

IMPRESSIONS AND EXPERIENCES

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Impressions and experiences by W. D. Howells

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BY
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CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE COUNTRY PRINTER	3
POLICE REPORT	35
I TALK OF DREAMS	70
AN EAST-SIDE RAMBLE	94
TRIBULATIONS OF A CHEERFUL GIVER	111
THE CLOSING OF THE HOTEL	140
GLIMPSES OF CENTRAL PARK	166
NEW YORK STREETS	181

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THE COUNTRY PRINTER

My earliest memories, or those which I can make sure are not the sort of early hearsay that we mistake for remembrance later in life, concern a country newspaper, or, rather, a country printing-office. The office was in my childish consciousness some years before the paper was; the compositors rhythmically swaying before their cases of type; the pressman flinging himself back on the bar that made the impression, with a swirl of his long hair; the apprentice rolling the forms, and the foreman bending over the imposing-stone were familiar to me when I could not grasp the notion of any effect from their labors. In due time I came to know all about it, and to understand that these activities went to the making of the Whig newspaper which my father edited to the confusion of the Locofocos, and in the especial interest of Henry Clay; I myself supported this leader so vigorously for the presidency in my seventh year that it was long before I could realize that the election of 1844 had resulted in his defeat. My father had already been a printer for a good many years, and sometime in the early thirties he had led a literary forlorn-hope, in a West-Virginian town, with a monthly magazine, which he printed himself and edited with the help of his sister.