

THE COUNTRY PRINTER.

A most enjoyable paper under the above caption appears in the May number of *Scribner's Magazine*. It is written by W. D. Howells, the novelist and critic, and describes his own early life in north-eastern Ohio forty or fifty years ago. The printing office he describes was that of his father, William C. Howells, who was United States consul at Toronto for some years in the eighties. And any one who had the good fortune to know that quaint, delightful, genuine gentleman, will enjoy the affectionately playful way in which some of his characteristics are described by his son. The Howells had long been printers; "in fact," as the writer tells us, "the art of printing was in our blood." He knows his subject, therefore, and tells his story of the place and the time and his own share in them very charmingly.

"The people of the county were mostly farmers, and of these nearly all were dairymen. The few manufacturers were on a small scale, except perhaps the making of oars, which were shipped all over the world from the heart of the primeval forests densely wooding the vast levels of the region. The portable steam saw-mills dropped down on the borders of the woods have long since eaten their way through and through them, and devoured every stick of timber in most places, and drunk up the water-courses that the woods once kept full; but at that time half the land was in the shadow of those mighty poplars and hickories, elms and chestnuts, ashes and hemlocks; and the meadows that pastured the herds of red cattle were dotted with stumps as thick as harvest stubble. Now there are not even stumps; the woods are gone, and the water-courses are torrents in spring and beds of dry clay in summer. The meadows themselves have vanished, for it has been found that the strong yellow soil will produce more in grain than in milk.

"There is more money in the hands of the farmers there, though there is still so little that by any city scale it would seem comically little, pathetically little; but forty years ago there was so much less that fifty dollars seldom passed through a farmer's hands in a year. Payment was made in kind rather than in coin, and every sort of farm produce was legal tender at the printing office. Wood was welcome in any quantity, for the huge box-stove consumed it with insatiable voracity, and then did not heat the wide, low room which was at once editorial-room, composing-room and press-room. Perhaps this was not so much the fault of the stove as of the building; in that cold lake-shore country the people dwelt in wooden structures almost as thin and flimsy as tents; and often in the first winter of our sojourn, the type froze solid with the water which the compositor put on it when he wished to distribute his case; the inking-rollers had to be thawed before they could be used on the press, and if the current of the editor's soul had not been the most genial that ever flowed in this rough world, it must have been congealed at its source. The cases of type had to be placed very near the windows so as to get all the light there was, and they got all the cold there was, too. From time to time the compositor's fingers became so stiff that blowing on them would not avail; he passed the time in excursions between his stand and the stove; and in very cold weather he practised the device of warming his whole case of types by the fire, and when it lost heat, warming it again. The man at the press-wheel was then the enviable man; those who handled the chill, damp sheets of paper were no more fortunate than the compositors.

"The first floor of our office-building was used by a sash and blind factory; there was a machine-shop somewhere in it, and a mill for sawing out shingles; and it was better fitted to the exercise of these robust industries than to the requirements of our more delicate craft. Later, we had a more comfortable place, in a new wooden 'business block,' and for several years before I left it, the office was domiciled in an old dwelling-house, which we bought, and which we used without much change. It could never have been a very luxurious dwelling, and my associations with it are of a wintry cold, scarcely less polar than that we were inured to elsewhere. In fact, the climate of that region is rough and fierce; and the lake winds have a malice sharper than the saltiest gales of the North Shore of Massachusetts. I know that there were lovely summers and lovelier autumns in my time there,

full of sunsets of a strange, wild, melancholy splendor, I suppose from some atmospheric influence of the lake; but I think chiefly of the winters, so awful to us after the mild seasons of southern Ohio; the frosts of ten and twenty below; the village streets and country roads drowned in snow, the consumptives in the thin houses, and the 'slipin',' as the sleighing was called, that lasted from December to April with hardly a break. At first our family was housed on a farm a little way out, because there was no tenement to be had in the village, and my father and I used to walk to and from the office together in the morning and evening. I had taught myself to read Spanish, in my passion for Don Quixote, and I was then, at the age of fifteen, preparing to write a life of Cervantes. This scheme occupied me a good deal in those bleak walks, and perhaps because my head was so hot with it, my feet were always very cold; but my father assured me that they would get warm as soon as my boots froze. If I have never yet written that life of Cervantes, on the other hand I have never been quite able to make it clear to myself why my feet should have got warm when my boots froze. It may have been only a theory of his; and it may have been a joke. He had a great many theories and a great many jokes, and together these always kept life interesting and sunshiny to him. With his serene temperament and his happy doubt of disaster in any form, he was singularly well fitted to encounter the hardships of a country editor's lot."

Referring to political bickerings and the letters and editorials devoted to them, the writer says: "The space given to them might better have been given even to original poetry. This was sometimes accepted, but was not invited; though our sixth page commonly began with a copy of verse of some kind. Then came more prose selections, but never at any time accounts of murder or violent crimes, which the editor abominated in themselves and believed thoroughly corrupting. Advertisements of various kinds filled out the sheet, which was simple and quiet in typography, wholly without the handbill display which now renders nearly all newspapers repulsive to the eye. I am rather proud, in my quality of printer, that this was a style which I established; and we maintained it against all advertisers, who then as now wished to out-shriek one another in large types and ugly woodcuts.

