

PROLOGUE.

A VOLUME of simple word painting, an effort to sketch that far Western Prairie life, to lay it unglossed before you. Accept it as such, and you won't be disappointed, I hope, as scenes are grouped before you which happened in days and nights already sunk into Eternity.

It may be strange to invite you to that far frontier, and show you the life and ways of men who have gone forth from our own old world, drawn to that new world by that sole boon of man—*hope*. Yet *hope* does much for poor humanity. I think it was Carlyle who wrote of hope thus : "O blessed hope, sole boon of man, whereby on his strait prison walls are painted beautiful far-stretching landscapes, and into the night of very death is shed holiest dawn. Thou art to all an indefeasible possession in this God's world—to the wise a Constantine-like banner written on the eternal skies, under which they shall conquer, for the battle itself is victory : to the foolish some secular mirage, or shadow of still waters painted on the parched Earth, whereby at least their dusty pilgrimage, if devious, becomes cheerfuller, becomes possible."