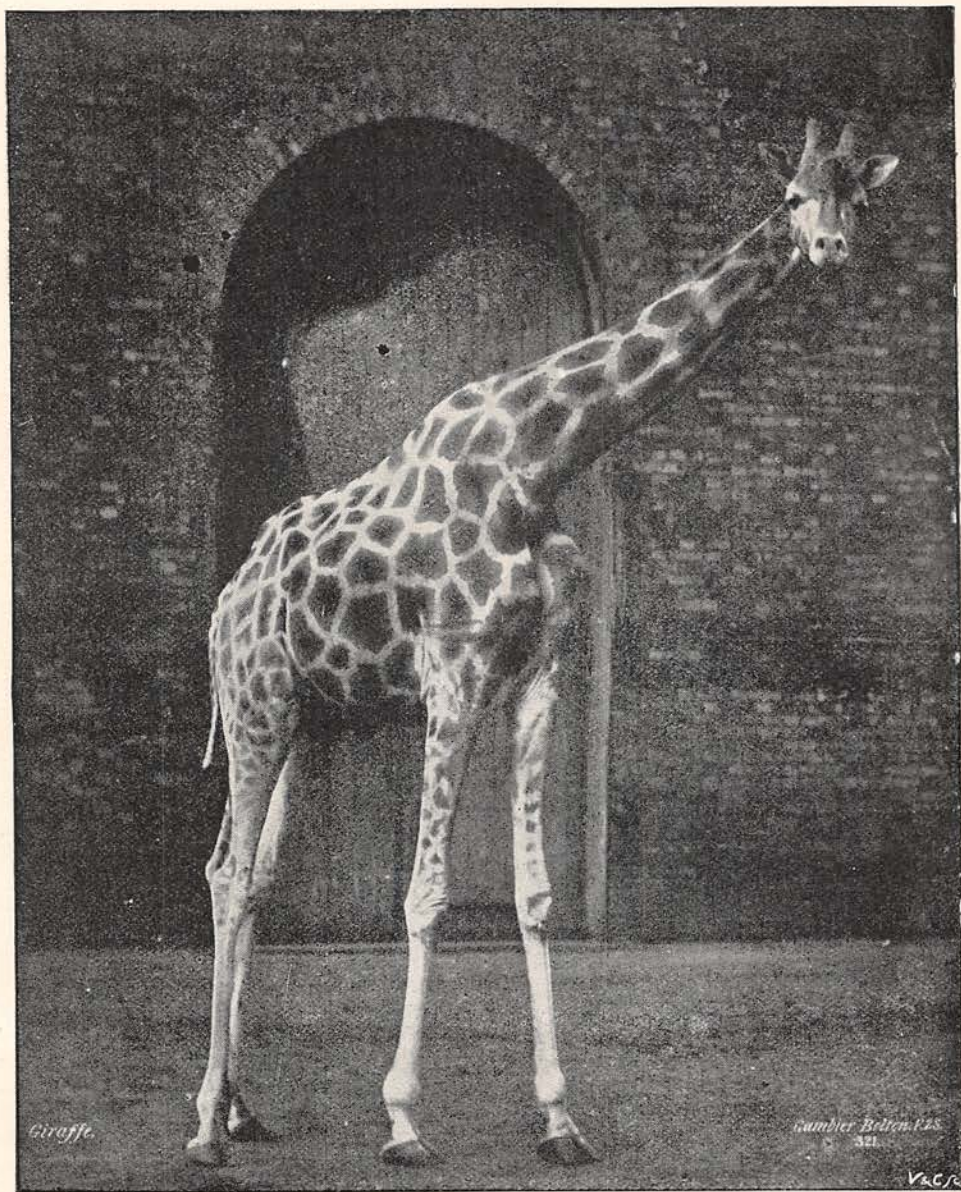
“DAISY” DOES A STRETCH.

small fry as yaks and Zebu oxen, which were slaughtered last winter as food for the carnivora when, owing to the severe frost, no horses or goats could be obtained.

But now this is all happily changed, and once more we can look upon a really noble specimen of the giraffe raising her long neck and graceful head and with outstretched tongue trying to pull down any leaves within her reach in the paddock, or stretching over the railings surreptitiously plucking the artificial flowers from some lady’s hat or bonnet.