"It was by no means easy to hold a firm hand with the 'live business men' of our village and county, who came out twice a year with the spring and fall announcements of their fresh stocks of goods, which they had personally visited New York to lay in; but one of the moral advantages of an enterprise so modest as ours was that the counting-room and the editorial-room were united under the same head, and this head was the editor's. After all, I think we lost nothing by the bold stand we made in behalf of good taste, and at any rate we risked it when we had not the courage to cut off our delinquent subscribers.

"There are those that say so, and whether they are right or not, it is certain that into the great centres where money is heaped up, the life of the country is drained, and the country press has suffered with the other local interests. The railroads penetrate everywhere, and carry the city papers seven times a week, where the home paper pays its tardy visit once, with a patent inside imported from the nearest money-centre, and its few columns of neighborhood gossip, too inconsiderable to be gathered up by the correspondents of the invasive dailies. Other causes have worked against the country press. In counties where there were once two or three papers, there are now eight or ten, without a material increase of population to draw upon for support. The county printing, which the paper of the dominant party could reckon upon, is now shared with other papers of the same politics, and the amateur printing-offices belonging to ingenious boys in every neighborhood get much of the small job-work which once came to the publisher."

—At the beginning of this year there were \$340,000,000 in gold and \$251,400,000 in silver in the vaults of the Bank of France. It would require 683 cars of a capacity of ten tons each to move the metals.

HIGH CHARGES FOR WORLD'S FAIR POWER.

In more than one instance has word come from readers of this paper who had intended to exhibit in Machinery Hall, at the World's Fair, that the exorbitant charge for power had led to the abandonment of the idea. A correspondent writing from the Fair on the day after the opening, finds more in this same line:

"Machinery Hall is rapidly getting in something like good shape, and most of the machinery is ready for running, but there is great dissatisfaction among the exhibitors over the rates charged for power. The circulars sent out said that 'a reasonable amount of power would be furnished,' and it was supposed that this would be given free, but it turns out to be at the rates of \$40 and \$60 per horse power, for the six months. One Erie, Pa., exhibitor will have to pay \$700 for three engines aggregating 12 horse power. Another firm with seven small turret machines, taking up a space of 20 x 20 feet, must pay \$1,500. The Singer Sewing Machine Co. has paid \$1,900 in advance for steam, and \$400 for electric power. Scores of small exhibitors say they cannot pay these rates, and will let machines stand still. In view of the facts that the boilers are furnished free by exhibiting firms, the World's Fair authorities having to pay only for the fuel and help, the rates charged do seem exorbitant. This is not the only thing in Machinery Hall of which exhibitors complain. Where concessions have been granted for the sale of goods, the authorities exact a percentage on the gross receipts from 15 to 30 per cent. on articles made in the building, while on those made elsewhere it ranges from 25 to 30. These rates are in many cases greater than the profits made on the articles. These things very naturally cause a bad feeling among exhibitors."

CHOLERA PROSPECTS.

Professor Virchow, referring to the insular state of the villages throughout Polish-Russia, where cholera is absolutely cherished by the filthy habits of the people, rather ironically remarked to a *N. Y. World* reporter: "You Americans, if you had such dangerous towns to contend with, would settle the matter with your usual common-place impetuosity. You would simply set fire to an entire town, burn it down and rebuild a new city on its ashes. But of course we cannot do that sort of thing over here." Then he added, "You may have a few cases, as you had last year, but the chances are very much against anything like an epidemic in the United States. Your cities are comparatively new, the people are cleaner in their habits than almost any other nation, your drainage is generally on the modern and most sanitary principles, and your water supplies are excellent, as a rule. Especially is this true in the larger cities. With these advantages the cholera is easy to fight, and nothing but the gravest negligence should bring about an epidemic in your country."

—The Premier Steel Works, of Indianapolis, the largest plant of the kind in Indiana, "and the largest of the West, assigned on Saturday, May 6th, and John E. McGettigan, of Indianapolis, was made receiver. The capital stock amounts to more than \$1,000,000, and two-thirds of it is owned by Charles Depauw, of New Albany. The remainder is owned by Louisville parties. It is stated that the works will be shut down for a week and then they will go ahead again under the receiver; that the company can show from \$3 to \$4 assets for every dollar of liability, and that the action taken was to protect the company from threatened action by some clamoring creditors. The liabilities immediately maturing, or to mature within a few days, amount to \$100,000. The manager stated that the action has been under consideration for a week, and was made advisable by the condition of the money market and the depression prevailing in the steel industry west of the Alleghanies, caused by the recent heavy failures in the east, notably that of the Western Steel Company of Pennsylvania. By recent expensive enlargements the Premier plant's value is said to be \$1,500,000.—*Chicago Journal of Commerce*.

—"Pure maple sugar" is beginning to come in. It is made by the Vermont farmer tapping the Louisiana molasses tree.—*Minneapolis Journal*.