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IN
DARK PLACES

WHERE THE PAVEMENT ENDS

BY JOHN RUSSELL

I think *Where the Pavement Ends* is the best book of short tales by any debutant since Kipling's *Main Tales*.

—SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

Mr. Russell has been compared with Mr. Conrad. This is together a compliment and an injustice. To me he is a wholly individual artist held in the grip of the savage emotions of the South Seas, inflamed with their colour, bound by their combination of ferocity and sweetness.

—W. L. GEORGE.

IN DARK PLACES

by
JOHN RUSSELL

*"Of calling shapes, and hurl'ning shadows dire,
And airy tongues that syllable men's names
On sands and shores and desert wildernesses. . . ."*

COMUS



NEW YORK
ALFRED · A · KNOPF
1923

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CONTENTS

THE COLOUR OF THE EAST ✓	3
THE PAGAN ✓	23
THE ONE-EYED DEVIL ✓	48
THE BIRD OF PARADISE ✓	71
MC KEON'S GRAFT ✓	96
THE WRECK ON DELIVERANCE ✓	110
THE DIGGER ✓	136
THE SLAVER	158
JONAH ✓	185
THE WINNING HAND ✓	222
THE WITCH WOMAN ✓	242
ONE DROP OF MOONSHINE ✓	268

IN
DARK PLACES

THE COLOUR OF THE EAST

IN an upper apartment of a certain house already astir with the evening's regular business—in a very private apartment, just above the rear entrance—the gentleman from Macao arrived quite noiselessly, popping between the curtains and startling a wordless cry from the woman who sat waiting for him there, alone.

"A mackerel!" was his announcement, given in the Portuguese-Chinese dialect. "Sweet poppy of mine, I have caught one big mackerel at last! Fat as butter. He will be here tonight, and tomorrow—we eat!" he said, with a click of teeth.

The woman quailed before the almost insane flicker in his gaze, the tiger-look of that polite, catlike, brilliantly-smiling little individual.

"You are bringing somebody—to me?"

She was young enough to have been a girl not so long ago, was still girlish and lovely under the lamplight—slight and dark, with hair and lashes that would have made her envied anywhere, with the rich warmth of skin that shames mere white. But she bore the stamp of half-race. The mark which stands for base metal to a heartless white man's world, always, though the soul within be unalloyed from God's own mint. Asiatic and European, and neither the one nor the other, she wore a spangled, jet-sewn gown that was only imitation; and the room itself made counterfeit setting for her—a cheap

drawing-room gone wrong, with garish carpets and tattered, faded velveteen hangings at doors and windows.

"Somebody for me?" she faltered.

"Somebody for you!" he mimicked, with contained savagery. "No—nobody for you, little flowerlet. Rest easy. This time it is another kind of fool. Saints, what a fool! A young one with the milk on his lip. He would not give a penny for you. But you will snare him for me."

"How, then?"

He caught her wrist in his small, steely grip.

"Listen! In a little while comes this idiot to play at Li Chwan's tables, inside. You will be there, as always. You will get the seat next to him, and before he loses all his stake, see to it that you coax him in here for a moment. Save your tears for that. Somehow, somehow, you bring him to this room."

"Li Chwan will beat me."

"The devils in hell fly away with Li Chwan! Lock that door between if he follows; I need but the tenth part of an instant. Tonight is our great good fortune—comprehend that. This stranger has money—much, much money—to be so easily come by. I saw it. In a fat purse. Therefore attend me well.

"You bring him here. You cajole him with what tale you like. You lead him over by this window." He swept aside the curtain that covered an exit upon the balcony. "You push him against the hangings, if you can, to make them bulge a little—thus. Ah, ha! I will be ready—fear not—in hiding just behind. Then you hold him only long enough to give me true aim. . . . Understood?"

She was staring dully past him through the broken slats, down, down, at the water below, where its tide lapped the pilings, and a vagrant ray of light shone zigzag.

"And you?" she asked mechanically.

But when she lifted her weary glance, she found him already fingering a ten-inch Japanese knife—testing the beautifully polished blade.

"*Meu Deus!*" she screamed. "Not that!"

He struck her across the mouth as she fell to her knees. "Be silent, thou! There is no evidence. There shall be no evidence at all. No one saw me with him. None shall see me. He, a stranger—a chance tourist, without friends—he comes to Li Chwan's to gamble. Next morning, the police find him in the bay— Who is he? Who knows? Who cares?"

"I will know!" she gasped. "If you drag me into this last infamy—"

"Well?" The gentleman from Macao took hold of her and began interrogatively to probe the soft hollows of her neck above the shoulder-blade—the spot where a dirk goes safe home. "Ah-ha? Wouldst betray me—thinkest thou? Couldst keep such treachery in thy heart—thinkest thou?" Pressing with his finger tips smoothly and deftly by some infernal skill, of a sudden he brought her grovelling.

As she writhed at his feet in agony, swiftly she made a snatch at his armed fist—drew it to her in despairing effort to bury the blade in her bosom.

Quite expertly and playfully, he hit her between the eyes.

• "Sweet honey-flower! Little marigold blossom! I

think not, I think not!" he purred—and smiled more brilliantly than ever. . . .

So, altogether, it might truly be said that attractions and amusements were thoroughly well provided against the visit of Camberwell, that eager young explorer, when he came to the fan-tan den of Li Chwan some time afterward, to continue his inquiry for local colour.

Purple and saffron had been Camberwell's first notion of it. He saw it so the day he crossed the equator, that line which always seems, somehow, as if it ought to run the other way—much less of a boundary between North and South than it is between West and East. They cried the news in the smoking-room, and he ran out on deck under a stormy sky more than half expecting to find an actual mark ruled straight over sea, as it had been in his school geography. And, sure enough, the sun showed for a moment just then through the clouds and paved a glorious threshold.

After that he could hardly curb his impatience while the steamer wandered among antipodean ports which interested him not at all—transplanted bits of white man's country where people talked in his own tongue and almost with his own twang. But presently they headed back on a long westerly slant, and one morning at dawn they made their landfall. Camberwell stood forward in the bows, and as the mists parted before him he seemed to be flying in through successive opening gates, each more wonderful—the first, "jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald . . . and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." Those flaming old words came to mind—

from Revelations, weren't they? It was all one revelation to him, the goal for which he had yearned, a fairy-tale come true—the dazzling, the gorgeous, the veritable East.

