

PASH A BA HO

STORY OF THE OLD CHIEF—AN INCIDENT AT "THE POINT"
WOMAN'S RIGHTS IN THE WILDERNESS

By Mrs. A. M. Mitchell in Gregg's Dollar Monthly and Old Settlers' Memorial, Vol. II, No. 3, p. 12, 1874

Mr. Gregg: As the *Keokuk Gate City* is at present entertaining its readers with a lengthy account of the old Indian Chief, Pash A Ba Ho, I suppose the incident I am about to narrate will not be misplaced in your columns. The circumstance which was related to me by one who was an eye witness of the affair was probably never told to A. W. Harlan, as the episode reflected but little credit upon the old warrior.

In the fall of 1831, the Sauk and Foxes, as was their custom when on their way to their trapping grounds up the Des Moines, stopped at the Point to lay in their winter supplies. Among them was the redoubtable "Stabbing Chief," who, under ordinary circumstances, was a quiet, well behaved personage, but, unfortunately, like many of his red and white brethren, had an undue partiality for the juice of corn, and it took but little of the fiery beverage to transform him into a quarrelsome, noisy, howling savage.

As the Indians remained several days at the Point, Pash A Ba Ho had a fine opportunity for offering his devotions at the shrine of Bacchus; for the whiskey barrels belonging to the American Fur Company always stood tap-free for the red man.

For the first day or two, Monsieur Pash kept himself pretty well under control, but on the third day concluded, as it would be the last chance he would have to imbibe for some time to come, to wind up with a grand drunk.

One after another the canoes left the landing, and in vain the occupants tried to induce the Chief to accompany them. Pash A Ba Ho was enjoying himself and expostulation and entreaty were alike unavailing; through the village he went, shouting and

dancing, talking Indian and swearing English, till all his people had left the place, with the exception of his wife, who still followed him about, mainly striving to quiet his drunken revelry.

The old Chief's wife was a refined, delicate-looking squaw, with quite self-possessed manners, and a low, softly modulated voice—a genuine lady by nature; consequently her husband's misconduct was exceedingly trying to her feelings.

Some fifteen or twenty feet from the American Fur Company building stood a large cottonwood tree, and beneath its spreading branches old Pash finally seated himself. Bracing his body against the tree, he swung his bottle above his head and commenced singing a hideous war song, pausing now and then to indulge in a few good solid English oaths. Madam Pash stood a short distance from the tree stirring a pot of venison broth, and her quick eye took in her lord's position at a glance, and she determined to end his carousal then and there.

Stepping behind the tree, she drew from beneath her blanket a long, woolen scarf, and with one rapid movement passed it twice around the old man's waist, fastening the ends firmly together on the opposite side of the tree; and before the Chief could comprehend the fact that he was a prisoner, she had picked up a bucket that stood near and started for the river.

In a few moments she returned with the pail full of water, and drawing as near to her husband as was consistent with safety, she emptied the entire contents over his head.

The shouts which went up from the old savage might have rivaled the cries that echoed along the walls of Pandemonium, during the Stygian council, so eloquently described by Milton.

"What is she doing with him?" asked my informant, who, with the rest of the villagers, had gathered around to witness the performance.

"Putting him through a course of discipline, madam," answered Colonel Farnham, who stood leaning against the porch, shaking with laughter, "and a very efficacious remedy it will be, as you will see in a short time."

Unmoved by the cries of her husband, or of the wild merriment

of the whites, the squaw again sought the river bank, filled her pail, and once more the contents went streaming over the head of her captive. Again the old Chief sent up an unearthly shout, yelling, swearing, threatening, as he vainly tried to release himself from his position, but the Indian scarf held him like a band of iron, while Mrs. Pash stood looking on with the utmost composure.

Not a sign of anger or annoyance on her face, as with her usual quiet manner she proceeded to give him another bath, and by the time the sixth bucket of cold river water had deluged his hide the effect was plainly perceptible, and in the course of an hour she loosened the scarf, and a more thoroughly sobered individual never rose from beneath the boughs of a cottonwood.

At a word of command from his wife, the Chief drew near the fire, and as soon as his clothes were dried sat down to partake of the food which had been prepared for him an hour before. The meal over he proceeded to help pack the cooking utensils, shook hands with his white friends, and with the docility of a lamb followed his wife down to the boat, and soon their canoe was floating away over the blue waters of the great river.

Pash A Ba Ho may have been a mighty brave warrior, and may have taken the scalps of seven Igh-ho-was at one time, but it is an unmistakable fact that he was once thoroughly conquered by a woman—a power which many whiter, as well as braver men, have been forced to acknowledge.

Warsaw, Feb., 1874.

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