

PREFACE.

I have for several years devoted many of my leisure hours to the study of the language, history, traditions, customs and superstitions of the Dakotas. These Indians are now commonly called the "Sioux"—a name given them by the early French traders and *voyageurs*. "Dakota," signifies *alliance* or *confederation*. Many separate bands, all having a common origin and speaking a common tongue, were united under this name. See "*Tah-Koo Wah-Kan*," or "*The Gospel Among the Dakotas*," by Stephen R. Riggs, pp. 1 to 6 inc.

They were, but yesterday, the occupants and owners of the fair forests and fertile prairies of Minnesota,—a brave, hospitable and generous people,—barbarians, indeed, but noble in their barbarism. They may be fitly called the Iroquois of the West. In form and features, in language and traditions, they are distinct from all other Indian tribes. When first visited by white men, and for many years afterwards, the Falls of St. Anthony (by them called the Ha-Ha) was the center of their country. They cultivated tobacco, and hunted the elk, the beaver and the bison. They were open-hearted, truthful and brave. In their wars with other tribes they seldom slew women or children, and rarely sacrificed the lives of their prisoners.

For many years their chiefs and head men successfully resisted the attempts to introduce spirituous liquors among them. More than a century ago an English trader was killed at Mendota, because he persisted, after repeated warnings by the chiefs, in dealing out *mini wakan* (Devil-water) to the Dakota braves.