

P R E F A C E .

My only title to the office of editor in the present case is some practice in such matters, with a very warm interest in all, whether relating to past or present, that concerns our western country. Mrs. Eastman,—wife of Captain Eastman, and daughter of Dr. Hender-son, both of the U. S. army,—is thoroughly acquainted with the customs, superstitions, and leading ideas of the Dahcotahs, whose vicinity to Fort Snelling, and frequent intercourse with its inmates, have brought them much under the notice of the officers and ladies of the garrison. She has no occasion to present the Indian in a theatrical garb—a mere thing of paint and feathers, less like the original than his own rude delineation on birch-bark or deer-skin. The reader will find in the following pages living men and women, whose feelings are in many respects like his own, and whose motives of action are very similar to those of the rest of the world, though far less artfully covered up and disguised under pleasant names. “Envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitableness,” stand out, unblushing, in Indian life. The first is not called emulation, nor the second just indignation or merited contempt, nor the third zeal for truth, nor the fourth keen discernment of character. Anger and revenge are carried out honestly to their natural fruit—injury to others. Among the Indians this takes the form of murder, while with us it is obliged to content itself with slander, or cunning depreciation. In short, the study of Indian character is the study of the unregenerate human heart; and the writer of these sketches of the Dahcotahs presents it as such, with express