

TWO LITTLE INDIAN BOYS AND WHERE THEY WENT TO.

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IT was a question which of my Indian boys I should take with me on my proposed five weeks lecturing tour through the Eastern province of Canada,—whether it should be one big boy or two little boys—whether it should be Joseph or Isaiah or Zosie or Kiyoshk or Soney.

So we had them up one or two at a time to tea and put them one by one through their paces to see which would behave the best and which would speak out the best, and which would sing the best, and finally, Willie Soney and Zosie Dosum were selected—Willie from Walpole Island, south of Lake Huron, a Potawatomi, and Zosie, an Ojibway, from the north shore of Lake Superior. There were still about two weeks before we should start and the boys must be trained a little—trained how to come into a room gently, how to abstain from putting knives into their mouths at meals, how to keep their finger nails cut and clean, how to say “yes, please” and “no, thank you,” how to go to bed properly, and how to wash and dress properly in the morning. A kind lady—somewhat advanced in years—kindly undertook to train the boys in these various little niceties and it was thought well in order to facilitate her efforts that the two lads should be separated entirely from the other pupils for the rest of the time that remained and be put completely under her charge. Then they required also to be trained for the parts they would have to take at the meetings, and this two of my daughters undertook to attend to, the boys were to say a number of texts which they already knew by heart, sing several hymns and repeat a dialogue; they were also to dress up in Indian costume, say another dialogue, explaining the various parts of their dress, ornaments, etc., and dance a war dance.

At last the day came for departure. The packing was all finished, the pony carriage and buckboard were brought round and amid the farewells of the assembled pupils we started off on our little trip to the east, which we expected would cover something over 3,000 miles and occupy rather more than five weeks. The names of the two boys who accompanied me on the journey I have already given. Willie, the elder, was somewhere between twelve and fourteen years of age—Indians hardly ever know their age. We called him twelve at the railway stations, a bright, pleasant, intelligent looking boy, his black hair growing rather low over his forehead, dark, black eyes, as they all have, a good-natured smile generally playing on his lips, his hat worn in rather a jaunty style, and a general air of independence and freedom about him, not at all shy, and making friends readily.

Zosie, the younger, was probably between eight and nine years old, and we called him eight,—a queer little chap with a comical looking face, and a comical way of saying and doing things. Sometimes, when his eyes lighted up, he looked almost pretty, but he had a way of drawing his hat down over his ears and standing with his mouth open, and at such times he would look exceedingly ugly, and almost Ape like. He was an independent little monkey, talking his quaint English to everyone he met—not at all wishing to be helped or shown how to do things, and yet very observant and imitative of other people's ways. His real name was probably Joseph, but he called himself Zosie when he first came to us, and the name has always stuck to him. When we started on the journey the boys were attired in the winter uniform of the school, dark navy blue military cut coats with red cuffs and collars and brass buttons, and grey étoffe trousers, their hats dark grey felt with a yellow band, on which latter were printed the letters O. I. H., “Our Indian Homes.” They were each provided with a warm overcoat and had a little satchel between them, which held their Sunday clothes and change of linen. They also had a long bundle, fastened with two straps, which contained the wild Indian costumes which they were expected to don at the meetings. Our first destination was Ottawa. Here we expected our ex-pupil, David Osahgee, at present a clerk in the Indian Department, would have met us at the station and taken the two boys to his lodgings, but owing to an accident on the line our train was seven hours late and David was not there; so we all packed into a cab and drove to the friend's house where I was expecting to stay. It was 6.30 p.m. and dinner was just ready. I explained that the Indian boy David had failed to meet us, and not knowing his address I had brought my two little companions with me to the door, until I could ascertain where to send them. My hostess very kindly invited them in and said that she would gladly put them up for the night as it was so late and she did not know the house at which David Osahgee lodged. Thus the two little Indian boys spent their first night in Ottawa, in a large well furnished gentleman's house, and a great deal was made of them by our kind entertainers. One of the ladies wrote about them, just after they left, “I thought it so exceedingly nice of Willie Soney, that, after receiving some little gift that friends had sent in to him, he went at once to his satchel, without saying a word, and taking out a little basket of his own manufacture, handed it to me, merely saying ‘Do you want this?’ Of course I was much pleased, and a little while later he went again to his bag, took out another basket of a different shape, and holding it up said, ‘Which you like best, this or that?’ Indicating the one he had given me.