Since the earliest time he could remember, Camberwell had been looking to this moment. He was the type of chap—more common than might be thought in a drab world—that dreams and that lives in dreams of those strange foreign parts, while destiny mostly holds the balance true with a trip between home and business twice a day. By the ordinary dispensation, he should have gone on dreaming, a little more dimly and dingily, until the bulge of a bank-account or the horse-power of an automobile became the only potent figures in illusion.

But Camberwell had the luck.

Before he was too old to care for dreams, or too dull to have any worth while, a certain forgotten aunt decided to assume the rôle of Providence and left him a very compact little sum in tangible cash.

A month later he had taken his inheritance, his leave of doting relatives, an expensive tropical travel-outfit, and the first vessel he could catch for realms of polychrome romance.

She was a cramped and insectivorous craft, somewhat underburthened for the size of her contract, one would have thought—"five months' cruise; view the marvels of the Orient." But she meant the *Argo* and the royal yacht and all the caravels of Columbus to Camberwell. She was only going to swing the lesser circle of the Pacific, with a few brief stops at obvious ports. But Camberwell asked nothing better; he was on the rainbow route at last. The morning of his arrival, he adorned himself in

his new silk suit, striped like an awning, and his new sun-hat, shaped like a fireman's helmet, and his buckskin shoes and his washable tie, and the cummerbund he had bought from the barber and the puggree the steward had sold him, and with his cane in one hand and his little guide-book in the other, he stood armed to sally forth like a modern conquistador the moment the gangway should be lowered.

"Mister, I'm going to do this town, and I'm going to do it good!" Thus he, exulting, informed the second officer as the vessel nosed a way toward her anchorage.

Mr. Davison turned a wooden, bluntly-moustached visage. Mr. Davison began to inspect the phenomenon slowly and casually, beginning at his feet. . . . He recognized Camberwell's general purpose and significance off hand. There is a certain detachment about the rank of second officer that seems highly favourable to cynic observation—perhaps it is so with the second at any job—and the observations of this particular second concerning and appertaining to the genus globe-trotter had been precise and acrid. He had a crisp retort ready when his glance came as high as Camberwell's own.

Now there was nothing about Camberwell to strike the beholder with architectural awe. He was just a well-made youngster of his sort, fresh and jimp, with some of his boyishness laundered into shining assurance by premature business training. But he did have rather remarkable eyes. Perhaps his dreams had something to do with them. In an undistinguished face, they were easily his best feature—wide and "seeing" eyes, unwavering, clear and clean as new pearl buttons—the kind of eyes that older folk linger on to retrieve some glint of their own youth. They surprised Davison. When he

met them full, he forgot what he had meant to say and changed involuntarily to an answering grin.

"How much of it are you going to do?"

"All of it," asserted Camberwell.

"You've got only until tomorrow morning."

"I know. But a fellow who's been waiting for a thing twenty-four years can sample a whole lot in twenty-four hours. That's me!"

Davison considered him.

"And what do you think you're after, sir?"

"Truth," said Camberwell promptly as if nothing could be simpler. "I want the essence of this strange place and these strange people. I want to understand it. I want to grab it for myself. I want— By gum!"

They were fairly in the roadstead now, where the city lay left and right. With its jumble of minarets and pagodas, of spires and domes as various as its faiths, it swam over its own reflection in the flood of the morning, detached, suspended like a mirage—a vision of incredible enchantment that burst upon Camberwell all at once.

"Look!" he cried. "That's it—that's what I came for! I want to get that."

"Yes?" said Davison, encouraging.

"By George! I knew it was bound to be splendid. But this—just look at the colour, Mister Mate!"

"Yes," agreed Davison, not unappreciative himself. "Yes. When that chap up-stairs begins splashing his lights all over the shop he does get some queer effects—no mistake. Though you'd have to keep looking a goodish while to learn the half of his combination."

"Maybe," said Camberwell. "But, d'you know," he breathed in hushed enthusiasm, "I believe it's got some

one combination. What? If a man were only keen enough to catch it—and wouldn't it be great if he could! Something vital and vivid to knock you on the spot so you'd say right off—"There, that *means* the East!" And I'm going to try, I'm sure going to try. I'll pass up no chance trying to get at it. Look now! How it seems. . . . You never saw a combination to beat that in your born days!"

Davison was doing some thinking.

"It'll seem something else in five minutes," he observed. "See here, sir, I couldn't go about to warn you at all—you being a passenger. I wouldn't presume." There spoke the professional stiffly. "And of course you're keyed up for your first Oriental port—natural, too. But, after all, y'know, it's not a Thousand and Second Arabian night. After all, it's only a huge great city, and not over sanitary, neither—" He hesitated, until Camberwell drew him with an amiable nod.

"A city like any other city, really," he went on. "Colours? My word, yes—every blooming colour. Twenty different races in a heap. But as for the truth of 'em—" He shook his head—a wise head, tinged with grey. "You couldn't ever dig it up. And if you did, you wouldn't much care for it; and likely it'd turn out to be a lie, anyhow.

"You see, sir, the nearest you or me can come to these people is—they're people. The good ones good enough, and most of 'em very well in their way—and a few of 'em rotten bad, I mean. The same as London, or 'Frisco, or Naples, or anywhere on earth. But these are rather worse—they've had more practice. And for a stranger in a strange place, as you put it yourself, what he's got to

remember; there's some regions and some kinds of truth he wants to leave strictly on one side. They may be pretty, but they ain't healthy."

Thus spoke the cynic when once well warmed out of his cynicism, all for the sake of the wide, unwary eyes of youth. And he had the usual reward. Youth jovially slapped him on the back.

"Fine stuff, ol' man! Now do me a last favour before I start, and I'll forgive you the rest. Those regions—that address you've got in mind—whereabouts, hey? . . . Just point 'em out as they lay, will you?"

