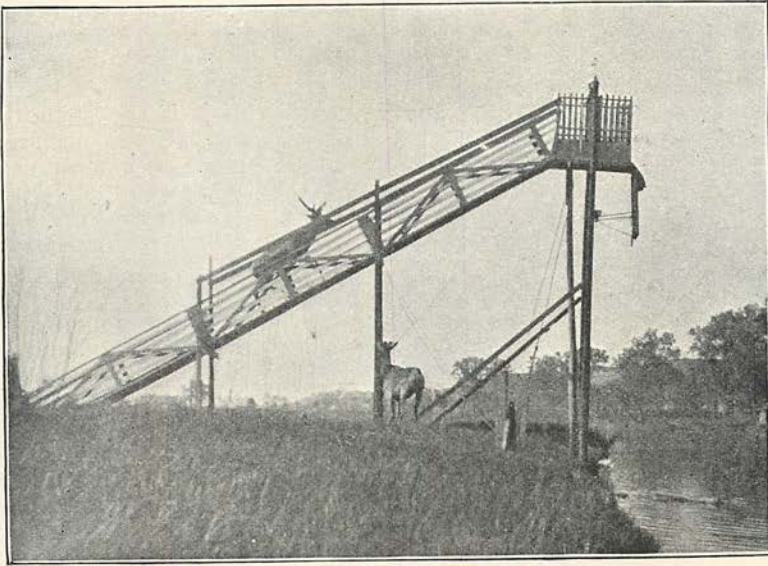


Diving Elks.

BY EMORY JAMES.

[From Photographs by Waltermire, Sioux City, Iowa.]



ASCENDING FOR THE DIVE.



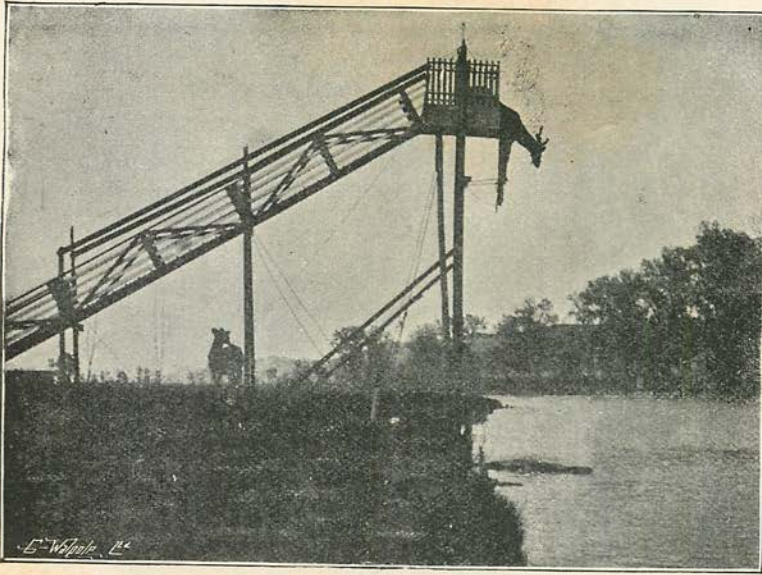
HE word "remarkable" is a big word, and ought always to be used with caution. But we doubt if it could be more appropriately used than in describing these diving elks—probably the most remarkable trained animals in the world. For decades people have been pestered with trained horses, elephants, seals, pigeons, cats, dogs, fleas, and lions—all in a greater or less degree of training; but it has remained for the last decade of this century to produce the diving elks.

With all their opportunities for knowledge, however, people are sometimes wrong. They have looked upon the moose as the stupidest of animals, and have given him credit for little else than the mere brute instinct common to his race. We fancy that the illustrations in this article, and our verbal attempt to show how the diving elks were raised up to their present elevated position, will prove that the moose knows something after all. First, however, let us say that the credit of educating these clumsy and somewhat vilified animals belongs to Mr. Will H. Barnes, of Sioux City, Iowa, who, after three

years of patient labour and the expenditure of considerable money, now exhibits his pets in various parts of the United States. There is no deception about them. They do what they start out to do, and they are accorded a reception of wonderment and enthusiasm wherever they appear.

Like many others, Mr. Barnes had heard of the elk's dulness, and it was on this account that he was prompted to train the animal. "The fact," he writes, "that the undertaking seemed almost impossible of successful accomplishment gave additional zest to my task, which was to train a team of elks to do the most remarkable thing I could think of, compatible with the nature of the animal."

