

CHAPTER XXI.

ORIGIN OF THE DISTINCTIVE NAME OF PILLAGERS APPLIED TO THE LEECH LAKE BAND OF OJIBWAYS; AND ERA OF THE SMALLPOX.

General remarks on the character of the Leech Lake Ojibways—Their gradual increase—Origin of their present distinctive name—Their camp is visited by a trader from the Lower Mississippi, in the summer of 1781—His inability, through sickness, to trade—Indians commence to take his goods on credit—A pillage ensues—Whisky found—The trader is forced to leave, and dies at Sauk Rapids—The Pillagers send a delegation to Mackinaw to atone for their conduct—They receive presents from the British—On distribution of the presents at Fond du Lac they fall sick of the smallpox—Common saying against the British—Account of the real manner in which the smallpox came to be introduced among them—War party of Assineboines, Kenistenos, and Ojibways to the Missouri—Attack on a village of dead enemies—They catch the infection—The Kenisteno village is depopulated—Course of the contagion—Loss of lives among the allied tribes.

IN the year 1781, the large band of the Ojibways, who had taken possession of Leech Lake (one of the principal sources of the Mississippi), became for the first time known by the distinctive appellation of "Pillagers," Muk-im-dua-win-in-e-wug (men who take by force).¹ They had become noted at this time (and it is a character which they have retained ever since), as being the bravest band of the tribe. Being obliged, continually, to fight with the Dakotas for the country over which they hunted, every man capable of bearing arms became a warrior and had seen actual service. They were consequently filled with a daring and independent spirit, and no act was so wild, but that they were ready and disposed to achieve it.

This band was formed mostly of the noted clans of the Bear, and A-waus-e or Catfish, and at the time which we are now considering, they probably numbered about one

¹ Henry found "Pillagers" in 1775 at Lake of the Woods.—E. D. N.