So, in the end, Camberwell went on toward his vision with a laugh and jest, undeterred, as it was inevitable he should have done. He went ashore by the first sampan to leave the ship's side, waving an airy hand toward a wooden-jawed second officer who gazed after him from the rail. He went along like the babes in the song, to see what he could see. And he saw—truly—several things.

Through the early steps of that pilgrimage he proceeded in a state of emotion for which he was hardly to be blamed. All explorers have shared it in some degree, and certainly the East is still the East, with a few features of its own never wholly appropriated to the comic-opera stage. . . .

The colours were there—they were there beyond all whooping! Brown, of course—faces and bodies lemon brown, coffee brown, apple brown, chocolate brown. Each separate figure leaped to the eye with some radiant spurt—kerchiefs of vermilion, of ochre, of aquamarine; assorted head-dresses in raw magenta, slate, salmon, robin's egg and grass-green; skirts and sashes in the odd-

est rich tints, oldrose and olive, apricot and cinnamon; the silver-embroidered cap of a babe, the yolk-yellow robe of a pongee, the vehement scarlet belt and badge of a muslin-clad chuprassy—bands and whorls, dots and patches of colour, as if the whole palette had been wasted abroad with one gigantic spatter-brush. Camberwell went blinking and hurrying through it all, random-footed and random-minded as well.

"I must remember this!" gloated Camberwell, and tried to make sure of it, clicking the mental camera furiously. But the folk swept him on and each vista blotted out the one that went before and made it seem poor and meagre and altogether insignificant.

How on earth was a man to remember anything, any one aspect, when another was always shifting in—equally surprising and equally true? The best he could do was to clutch his guide-book the tighter, and blink the faster, and mop his bewildered, beaming face in a heat that waxed about him like a steam-bath and go tearing on—seeing, still seeing. . . .

A mad sort of pilgrimage, and before evening it had led him the extended round. To the bazaars and the forts and the race-course. To the Chinese millionaire's—an immense carved glove-box in cinnabar, lamp-black and chrome. To the Mohammedan mosque—a wedding-cake of frosty white, and the Hindu temple—a birthday-cake of pink icing. Finally, to the municipal gardens, where fantastic vegetation from the most expensive hot-houses in the world had been recklessly heaped right outdoors to display every tinge, wash, stain, tincture, or complexion that man ever named, and many more they

never could—every blooming colour, as Davison had said.

"This is it!" decided Camberwell, again and again. But how was a fellow to choose?

And when, at last, the seeker after truth took refuge in a big open-faced hotel by the Bunder—hot, tired, dry and dusty—happy, but somehow baffled, satiated but yet unsatisfied—when he called for refreshment in a broad, dim bar of tables and pillars and swaying punkahs where "Manhatcoktail" and "Thos. Collins; 1 Dol." lent an erratic familiarity to the decorations—by one of those coincidental errors that triumph over any studied irony—lo!—a stupid Goaboy waiter set out before him the wrong glass—a thin finger-depth of variegated sparkling liquor.

"*Pousse-café!*" exploded Camberwell then. "Half way around the world to find this! . . . *Pousse-café!*"

He turned with a human impulse to divide at large the inestimable humour of it; with the same gesture he flung open his well-crammed wallet to make payment. And that was the precise moment at which he met the inquiring, brilliant smile of the little gentleman from Macao.

The little gentleman from Macao occupied the adjoining table. It was wholly natural for him to reply with winning and easy politeness. "Pardon," he said. "Is your order wrong by the steward? Maybe I can do a service. If you allow me——"

He appeared to be only some casual merchant, clerk, or agent of the port. With his suit of spotless drill and low-brimmed Panama, with his languid glance and pruned moustache like tiny leeches on his lip, there was nothing to set him apart in the class of resident local whites and

superior Eurasians. Camberwell had been vaguely aware of such a class. He even thought for an instant he must have seen this gentleman before, somewhere. But that was hardly possible. The gentleman from Macao had been trailing him half the day, and it would have been very poor business indeed if he had intruded himself so clumsily. A certain experience in these affairs had taught the gentleman from Macao to be neat as a pin, inconspicuous as a cat, smooth and deft always. Which he was and, except for his smile, completely colourless.

"You don't like?" he queried.

"Why, no; I don't," said Camberwell, readily if somewhat ruefully. "The way it comes, they certainly put one over on me. I leave it to you. Here I've been running in circles since early morn to discover the special domestic attraction of your burg—and here's the answer I get slipped to me after all. A common, every-day mixed drink!"

"Ah-ha! Too common? Not am-using enough."

"Oh, it's amusing. But exasperating." Camberwell held up the glass. "I didn't come for this!"

"No," agreed the other. "No, of course you didn't. The same 'sing you get at 'ome—eh? And 'ere you expect somesing new—somesing different."

"Mister, you've said it!" returned Camberwell.

A most intelligent little person—this gentleman from Macao. He nodded. "I onerstan'. If you please wait one second——"

To the stolid Goaboy, still hovering near, he passed a few swift, purring phrases. It was a curious detail that he used a Portuguese dialect which is almost as safe as a secret code, even in the babel of a Far-Eastern town.

But nobody could have noticed the order he gave, nor how he gave it; from across the bar nobody could have suspected him of taking any interest in the visitor. Only, after the fresh drink had been brought—

“Ow you like *that*?”

“Great!” The stuff looked exactly like liquid topaz, tasted exactly as topaz ought to taste—delicate, keen, and pungent. “It’s great!” admitted Camberwell, sipping.

Only then, the gentleman from Macao leaned a trifle closer. “And about these amusement’. These attraction you speak of. Maybe I could ’elp you also. Suppose, now,” he went on, in a voice of infinite suggestion, “suppose you go see a lid’l dance—eh? Mu-sic—dancers. Very special—very different indeed! . . . A lid’l sing-song——” He stopped, for the visitor had drawn back.

“Thanks,” said Camberwell, without offence. “That’s not quite what I’m after.”

“No?” exclaimed the gentleman from Macao, and it was his turn to ask, as Davison had asked before him: “No! But *what* is it you are after?”

So again, for the second time since dawn, Camberwell had to give account of himself in the East.

“The dope,” he said simply. “Just the true dope. I want what this place can show—the inwardness, the meaning, the colour. I want the colour of it, *right!*” he cried, with a sort of passion, and shook his head. “I’ve been looking and looking all day,” he added whimsically. “But I haven’t found it yet—not to be sure.”