But elegant and graceful as “Daisy” may be at general times she can now and then place herself in the queerest possible positions, and only a short time ago the Prince and Princess of Wales and their party when at the Zoological Gardens were treated to such an exhibition of giraffe antics as has rarely been witnessed out of Africa. The noise of the wind rustling through the trees suddenly set “Daisy” off into a wild gallop round and round the enclosure, and she improved on this with such a series of capers and kickings that she fairly “brought down the house,” and spectators who ought to know declare that it is a long time since the Prince enjoyed such a hearty fit of laughter as he did on that occasion.





From a photo by]

THE LAST MALE GIRAFFE AT THE ZOO.

[Gambier Bolton, F.Z.S.

The late Frank Buckland is credited with the apt remark, "What a terrible thing it must be for a giraffe to have a sore throat," to which one may well add, "What gallons of gargle and yards of red flannel he would require." Still, apart from the sore throat, it is undoubtedly this long neck that most strikes anyone on first seeing a giraffe, and it may surprise many to know that in spite of its great length it possesses exactly the same

number of bones or vertebræ (viz. seven) as human beings, whales, and indeed, with three exceptions, the whole of the mammalia.

This long neck is of the greatest possible use to them as they but rarely graze, their food consisting almost entirely, when in their natural state, of leaves which they pull off the trees to a considerable height from the ground, assisted by their tongues, which are very long and flexible. When it comes



to grazing or drinking they are compelled to straddle their legs wide apart to enable them to reach the ground with their heads, and we give several illustrations of these quaint positions.

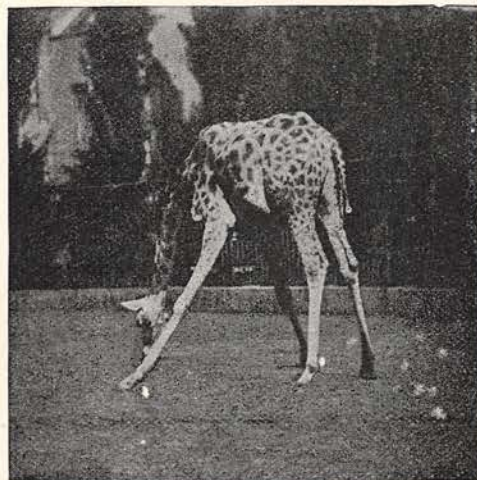
Scientists place the giraffe in a distinct family or group by itself, between the antelopes and the deer, on account of the horn-like appendages which rise from the forehead. When young these horns are quite separate from the bones of the skull, but as the giraffe gets older they join to them, and during a desperate fight between two males in captivity some years ago, the horns of one were said to be driven into the head of the other; but they can scarcely be



HORNS AND VERTEBRÆ.

termed general weapons of defence, as they trust to their kicking powers alone when attacked by enemies, and a blow from the hind leg of an 18-foot giraffe is not a thing to be sneered at by any means.

During "Daisy's" gallop round her paddock the extraordinary appearance of these animals when galloping was seen to perfection, for she screwed up her tail like a corkscrew above her back, and each stride she took brought her hind legs, one on each



GIRAFFE: BACK VIEW.

side, straddled in front of her forelegs; but although appearing to travel at a great pace, a horse in really hard condition can soon run a giraffe down, especially if it is at all fat, and at this time their flesh is excellent eating, whilst their skins are now worth £3 to £4 apiece. And so each year sees them becoming rarer and harder to obtain, for they are driven farther and farther back into the centre of Africa by the ever-increasing advance of civilisation, and unless steps are taken quickly to ensure a "close time" for them, as has already been done with the



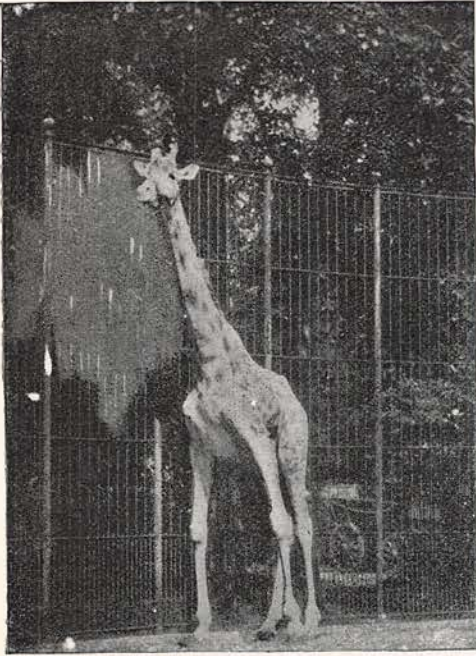
GIRAFFE: FRONT VIEW.

elephant and many of the antelopes, they must soon become extinct, or at all events driven into such utterly inaccessible places in the African deserts that none will ever be brought out alive owing to the enormous distance from the coast and the impossibility of transport.

