

A PAGAN OF THE SOUTH

"How goes it, my friend?" said Shorland, bending over him.

Alençon Barré looked up, agony twitching his nostrils and a dry white line on his lips. "Ah, *mon camarade*," he answered, huskily, "it is in action—that is much; it is for France, that is more to me—everything. They would not let me serve France in Paris, but I die for her in New Caledonia. I have lived six-and-twenty years. I have loved the world. Many men have been kind, and once there was a woman—and I shall see her soon, quite soon. It is strange. The eyes will become blind, and then they will open, and—ah!" His fingers closed convulsively on those of Blake Shorland. When the ghastly tremor, the deadly corrosions of the poisoned spear, passed, he said, "So—so! It is the end. *C'est bien, c'est bien!*"

All round them the fight raged, and French soldiers were repeating English bravery in the Soudan.

"It is not against a great enemy, but it is good," said the wounded man, as he heard the conquering cries of a handful of soldiers punishing ten times their numbers. "You remember Prince Eugène and the assegaïs?"

"I remember."

"Our Houses were enemies, but we were friends, he and I. And so, and so, you see, it is the same for both."

Again the teeth of the devouring poison fastened on him, and, when it left him, a gray pallor had settled upon the face.