And again, in his turn, the gentleman from Macao searched Camberwell’s face—just as Davison had done—met Camberwell’s eyes, those rather remarkable eyes.

Whatever he saw there, he made no sign to declare; perhaps could not have told any better than the second officer. The fact remains he adjusted to it with even greater celerity.

"Ah-ha! Yes,"—he nodded—"I onderstan'. But 'ave you ever reflect' to yourself," he offered, leaning still closer until his teeth glistened, "'ave you reflect' 'ow these dope of yours change? If you so want the colour, the true colour—eh, what?—why not go look at night-time?"

Camberwell sat up. There was a pleasant tingling in his veins; his fatigue and disappointment had lifted like fog from a channel. All the eagerness and the brightness of his dreams came back with a rush. As a pilgrim re-inspired he turned to the quest once more.

"By George! It's a fact. I still have the night, haven't I? Mister, you're a wiz! If you happen to keep that address on you—the region, the whereabouts——"

A minute later, the gentleman from Macao had taken himself and his unfailing smile elsewhere, had vanished, leaving a card behind him on the table with the polite, murmured direction:

"Tell any 'rickshaw-man."

And while Camberwell read the jotted number, he chuckled aloud:

"Too bad about the one the mate wouldn't give me!
. . . Wonder if this is the same!"

As a matter of fact, it was the same—geographically a district, a section, a public place. A famous place, in its way. Moreover, if he could only have known by some clairvoyance, it was that identical place elsewhere toward which that obliging informant of his, who had just proved the trick of smoothness so admirably, was

even then gliding away through the clogged purlieus of the city and the sticky tropic night—inconspicuous as ever, keeping to the shadow and the unfrequented path, moving like a sleek thing of prey which runs before to prepare its ambush.

Camberwell came in condition to enjoy it, to enjoy almost anything, thanks to the topaz drink and the mummy-faced Goaboy, who must have had some talent, too, for Camberwell was accurately and scientifically within the penultimate limit. How he reached the main entrance, how he braved the portals of that famous place where angels certainly fear to tread, he could never have told; but in good time he tipped the grinning doorkeeper a gold piece and bashed his sun-helmet over the celestial head, hung his cane on a joss, shook hands with a Cantonese hatchet-man—the Oriental equivalent of a bouncer—elbowed through as choice a gang of cut-throats and half-caste outcasts as ever gathered between Hakodate and Suez, yanked a chair from under the worst of them, offered it to the nearest scared *nina de salon* and stood in to play. Easily. With complete enjoyment. . . .

For the colours were there. It was just as his casual little friend had said—the colours were there—mellowed and deepened in the night-time: hot and bright and swinging round him now with the most entrancing gyrations. Seagreen on the table-top—tiny twinkles of brass cash under the banker's pale yellow fingers. The bronze of intent faces, the gamboge and citrine of downward-flaring lamps, the amethyst drift of smoke. Puce and mauve and maroon among the clustered players. Turquoise and violet and crimson among the dresses of the women. He

liked them all. He liked them better as he won and won.

And that was easy, too. You shoved your bet on one of the four numbers, and then they counted your number from the bowl and gave you white banknotes to match your greenish bills. . . . At least, they did at first. Easy! With that little *nina* to help you pick up the profits, whispering and nudging at you in the most kindly fashion, waiting upon you with her great soft, tender glance. Really an awfully pretty girl—young too. Though he could not understand why there should be tear-drops caught in her lashes like a dew on a flower. Unless, perhaps, she was crying for him because he had begun to lose.

He plunged the heavier, to reassure her. He lost. . . . Crying for the luck, was she? Charming girl, always plucking at his sleeve for some reason! But he would show her how well he could do this town in the night-time. He plunged. . . . And he lost. Plunged again, until, in an unmeasured interval and from an unmeasured distance, her sharp, urgent message filtered through his dazed senses.

"Come a-way; come a-way—quick. There is danger—danger—danger!"

He rallied to that call and tried to follow her through the crowd as she edged out. But it was not so easy this way—not nearly so easy to leave Li Chwan's as to enter it. Arms were put out to impede them. A muttering rose here and there. But they had reached the edge of the throng, the threshold of another apartment, before a moonfaced Chinaman came bustling up, chattered angrily at the girl and snatched her back toward him.

Camberwell drove a fist to the jaw with a gesture so

natural as to be almost unconscious—abolished that Chinaman, sent him tumbling and clawing while the girl slammed a door and leaned there atremble.

"You said—some danger?" queried Camberwell gravely, surprised to find how slowly the words and thoughts came.

"Foah you—foah you!" she cried, prettier than ever in her distress. "I did try to make you go a-way. I tried! Now you are caught!"

He got the idea dimly. He looked round him. They were alone in a sort of closed alcove with heavy hangings all about the walls, and at the far side the curtains of two windows. The girl seemed to be looking toward the windows with a strained face. She led him a step or two, and stopped, and wrung her hands. A smart blow fell upon the door. Voices were babbling inside there. The house was up against them. A perception common to all trapped creatures reached Camberwell.

"There must be a way out of this."

"Yes—but you can never get to it!"

"Show me, please. Which side?"

Again she led him a few steps, toward the far corner of the room, and again she stopped and held him back. They had to pass the second window if they were going to move any further. The girl held to him with stiffened fingers while a tattoo struck the door. She could not turn either way.

"Why?" she cried, despairing, "Oah, *why* did you ever come 'ere? You 'ave lost your money; you got no money for it!" In fact the wallet he still kept in his hand was sadly shrunken. "Didn' you know on-lee bad an' wicked come to such a place? What you come after, *you?*"

He regarded her, and, by the solemn logic of drink, it seemed to him that she meant a legitimate question. She was so very pretty—so troubled and fearful for him, but brave and true, too. So like any right kind of girl to whom a man can and should tell these matters.

For the third time within his twenty-four hours, the explorer through strange foreign parts explained himself in all good faith.

