

PREFACE.

IT is a comforting thought to some of us that a rill is as much of a fact as a river; and a river as real a thing as the ocean, and in some regards as useful, even if not so broad, deep, mighty, or sublime. We are saved from despair by the reviving recollection that a grain of wheat in a bushel of chaff may be as good wheat as the waving wealth of the prairie or the granary's golden store. But we are by no means justified in the illusion that the rill can bear up argosies and navies, with all their riches and power, or that the grain of wheat can maintain armies and nations. Yet who knows but the rill, gathered as a confluent, might at length sweep grandly past mart and capital to the sea? Who knows but the one grain falling into the ground may, of nature's kind nurture, shoot forth upward into the light, adding beauty to the valley, holding the gem of the dew in the diadem of the hills, bringing gladness to the reaper and glory to the harvest? Or if the rill never reach ocean, it may brighten the sweet, quiet flower by