Mr. Barnes got his elks when they were first captured, full grown, and perfectly wild. He put them in a small inclosure, from which they could not leap out, and he then forced his kind attention upon them until they finally allowed themselves to be petted and fed by the hand. Next arrived the thorny days when "Ring" and "Ringlette" were introduced to harness—an introduction not so easily consummated as it seems. Measurements were taken, and two sets of harness



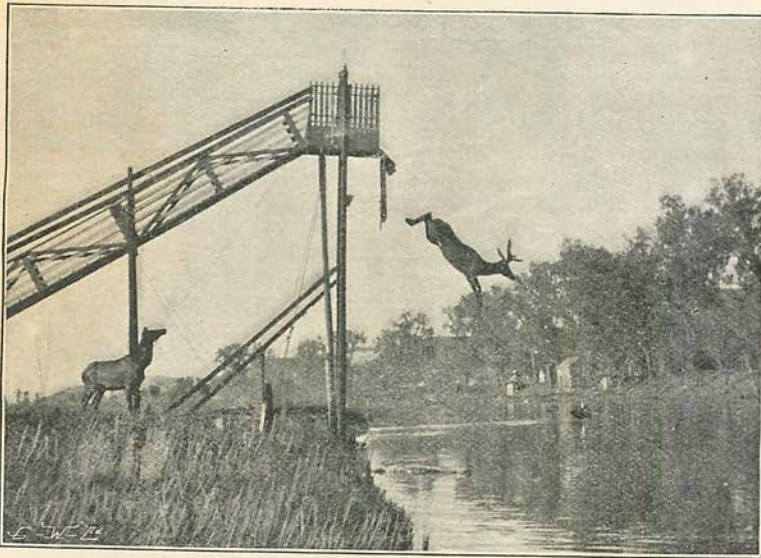
READY.

"It was while I was breaking them to harness," he says, "that I conceived the idea of endeavouring to give public exhibitions of high leaping. The idea suggested itself from the seeming indifference of the elks as to what they jumped from or over while in training. Whenever they could do so they would always make a break for the Big Sioux River, and would go plunging head-foremost

were ordered, but it was not for many months that the elks would consent to be dressed up for a drive, and not till many months after this that they would consent to be driven. At last, however, the trainer succeeded in his purpose, and the harnessed elks became a

into the water from any height. The first dive they ever made was from a high bank into the Sioux River, on which occasion," the writer naïvely adds, "I went after them."

This sudden and alert appreciation of a fact in the elk's nature, and the deduc-



THE PLUNGE.

curious feature on the public streets of this Western city. In Mr. Barnes's own words we may now describe how the harnessed elks took the next step in their interesting career, and became the diving elks.

tions so quickly drawn therefrom, are what lift a circus-attraction into the realm of things worth knowing and seeing. The object now with the trainer was to get his elks to do permanently, and for the

public, what they heretofore had done privately and spasmodically. Accordingly, Mr. Barnes first arranged a short chute on the river bank, and by dint of persistence, and a little prodding, got them to run

when Mr. Barnes arrived at this point in the tuition of his pets, he took them to New Orleans on account of the coldness in Iowa and the possible danger to the elks after immersion in a cold river. Here, in New



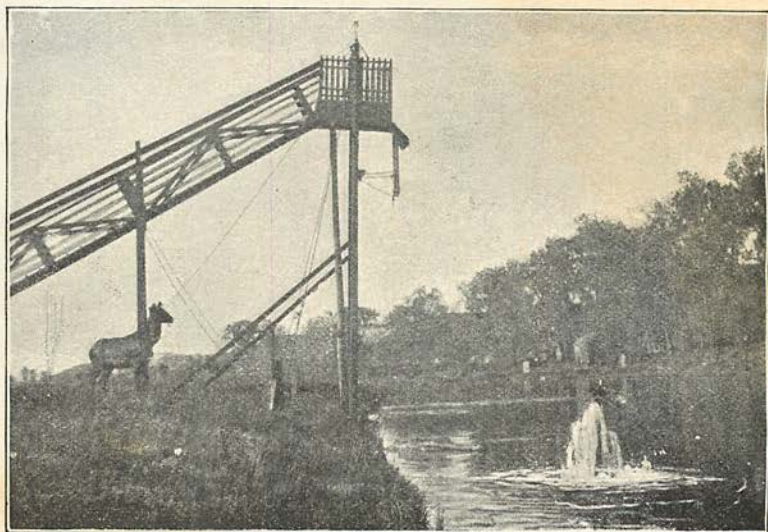
HALF WAY.