"Well, I tell you," he said, swaying; "y'know—I wanted to buy some little things to take home with me. I wanted some little presents for my—my mother and sisters, y'know. Kimonos or shawls or things. And I thought—I thought, wouldn't it be great if I could only get the right colours? . . . Colours, good colours—I love 'em, and I wanted—the true colour of the East to bring back. That's all. But of course," he added mournfully, showing the wallet, "I can't do it now."

Then it was the turn of the half-caste girl to look into his face and his eyes—the rather remarkable eyes of Camberwell—and she looked, long and deep, from her agony of despair and life-weariness.

"'Mother'?" she breathed. "'Sisters'—you 'ave? An' you can speak of them 'ere?" He nodded, unvexed. "Boy!" she said, with something like a sob. "You—you boy from far a-way! You have the clean heart—the sweet heart!" She caught him closer. "Do not remember me—never, never think of me a'gain. But now—will you on-lee kiss me once bifer' you go?"

Well, she looked the sort of girl one kisses. And, besides, having asked—

He drew the back of his hand across his mouth. Her own was quite close, quite tempting. They were stand-

ing by the window. But in the long moment while she clung to him and their lips met, she swung him round, so that she leaned among the curtains herself.

A thundering assault fell upon the door, and at the same time she thrust him away from her so violently that he staggered toward the far corner and almost fell, literally, down the well of the rear staircase that guided him to the street. . . .

There the second officer met him, wandering in the unprofitable dawn, and picked him up with a great roar of relief.

"Thank God, Mr. Camberwell, sir! I've been looking all about for you. You gave me a fright, I can tell you. I was feared you might be over here in this here gambling-hole on the next block. A tough place! The police raided it last night, and it seems they caught a little murdering yellow rat of a Macao Portugee——"

Camberwell stopped him.

"Never mind any of that. I don't care. The only thing I want to know is when the ship sails."

"On the tide, sir—half-an-hour."

"Come along then, won't you?"

"Why, sir?" was Davison's query. "Have you had enough of this queer port and these queer people?"

"Yes," said the student of local colour. "Yes; I've had enough. Let's go!"

As they started along the water-front he rubbed his lips surreptitiously, as a man will do, on the back of his hand. And when he looked, there was a red smear. Red! That was the final discovery of Camberwell in the Far East. Red. The colour of life, everywhere the

same. Just common red. In a sudden brusque gesture of distaste and disillusion, he scrubbed it off with his handkerchief. . . . For he thought, and he went on thinking, and he always would think, that the stuff was nothing but rouge.

THE PAGAN

IT MAY be that some men can hold hatred in their hearts like a secret spring in a rock; that they actually do carry out feud and grievance and retributive vengeance after many years. But the men must be men of sour and bitter strain—very different from Henry of Vitongo. He grew up under the shadow of an unsatisfied wrong without once swearing a vendetta or taking a blood oath.

Henry was half Samoan—the gentlest, most tolerant and peaceable stock in all the jumbled racial chemistry of this world. And Henry himself was the laziest, most hopelessly easy-going and unconsidering youngster that ever drowsed and dreamed and played away the hours on the fringe of a jewelled beach. He had no hatred, only sunshine and laughter in his heart: Henry of Vitongo.

That was not all his name, of course. He had inherited the estate and the lawful designation of his father.

In the garden of the ramshackle, jig-saw homestead—imported piecemeal from Australia—stood a weather-beaten marble tomb—imported bodily from Hawaii. Between the jungle that ran over in tangled green and the lagoon that frothed in cream and blue, there it had stood for eighteen years; and from its ornately carven epitaph the half-caste boy had first learned his letters:

HENRY GORDON SHOESMITH

b. Scotland 1847

d. Vitongo, Sept. 6, 1898

"Every man's work shall be made manifest."

I. COR. III

And underneath lay the original trader of Vitongo—the tough old, far-wandering Scot who had founded home and family and fortune in this restful island nook; who had been brought to his last rest treacherously and terribly—slain by an unknown hand.

"Unknown," be it said at once, in the official sense only; for no person had ever been tried for the deed. "Unproven" would be more nearly exact; for in private talk, the murderer had been charged, tried and condemned long since. Some hundreds of folk in the Aana district of Upolo could have told how Henry Gordon met his death in the disordered days of Tri-Partite government, when men died without formality and law was weak in the land. Some dozens of old-timers along the coast from Apia town could have stated the case and the quarrel nearly enough. . . . They could have, but they did not; the natives because of native caution; the whites because of white policy. It was really nobody's business unless it was young Henry's business. And—

"*Tu'u ia mo paga,*" said Henry; which means, it is nothing, it is forgotten—it should not count. He climbed ashore and sat shaking the wet from his straight black hair and gleaming in the sun like a bronzed merman. "Eighteen year, tha's awful long time," said Henry of Vitongo.

His cousin Gordon scowled down at him.

"A long time don't change the fact. If you was a man, Henry Shoemith—the 'alf of a man——!"

"Ah, tha's it," smiled Henry quietly, without malice. "Tha's why—eh? I am only 'alf a man beside you." A neat way of recalling that Gordon's mother had married a white; wherefore Gordon was a quarter-caste, college-taught in New Zealand, and wore celluloid collars and satin ties and altogether comported himself with the dominant race. Wherefore Gordon despised a second cousin who preferred to live Samoan fashion—camping on an open veranda while real carpets and red curtains and pink lace doilies went to rack and ruin inside his neglected house, and never wearing so much as a pair of pants when he could help it.

"*Tu'u ia mo paga,*" repeated Henry.

The other bit his lip. It was his vehement annoyance that this graceless young scamp should have fallen into the best part of the Shoemith possessions. It was almost equally annoying that the scamp should care so little to augment those holdings, to deploy them with social gestures—or even to protect them, as appeared. "List'n to me," he said, severely. "Everybody knows who killed your father. Everybody knows it was the same h-wicked, h-wicked man who is trying to thieve away the rest of your land now!"

Henry pillowed himself on the warm sand and continued to smile indolently out across the smiling bay.

