

Lopez

--from notes of H. C. Bailey.

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A digger Indian is surely a good subject for a character sketch, but there are peculiar characteristics in the Indian tribes as in any other people. And we frequently get insights into the real character we can get along no other lines.

In the fall of 1855, there were fifty or more Indians camped in my pasture near the homse. Wife and I visited them frequently in the afternoons. Our attentions was attracted to a boy seven or eight years old whose general makeup was more like a Brownie than a boy. All stomach and head. His other anatomy seemed to just be clinging to these two parts. Legs, arms and chest, all skin and bones and his large, black eyes with a most forlorn and pathetic expression.

On inquiry, we found he had no parents. Both were dead and his uncle had charge of him. We as ed old Lewis and Sue (his guardians) to give him to us, which they were only too glad to do.

We went home an Indian richer and one more added to the household. It did not take long to crop his hair, give him a general scrubbing and get some clothes on him, (though neither tailor cut nor made) after which we had a happy contented Indian. By giving him plenty of food, pills and quinine, we soon had a sleek, fat, shiny, happy boy all our own, for the present at least.

The boy grew and flourished a pace, and soon with his store of clothes and boots, began to put on airs with his old chums. When they came around he shunned them as far as he could, and after a few visits to the rancheria, as far as he could, turned his back on the whole tribe and started out to be an Americano.

We were well pleased with him, as he soon learned to wash dishes

and do many chores around the house, and seemed delighted to get praise for well doing.

As long as he tried to be an Americano, he was about the same as any boy of his age except he never got into mischief as most boys do. He was anxious to learn the alphabet, making the letters on anything he could find, and did fine work. "e could beat me from the start.

It added greatly to his content and pride, teaching him to shoot a shot gun and ride the horses. The second winter I put him to playing and never saw a boy prouder of his achievements than he.

He now felt so far above his old comrades he would not talk to them when he could help it. I was congratulating myself on my acquisition, as he was worth about twenty dollars a month, and I now felt fairly secure in my possession.

But "the best planned *laid schemes of mine* and men,
Hang aft a-glee
And leave us nought but grief and pain for promised *joy*."

All went well for about two years. "e then wanted to go to the rancheria, at first a month or two between visits. I had no objection as he always went Sunday morning and came home on good time to do his chores. I didn't know Indians then as did later. He soon wanted to go Saturday evening and come home Sunday evening. And then Monday morning and maybe Tuesday.

The Indian microbe in him was working with a sure result in the near future.

I had to go after him twice and had trouble to find him the last time. But he came home peaceibly and worked as well as ever. At last one Monday morning he failed to appear.

I waited two days and went to look him up (I was stuck on that Injun) but the other Indians would not tell me where to find him. Afternoon Wednesday I found him with a band of young bucks. When I hailed him

and told him to get on my horse behind me, he started to run. I soon caught him on my horse and a few good strokes of an oak limb stopped him and brought him to turn.

But I knew he was a goner and tried to make a compromise. I told him if he would stay till I could get done plowing I would give him a new suit of clothes, a little money and good will. He stayed a few days and left. I did not see him for more than a year.

One evening just about dark, he and his Mehala (name Sue, something of a belle) came in drunk as sailors, and in a wonderful good humor. He was going to work for me and milk while Sue worked in the house.

They were the only good humored drunk Indians I ever saw, as usually they are ugly.

We told him to go into an old dry cellar to bed and in the morning we would see about it. Instead of the cellar, they went into the hen house and located just under the roosts. Next morning just after sunup they came out of the hen roost, the worst cowed and shamed couple I ever saw.

Well, if they were not a sight to see, I give it up. Nor did they need any extra perfume to make their presence known. Poor creatures, we could not but feel sorry for them, they looked so humiliated and forlorn.

They soon left and that was their last visit to our home. But his training was quite a factor in his future life. He never lacked for a job if he wanted it. He was a good farm hand along all lines; trusty and could handle horses as well or better than many white hands did.

My wife visited our old home about ten years later and saw Lopez and Sue. They had a good, rough board house fairly furnished; a cook stove and a sewing machine.

Lopez just had sued the Justice of Peace of the township for his wages, had beaten him and got his cash. He had not lost all his American ideas. He was well liked and conducted himself as well as the average citizen.

I learned from him and other cases, which came under my observation later, that it is just about as easy to change an Indian's color as his nature. It makes no difference under what conditions they grow to maturity, or how young they are separated, when the time comes they are about as sure to turn out a genuine Indian, as a tadpole is to make a frog.

I never knew but one exception and he was a Trudkee Indian bought from Nevada.

I knew two girls stolen from Clear Lake, sixty miles west of where we lived. They were raised almost from infancy by wealthy people and had all they wanted.

In 1858 the people left and came to Colusa. About a year after they came, one morning the girls were gone and had got about half way to Clear Lake before they were overtaken and brought back. But it was no use; the Indian was beginning to assert itself and no inducement could keep them. Though they had always been well dressed, I have no doubt in two days after they reached their old home they were as dirty and greasy as any one in the Rancheria.