

## A PAGAN OF THE SOUTH

his fingers; he sipped it once, and then drank it all. "Again," he said.

Again it was filled. The cigarette was smoked nearly to the end. Shorland must unburden his mind of one thought, and he said: "You took what was meant for me, my friend."

"Ah, no, no! It was the fortune, we will say the good fortune. *C'est bien!*" Then, "The wine, the wine," he said, and his fingers again clasped those of Shorland tremblingly. He took the glass in his right hand and lifted it. "God guard all at home! God keep France!" he said. He was about to place the glass to his lips, when a tremor seized him, and the glass fell from his hand. He fell back, his breath quick and vanishing, his eyes closing, and a faint smile upon his lips. "It is always the same with France," he said; "always the same." And he was gone.

## V

The French had bought their victory dear with the death of Alençon Barré, their favorite officer. When they turned their backs upon a quelled insurrection, there was a gap that not even French buoyancy could fill. On the morning of the twenty-fifth they neared Noumea. Shorland thought of all that day meant to Luke and Clare. He was helpless to alter the course of events, to stay a terrible possibility.