"He will do it, too—unless you fight. He has bought up all the notes of your foolish borrowings in Apia and raised the amount by tricks and false claims. Oh-h, a

cunning d-hevil! It was so easy how he robbed and killed your father. 'Ave you forgotten?" Gordon's voice fell a sinister note. . . . "Your father had loaned him much money. They went together one night to drink. Afterwards, somebody—somebody—rode a white horse from Mulifanua in the dark and cut your father's throat as he slept, and thieved all those papers of those loans! Eh? And now this same man comes again to r-r-rob you. Only this time he does not need to use a knife . . . Henry Shoemith !" Gordon called upon him. "Henry Shoemith; do you remember that knife?"

Something like a cloud passed over Henry's face; something like a shudder took him, as when a damp wind turns the bread fruit leaf. Did he not remember that knife? It was the substance of every evil vision he had had from childhood. He always saw it as it hung over his father's bed—a Malay kris, really, though Henry never knew it as such; one of the relics the shrewd old trader had gathered in his travels before he settled down as an island patriarch; a thing with a wavy blade and a handle set in coloured stones that glittered—glittered dreadfully. He always saw it glittering through a red mist since the morning when, as a mere toddler, he had been first to discover the tragedy.

"List'n. I know where that knife is kep'! I know three men in Apia who have seen it. The stones are very valu-able, and Joranson needs money again, as he did before. . . . He has tried to sell it—Joranson the Dane!"

Still Henry made no response.

"You could find that knife if you searched on board his trading cutter. . . . If you dared!" said Gordon, with

a spurt of anger. "Hoh! But you do not dare. Even when Tito is waiting there for you. A beautiful girl is Tito—the daughter of Joranson. She fears 'im, and every night he beats her with a bamboo stick. She is only waiting for some strong man to take her away from him. But she will not wait long for you when she knows you are a coward!"

Henry sat up at last. "I am not a coward," he said, stung into full-throated native speech. "I am sprung from the seed of Alipia Nailetai—'Alipia Who Died in the Sea.' He was a great chief of Samoa, and Samoans are not cowards!"

"Samoans are not cowards, but thou knowest what white folks say of them? They are quit-ters," returned Gordon, bitterly. "They will not fight. They quit! They can not carry through anything, even in their own defence. . . . And so it is with thee, who art no Samoan. What art thou? Only a fish-man and a fool. Only swimming and joking and idling while thy blood-enemy goes unslain and unpunished!"

"It is not for a Samoan to have a blood-enemy. It is not the custom of the country to slay anybody."

"It is the custom to ask justice! Only as nearest of kin you must ask the court yourself. . . . Come now, Henry, let me take your case," pleaded Gordon. "We can so easy prove that Joranson did it, and we can leave the killing to the English judge. He will 'ave Joranson 'anged by the neck. And then you can marry Tito—and Joranson's cutter and all that is Joranson's will be yours!" he added eagerly.

Henry lay back on the beach again with one arm thrown over to shade his brow. But while he regarded the im-

portunate visitor, in the pooled depths of his eyes ran a tiny flickering light which might have recalled—which did recall—the temper of that able Scotch trader, his father.

"Gor-don Shoesmith," he said, slowly, "go away. You are smart-man and lawyer-man. You are thinking if anything 'appens to me you will be next to own Vitongo—eh? And any'ow if you stir up bloody row you make me fight to keep Vitongo for you—eh? List'n. I am maybe fool but I am not damn fool! Go away, Gordon Shoesmith."

So Gordon went, swearing aspirated oaths as he mounted his rattletrap cart, and slashing his flea-bitten pony as he turned back towards his own plantation. Henry watched him go, and Henry laughed. He would have liked to keep on laughing. But after a while the laughter failed. All very well to check a meddling schemer; all very well to postpone a troublesome issue in true Samoan style with a handy proverb, saying it was naught—it was forgotten—it did not count. But the trouble which had been making for him pretty much since his birth would not banish so readily on this critical morning of his twenty-third year. . . .

Henry of Vitongo was that curious modern product—seldom noticed—the man midway East and West, whose heritage swings between two pasts as wide apart as the poles. It was a remarkable share in the heritage, and the world's indirect tribute to a noble native race, that as a half-caste of Samoa he need never be ashamed of it.

Pride of race is so rare with mixed bloods; still rarer when granted by white to dark. Only among descend-

ants of certain American Indian tribes, of the Maoris and kindred Polynesian branches through the Islands, will you find such pride held and acknowledged. And this was Henry's.

Not but he knew well enough the ways of a saddle-tinted society—like Gordon and Gordon's womenfolk, who anxiously aped the manners of a money-making middle class. Not but he saw Shoesmiths and Smollets and Schmidts—offspring of beachcombing adventurers in the last century—established now and vastly concerned with a quaint parade of high heels and ormolu clocks and afternoon teas. But he also knew in this same society how carefully the old Samoan names were remembered and honoured; how closely the old Samoan link still held. Even Gordon, with a sophisticated taste in neckwear and lawsuits—even Gordon himself claimed an ancient chief's title through a famous *taupo*, his grandam, and never dreamed of denying his island origin or the island speech.

The difference with Henry was that he had no call to be a Shoesmith at all. To these striving relatives of his many things seemed essential; invitations at Government House, land and profits and the tricks of commerce. To Henry nothing in life seemed important except the living.

It always had been so with him. Since his orphaned boyhood he had been a scandal to his kind. In his school days at the Marist Mission he had offered a sad problem to those earnest saints who shed a pale cast of culture on the riotous tropics. The best swimmer and cricketer, the quickest hand with net and bonito boat, he never had felt a really vital concern in compound percentage, the rule of three and the "Book of Sacred Gems." . . . As

sheerly a matter of feeling as when Brother Leo used to catch him playing truant with garlanded madcaps at the jumping-rock—used to shake an angry finger at the elfin face and explode a six-barrelled German word which signified, in approximate meaning, a “throw-back.”

“That is what you are, Henry Shoesmith. You belong a gentleman—no?—with a fine home and a trading store. And you act as a little pagan. Ach, such conduct displeasing to the good God; you should blush for yourself!”

Brother Leo intended no jest. It hardly occurred to him that a skin like sun-gilded fruit does not show a blush in the sight of the good God. But otherwise Brother Leo had hit the truth. Henry of Vitongo was a born pagan.