through the chute into the water. This persistence had, of course, to be exercised kindly, else the trainer would have lost the elks' confidence, which, after considerable labour, he had obtained. Gradually the animals got used to the chute, and just as gradually Mr. Barnes insidiously raised the end of the chute above the water. Foot by foot and day by day he raised it until he finally had the elks running up a steep inclined plane to the height of thirty feet. As it was the only place from which they could get into the water they began to look upon it at first as great sport, and the elevation of the platform did not offer so many difficulties as the trainer at first supposed.

Two years ago,

Orleans, he perfected his teaching, and gradually had the satisfaction of seeing his elks reach the position where they could be safely and satisfactorily exhibited to the public.

We may pause for a moment to look at the inclined plane, or "chute," which, after considerable study, Mr. Barnes arranged for



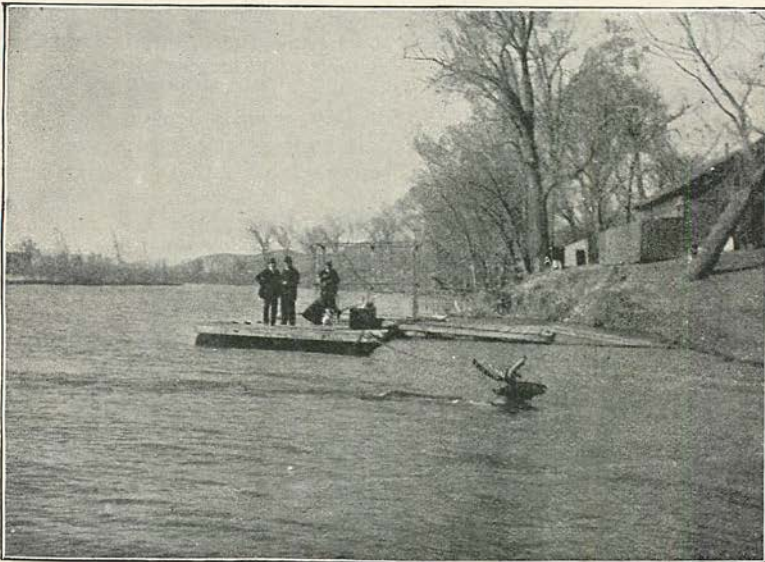
THE SPLASH.

the performance. Our illustrations show clearly the horizontal platform upon which the elks rest before jumping into the water. At first they jumped directly from this platform, but as time went on they learned to put their front feet on a cleat attached to a movable footboard; and, with their hind feet against a cleat on the top platform, they braced themselves for the plunge. It was necessary, of course, that the elks should make this plunge head-first or at an angle, as otherwise they might have been injured by sudden contact with the flat surface of the water after falling from such a height.

It is interesting to note that one of the elks, Ringlette, is a more expert diver than his brother. He seemed by instinct, according to Mr. Barnes, to get the true diving idea of making his plunges head-first, with front feet extended. He now goes head-foremost, and strikes exactly in the centre of the tank, which, in lieu of a river, Mr. Barnes has to carry with him on his exhibition trips. This tank is 16ft. square, and 12ft. deep. The elk Ring, adds Mr. Barnes, "is beginning to dive almost as expertly as his brother, and I am sure, before the year is over, that he will dive headforemost, with his feet extended, as does Ringlette."

We may believe Mr. Barnes when he says, "I did not realize what a sensation the elks would create, as I have put in so much time training them and raising the elevation foot by foot that I have become, like the elks, used to it. But I have since been told thousands of times that it is one of the most wonderful feats ever accomplished with animals."

The elks are carried from point to point in the United States in a specially constructed stock car, which, when not in use, lies near the station in Sioux City. We have before us a photograph showing this car with the elks standing before it in their shining harness attached to a carriage upon which the trainer sits with pardonable pride. To show how the most remarkable things fail to draw a crowd when they become objects of daily observation, we may add that there are no figures in the photograph except one of the railway servants, who seems to have nothing to do; whereas, when Mr. Barnes takes his elks to any other part of the country, his unique carriage and pair attract general attention, and their progress through the streets is celebrated by an effervescence of hilarity and yells on the part of thousands of boys.



SWIMMING FOR SHORE.