

PREFACE.

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these Legends I have been greatly aided by Rev. S. R. Riggs, author of the Grammar and Dictionary of the Dakota language, "Tâh-Koo Wah-Kân," &c., and for many years a missionary among the Dakotas. He has patiently answered my numerous inquiries and given me valuable information. I am also indebted to Gen. H. H. Sibley, one of the earliest American traders among them, and to Rev. S. W. Pond, of Shakopee, one of the first Protestant missionaries to these people, and himself the author of poetical versions of some of their principal legends; to Mrs. Eastman's "Dacotah," and last, but not least, to the Rev. E. D. Neill, whose admirable "History of Minnesota" so fully and faithfully presents almost all that is known of the history, traditions, customs, manners and superstitions of the Dakotas.

In *Winona* I have "tried my hand" on Hexameter verse. With what success, I leave to those who are better able to judge than I. If I have failed, I have but added another failure to the numerous vain attempts to naturalize Hexameter verse in the English language.

The Earl of Derby, in the preface to his translation of the Iliad, calls it "That 'pestilent heresy' of the so-called English Hexameter; a metre wholly repugnant to the genius of our language; which can only be pressed into the service by a violation of every rule of prosody." Lord Kames, in his "Elements of Criticism," says, "Many attempts have been made to introduce Hexameter verse into the living languages, but without success. The English language, I am inclined to think, is not susceptible of this melody, and my reasons are these: First, the polysyllables in Latin and Greek are finely diversified by long and short syllables, a circumstance that qualifies them for the melody of Hexameter verse: ours are extremely ill qualified for that service, because they super-abound in short syllables. Secondly, the bulk of our monosyllables are arbitrary with regard to length, which is an unlucky circumstance in Hexameter.

 * * * In Latin and Greek Hexameter invariable sounds direct and ascertain the melody. English Hexameter would be destitute of