

aside their rifles, cartridge belts and leggins and found seats on the floor from which they could watch their host at work over the fire. The meal of bacon and venison, tea and bread, was soon ready, and the four crowded around the table, perched on little heaps of firewood.

Afterwards, tobacco burned and tongues wagged. The midshipman told many stories of gallantry and adventure to which their host listened with kindling eyes. At last, taking advantage of a lull in the chatter—"Have you heard of the 'Essex?'" he asked.

"Well, rather," exclaimed Rodway.

"Got on the rocks, didn't she?" queried Wallace.

"She bucked a reef and sank just north of Frenchman's Bay," replied the hermit. "That was six years ago last July—the tenth of July."

"And there was the devil to pay," said Rodway, eagerly. "I've often heard about it; for the chap who commanded her was spoons on an aunt of mine. I've often heard my gov'nor talk about it."

"She was rather a rotten old tub," said Brown. "Don't see why the Admiral raised such Ned at having her put out of the way."

"I was there when it happened," said the man of the hut. "Weather thick as soup. Heard her strike. Then they all came off in boats—except the commander. When the fog cleared in two hours, there wasn't a sign of her. She'd slipped back—off the reef—into deep water."

"That's the way of it," said Rodway. "Nevill—that's the chap who commanded her—swore he'd not go ashore and stand court-martial. The 'Essex' was his first command, you see, and he'd rather go down with her than have his sword taken from him. But the others got away, and the court of enquiry decided that Nevill was entirely to blame—and he had taken his medicine. Dashed hard lines, I call it. Tompkins, who was acting first lieutenant, told my gov'nor that Nevill and he were both on the bridge, lookin' out sharp for the white-topped spar-buoy that marks the channel into the bay. The old lady was slopping along at about quarter-speed. They sighted the buoy—both of 'em; but as they struck, Tompkins saw the white top flap away from the channel-mark—and I'm dashed if it wasn't a bunch of wreckage with a brace of gulls perchin' on it."

"I think I'd have come ashore with the others, if I'd been Nevill," said Wallace.

Brown shook his head. "They'd have called it 'gross carelessness'. He would have been asked to get out of the service—at least," he said.

"I call it dashed hard lines," grumbled Rodway.

"It must have been hard on—the lady Mr. Nevill was engaged to," remarked the hermit.

"She'll never forget it," replied Rodway. "She's a good-looker, too—but she's cut away from everything since that. She says that the Admiralty as good as murdered Nevill—for if they hadn't been known as hard-hearted and pig-headed, he'd have taken his chances."

"He should have taken them anyway," said Wallace. "Those duffers ashore might not have understood, but the Service would have."

"So you don't think he was to blame?" asked their host intently.

"I think it was beastly bad luck," replied Brown.

"Same here," said Wallace.

"And he was a fine chap—and a clever sailor," said young Rodway. "My gov'nor thought no end of him."

The mood of the company had become serious and reflective. Each man smoked in silence for awhile and stared at the subsiding fire. Suddenly the hermit got to his feet and faced the midshipmen.

"What would you have to say to this Nevill, if he were still alive?" he cried. "You have pity for his memory—and excuses—but suppose he had swam ashore—and hidden for six years—what would you say to him? Give me the truth, by God, for I'm desperate."

They looked at him in amazement and dawning comprehension. He read their eyes by the flickering light.

"Yes, my name is Nevill," he continued, more quietly.

"Captain John Nevill, R.N.—that is who I was before I crammed the old 'Essex' onto that damned reef. I meant to go down with the old tub—but somehow, when I found myself in the water, I couldn't help making a fight for life. The fog was still thick when I crawled up the land-wash. I heard the voices of Tompkins, and DeMille, and my men—but I turned away from them and hid among the rocks. When the fog cleared I saw them looking for my body—wading 'round among the black rocks—and I wished to God I'd not fought the tide and the surf. And ever since then I've been worse than dead."

His guests gazed at him with blanched faces.

"Six years—in this place," whispered Brown, with a thrill of horror in his tones.

Suddenly Rodway sprang up and extended his hand. "I'm glad you swam ashore," he said, huskily. At the same moment Wallace and Brown joined him.

"Nelson himself couldn't have stood up against such cursed bad luck as that," said Wallace.

Brown, who was on the verge of tears could not express any appropriate sentiment. But he shook the hermit's left hand, patted him on the shoulder and babbled strange oaths.

Early next morning, the three midshipmen set out for their ship. Their parting with the bewhiskered hermit was cordial—even tender. They halted on the summit of a knoll and turned their faces toward the mound with its plume of smoke.

"Don't forget, sir," shouted Wallace.

"Don't forget," shouted Brown.

"I'll tell her—to make sure you'll not forget," shouted Rodway.

Then they dipped over the brow of a knoll and were lost to view.

"God bless that girl—and those three charitable kids," cried Nevill. Then he knelt awkwardly, on the brown loam of the barren and covered his face with his hands.

Only Millionaire Redskin

THERE has just arrived in London from the United States an interesting visitor in the person of Quanah Parker, the mighty warrior chief of the Comanche Indians. He has journeyed to England on the personal invitation of Mr. Bryce, the British Ambassador. He is accompanied by the favourite of his three wives, Too Nicey, said to be "the pearl of the redskins' wigwam." Parker is said to be a millionaire and the richest copper-coloured man alive. He was not a full-blooded Indian, however, but it was his mother, not his father, from whom he derived his white blood. She was Cynthia Ann Parker, stolen in 1836 by the Comanches, and searched for by Texans for years unsuccessfully until 1860, when she was recaptured in a fight between whites and Comanches.

She was the wife of a chief then, and he was killed in a fight. She had forgotten English and wished to return to the tribe, which she was not allowed to do. She had two sons, who remained with the redskins. One died many years ago, the other is chief of the tribe today and is just now our visitor. For the last ten years he has lived at a little place some sixteen miles west of Fort Sill, in the new State of Oklahoma. Parker frequently journeyed to Washington to see the late President McKinley on behalf of his tribe, while he has had many chats with President Roosevelt.

But the most famous redskin now living is undoubtedly "Alec" Kennedy, who is justly proud of the two service medals he owns, and which were awarded him for the work he did in Africa during the Egyptian War. His headquarters are at Edmonton, on the Upper Saskatchewan River, at the end of the railway—the real jumping-off place in the Canadian Northwest. He is in the employ of the Indian Department of the Canadian Government, and has been most of the time since the Hudson Bay Company's territory was taken over. Before the change he was employed by the company. His present occupation is guide and interpreter to the Indian Commissioner and other Government officials.

When the Louis Riel rebellion broke out, Kennedy found himself at the head of a band of bateau men, whose business it was to transport the government stores and ammunition for the troops. He did his work so well as to attract the personal attention of Wolseley, who was then in Canada. Years later, when the famous soldier was in Egypt and it was decided to send an expedition to Khartoum he recalled the faithful services of the Indian and his skill and intimate knowledge of the ways of rivers, of boats and boatmen. Wolseley sent for him and bade him come at once with a select party of bateau men to Egypt. Kennedy was under fire more times than once on the Nile, but remembers few of the accompanying circumstances—or, at least, he will never tell of them—perhaps because he has been shot at more than once at home and has never been hit. He is descended from a member of the famous party of Scots, led by Lord Selkirk, who went into the Hudson Bay territory as settlers a hundred years or more ago. His grandfather was therefore white, but the Indian blood undoubtedly predominates in Alec. He himself has married a full-blood and has several children.—M.A.P.