

CHAPTER XXIII.

ATTACK OF A WAR PARTY OF DAKOTAS ON A FRENCH TRADING HOUSE, ON THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI, IN THE YEAR 1783.

A French trader whom the Ojibways name "the Blacksmith" builds a cabin, and winters at the mouth of Pena River, which empties into the Crow Wing—He is attacked by two hundred Dakotas—The Dakotas, being armed mostly with bows and arrows, are finally repulsed with loss—Two Frenchmen are wounded.

ESH-KE-BUG-E-COSHE, the old chieftain of the Pillagers, who is now¹ beyond his seventieth year, relates that when he was a small boy, not yet able to handle a gun, he was present at a trading house located at the confluence of Patridge, or Pe-na River, with the Crow Wing, when it was attacked by a large war party of Dakotas. The different circumstances of this transaction appear still fresh and clear in the old man's memory, and as he is one of the few Indian story tellers who is not accustomed to exaggerate, and in whose accounts perfect reliance can be placed, I have thought the tale worthy of insertion here, from notes carefully taken at the time I first heard the old chief relate it, as an important incident in the course of his adventurous and checkered life.

The trading house had been built late in the fall by a French trader whom the Indians designated with the name of Ah-wish-to-yah, meaning, a Blacksmith. He had venturously pitched his winter's quarters in the heart of the best hunting grounds on lands at that time still claimed by the Dakotas, but on which the Pillagers were now accustomed to make their fall and winter hunts, undeterred by the fear of their enemies, with whom they continually

¹ A. D. 1852.