

PREFATORY NOTE.

UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL AND
GEOGRAPHICAL SURVEY OF THE TERRITORIES,
Washington, D. C., June 10, 1877.

During the year 1854, while engaged in exploring the then almost unknown country along the Upper Missouri and its tributaries, the writer of this note commenced the work of collecting vocabularies of the languages and other ethnological data respecting the Indians of the Northwest. He continued this work at intervals during a period of about six years, and the materials thus accumulated were finally published in 1862 in the "Transactions" of the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia, under the title of "Contributions to the Ethnography and Philology of the Indian Tribes of the Missouri Valley". A brief sketch of the Hidatsa Indians, and an incomplete vocabulary of their language, was included in that work.

The author of the present volume, Dr. Washington Matthews, assistant surgeon United States Army, spent some years among these Indians while stationed at a military post in performance of his official duties as a medical officer of the Army. During this period he paid great attention to the same subject, observing the manners, customs, and other characteristics of these Indians, and making a close and careful study of their language. In this way were secured the materials upon which, elaborated with the utmost care and with conspicuous ability, the present important memoir is based.

Dr. Matthews's earlier studies of the subject resulted in a Hidatsa-English and English-Hidatsa vocabulary, prefaced by an essay on the grammatical structure of the language. A small edition (100 copies) was printed by Mr. J. G. Shea as one of his series of American Linguistics. At the request of the writer,—who earnestly desired to push to completion the work he had long since undertaken, but was compelled by pressure of other engagements to suspend,—Dr. Matthews spent much time in entirely remodeling and greatly enlarging the scope of his paper, to include the ethnography as well as the philology of the tribe. His final result is herewith presented.

Besides revising and adding much new matter to the vocabularies, Dr. Matthews has here made those other important additions, without which the article could hardly have been considered monographic. The whole of the "ethnography" and "philology" are new. The manner in which the work has been accomplished reflects great credit upon the author and upon the Medical corps of the Army, whose capacity for scientific work Dr. Matthews honorably illustrates in his own person. Of the value of the work as a contribution to American Ethnology, little need