To ride the breaker, to chase the rainbow fish, to beguile the hours, nourished at nature's ripe breast and sleeping there without doubt or care—no books had taught him this; no books could teach him better. The casual villages in each shining bay—the bee-hive houses without walls or doors like the open, simple lives of their indwellers—they were home to him, and homelike and kindly were the scents of hearth and thatch and freshly-plucked *masoo'i*, of cocoanut shell fires and new cocoanut oil, headier than any musk.

He loved the equal days and the long, long moon-lit nights that pass to merriment and choric song, the droning organ of the reef and the cymballing of the palm-fronds. He loved every impact that set him in his ordained environment—the salted lash of spray, driving wind and rain like hammers from the sky: the breath-taking, bubble-poised send of a frail canoe: the cleaving triumph of a deep-sea dive: saffron dawns and cool pur-

ple dusks and quivering fierce noons on a coral shore. And the folk—his mother's sweet-voiced, sweet-eyed folk, with the port of demi-gods and the souls of trusting children—fated, of course, and condemned ultimately to vanish from a white man's world as surely as soft metal in an acid bath, but unvexed and unresenting: accepting the white man's religion and the white man's governance with the rest of the white man's deadly contact, but still at heart unchanged since a golden, olden age: neither labouring, owning nor coveting: harming none, envying none and hating nobody—these Henry loved, too, and lovingly understood.

All of which was harmless enough, to be sure—all of which involved nothing worse than the talk and the scandal aforesaid—to the fateful moment when he learned that he loved, and hopelessly loved, pretty Tito Joranson. . . .

“A beautiful girl is Tito, the daughter of Joranson the Dane. Every night he beats her with a bamboo stick. She only waits for a strong man.”

Well, whatever any one might say or think of it, Henry certainly had done his best to qualify.

Had he not enlarged Vitongo store at reckless cost? Had he not plunged with a bold financial gesture on three trading ventures to Savaii? Had he not mortgaged and borrowed right and left in order to gamble disastrously in copra and cocoa—all at Joranson's own cunning suggestion and all for the single purpose of proving himself a strong man and a gentleman by every half-caste standard and a worthy candidate for a son-in-law?

His effort had failed. It had worse than failed, for

Joranson was coming this very night to demand a settlement. Henry dreaded it. How terribly he dreaded it, only one could have guessed who had ingrained in his make-up the obscure inhibitions of Polynesia—primitive without savagery—wise without wisdom; the people who do not fight: "they can not carry through anything, even in their own behalf." Here and now he was going to have to meet the crisis of his life—to square life and love somehow with the reputed murderer of his father!

Such was the case of Henry Shoemsmith on this particular morning of his twenty-third year.

It was not a good case, but it offered no escape by his own lights and limitations. Neither by compound percentage. Nor yet by the "Book of Sacred Gems." And finally it drove him out of his dreams into making some sort of a show for himself. . . .

He hurried to the big house. He donned a pair of dove-grey pants. He laid out a shirt with pearl buttons. Better still; from a battered cowhide trunk he unearthed old yellow shoes, a jacket of black alpaca and a venerable silk waistcoat sprigged with forget-me-nots. Once he had scrubbed away the mildew and tucked up the sleeves and nearly strangled himself with a collar button and had set a warped straw hat to top the glory, he felt like an armoured knight; very gentlemanly, indeed. Then he marched over to the store where he relieved his Niue-boy clerk and sold three yards of calico for a total profit of ten pence ha'-penny and felt himself a business man.

The moral uplift sustained him all day long. Until swift tropic night began to pour in against the land. Until a lantern on Joranson's cutter cocked its baleful

and expectant eye at him across Vitongo Bay. Until he crept down cautiously to avoid his dear cousin Gordon—who doubtless would be watching and spying somewhere among the palm-trees—and paddled out in his little outrigger proa on the dappling phosphorescence of the lagoon to achieve his destiny.

Tito was waiting for him. Somehow he had been sure that Tito would be waiting and he was glad, though inwardly quaking. In a way this encounter was worse than the prospect of his ordeal with Joranson, for a half-caste courtship is hedged with infinite ceremony and he never actually had addressed a dozen words to his lady-love. He could see her gown as a lighter patch there on the forward deck. So he put on his shoes—instruments of torture which he had saved to the last moment—and climbed aboard over the cutter's rail.

"A-good even' to you, Miss Joranson."

"A-good even', Mis-ter Shoemith."

He swept off his hat with a flourish. She made him a courtesy in the grand manner of the saddle-tinted aristocracy. But both of them rather spoiled the effect by turning an anxious glance towards the after cabin, where their common ogre sat alone at his dinner. Their voices were hushed.

"I did not fin' you at the pi'ture theatre las' Thursday night," began Henry politely.

"No. Tha' was the same n-ight the dance of the Ladies' Tuina Club," returned Tito primly.

As a matter of fact, Henry had not gone to the picture theatre; neither had Tito gone to the dance. These were company conventions, to which they desperately clung.

"Business 'as been good today," observed Henry, fanning himself. "Copra is up again. I think there will be much money in the villages this season."

"Yes. And much gay time' in Apia," agreed Tito. "Two weddings will be soon—and a christen' party."

As a matter of fact business and parties were equally far from them; but they were saying the proper things.

Out on the broad horizon grew a faint halo, luminous with coming moonlight. It made a background for Tito's fillet-bound head. Higher yet hung two quivering points of radiance. Henry thought they must be fireflies caught in the dusky web of her hair. Then he saw they were stars, and presently, as a wonderful and very dear and very intimate revelation, they showed him her face.

A flawless face; of a beauty that would have matched a Reni Madonna—the soft, rich, almost Latin beauty of her type. Henry knew its loveliness. But now as he looked down at the tremulous mouth, the glorious great eyes uplifted and dwelling in his by the starlight—now in a dizzy sweep of tenderness he knew something else; her wistful appeal; her trouble that answered his own trouble—the same timid and passionate longing clouded with the same complex of doubts and misgivings and imposed restraints possessed each of them.