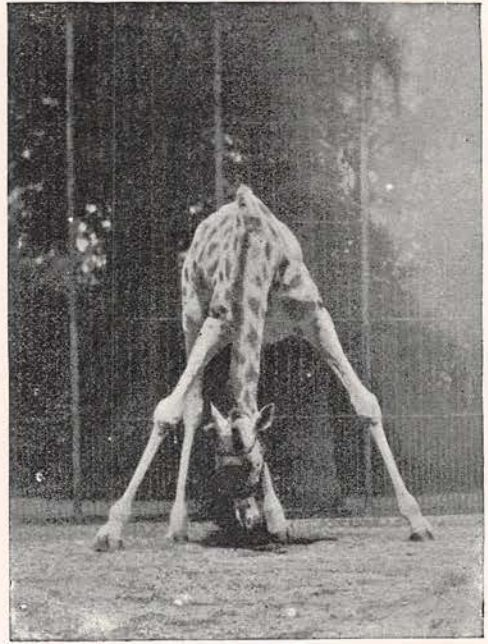
Naturalists are at last recognising these facts, and the consequence is that the price of living giraffes is rising rapidly, and it is not at all improbable that we shall hear of 1000 to 1200 guineas being paid for a good specimen shortly by one of the Continental societies.

Bearing these facts in mind, it may prove interesting to see a few of the living specimens in Europe to-day. The two at Antwerp are both females and decidedly aged. The patriarch at Amsterdam is seven-and-twenty years old, and his widely-bowed front legs and overgrown hoofs proclaim him as one of the very oldest specimens ever known. It really seemed almost a cruelty to make





AN ANCIENT AT AMSTERDAM.



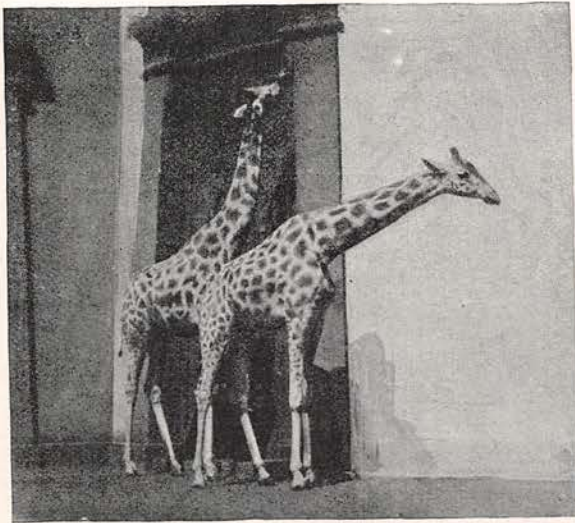
THE ANCIENT DOES "A SPREAD."

the old gentleman do "a spread," and it took him several moments to make up his mind, and then even longer to gradually let himself down. But eventually he did it in quite the orthodox way, placing one foot somewhat in front and the other as far back as possible, and then by a series of jerks, he kept on increasing the distance between the two, until at last he was able to reach the ground, and twisting his long prehensile tongue (which—as is often the case with human beings—age had in no way shortened) round the leaves, he jerked himself back to his normal position once more.

The photographs show very plainly the difference in the markings of the two varieties,

the rare South African specimen having large patches of dark brown or chestnut sprinkled over a paler ground colour, whilst the others are chestnut coloured animals, marked by a network of fine tawny lines. The only fault in the portrait of "Daisy" is one for which the artist cannot be blamed, as,

like the up-to-date housemaid who reads all the Society papers but never washes the back of her neck, "Daisy," after spending hours in rubbing the soot and dirt off the palings and so spoiling the colour of her neck, absolutely refuses to have it washed or even brushed, so that her portrait will have to go down to posterity bearing a neck several degrees darker in colour than the rest of her body.



AT ANTWERP.