She wore a tight frock of some pink stuff. On her arms, smooth and firm as copper cast as flesh, and over her superb shoulders, she had tied a woolly shawl. By one ear dangled a bunch of ribbon, and she went mincing in ballroom slippers—velvet with jet trimmings—the kind that knock about all the shelves of the Pacific in job-lot consignments for the Colonial trade. Her whole splendid body, made for sun and freedom and the embrace of

cresting seas, had been pinched and frilled and tricked out in a pathetic attempt at fashion.

And with sudden enlightenment Henry recognized the pathos—not, as another might have done, the absurdity, of it; suddenly this girl who had seemed an unattainable mystery seemed a mystery no more. She was so delightfully embarrassed; so exquisitely uncomfortable—it thrilled him. . . . Surely her feet must hurt even worse than his own!

For Tito herself was just another product. She, too, had been taken as a child from her native mother and run through a mission. She, too, had submitted to the ideals of some gloomy suburb half a world away—like West Ham, perhaps, or Dulwich, or wherever the good sisters of the Papautu Girls' School hail from; had struggled with the rule of three and tried to find compensation for living in an earthly paradise by the "Book of Sacred Gems." And she had not made much more of it than Henry Shoesmith. He was aware of that at once, by voice and eye and the throb of a woman's breast—things not taught in missions. . . . Surely, some time or other, somebody must have called her a little pagan, too!

"Tito——!" he cried, and would have reached to her. But his collar button nipped him in time. After all, it is hard to discard a gentlemanly training; he had come braced and belted in such gentlemanly style. . . .

"Miss Joran-son," he corrected. "You look aroun' this place—eh?" He swept a stiff arm over the bay. "From shore to shore is Vitongo. You know?"

"Yes," she said, innocently. "Yes, Mis-ter Shoesmith. I know. Vitongo."

IN DARK PLACES

"You like it?"

"Yes," she said. "Oh, yes, Mis-ter Shoesmith. It is very pretty. And very es'pensive."

"It give me gr-reat pleasure," he stammered, "if you will accept per invoice . . . I mean—if you will do me the 'onour. . . ." With choking eagerness he tried to capture an eligible half-caste formula. "Dear Miss Joranson; list'n. All this is mine. This plantation; with a fine 'ome and a trading store. I own Vitongo myself——"

"Like hell you do!"

The words fell upon them with the force of a club. They started apart. And there at the hatchway of the little cabin stood their ogre; the white man—the inevitable white man who always has appeared in just that manner to the gentler peoples of the earth, who always does stand at the hatchway—grim and masterful.

"I heard you, Henry. I been waiting for you. Come inside here and cool off." His voice grated on the humorous note more compelling than any threat. Tito he passed over without a glance. At the first turn of his big hand, she vanished aft like a wraith. "Henry," he repeated, with formidable pleasantry, "don't be backward, my boy. Did I not tell you to come in here? . . . You're late."

Joranson was one of those figures that have made the South Sea the last far-flung, picturesque frontier. In the old days they possessed it with the missionary, step for step. The missionary sought the bewildered souls of black and brown men. The pioneer sought their labour and their lands. The one set up a paralysing system of

morality, while the other cashed in. Together, pioneer and missionary farmed the helpless island world—and few had come off better than Joranson. Blackbirder, gin-seller, gun-runner; he had tried most ways of scoundrelism in season. If he had died in that lawless period he might have become almost legendary, like the pirate Bully Hayes, whose disciple he had been. But he survived. And he survived because he was far-sighted as he was ruthless.

Joranson the Dane, they called him. The name had lost its original meaning; the man himself had long since moulded to the prevailing trader type, Colonial in speech and Yankee in oath. And this very adaptability was the line of his success. His early rivals were dead—Shoemiths and Smollets and Schmidts with whom he had played the old frontier game of fraud and violence as it used to be played. They were gone, and—"eighteen years, that's an awful long time." He seldom needed a weapon nowadays; he preferred a court order. He no longer beat the native over the head and sold him into slavery; he gave him credit and sold him into debt. And occasionally, when luck was kind, he caught some shiftless heir of one of his former foes and squeezed the life out of him with a very special satisfaction.

As in the case of Henry Shoemith.

"You was saying you owned something; and I was saying you did, nix." . . . Powerful—built on a huge, loose scaffolding of bone and muscle—he was still in steel-hard condition. Only his grey hair and his grey face betrayed him. He had a face gridironed like a devil's, and slitted eyes with a cold spark in them.

"You'll find it by these papers, Henry," he remarked,

as he tossed out a sheaf of documents on the tiny cabin table. "You don't own nothing. Them notes of yours went to protest, d'y' see? All you got to do is sign y'r assets to me . . . *All assets*," he added amiably.

Henry gasped.

"You mean—Vitongo?"

"The whole outfit."

"Vitongo——!"

"What t'hell else did you expect?"

Henry could hardly have told; but even with Gordon's warning he never had expected this. He never had thought of Vitongo itself as a piece of property—something you buy and sell. Vitongo was the land—his birthplace; the soil to which he belonged. . . . It stunned him.

He wanted to resist. Doubtless the papers had been juggled—perhaps actually falsified, as Gordon had said. But he could not tell how or where. He wanted to charge the other with his treachery; he wanted to deal or to dicker or to bargain somehow for his heart's desire. These were the things he might have learned in school, if he had been capable of it. But he had not learned.

Uncounted centuries debarred him. He was the man of colour, and against him stood the white man, armed with the white man's power and backed by the white man's code. He was the predestined victim. He had no choice but to obey, in a sort of helpless trance. Meanwhile Joranson continued to enjoy himself. It made a rare moment for Joranson, this neat turn which was also the triumph of his ancient feud. "I don't mind telling *you*," he said once, with infernal geniality, "I ought'a had the place long ago. Your father beat me out of it. But I

notice such crooked doings have a way of coming straight. . . . Sign y'r name right there, Henry—on the line."

And again:

"You'll understand there ain't a holy chanst for you, Henry. Not a chanst. I been too blame' careful. There'll be no pickings left over. Not even for that smart blackmailing cousin of yours—Gordon. I got Mr. Gordon stopped—don't *you* worry!" Which information, oddly enough, gave poor Henry a fleeting touch of comfort in the midst of his misery.

But the worst was at the last. When the business was done, when the name had been signed, Joranson slipped the mask a little. "That'll be all, Henry. Just one thing while you go." He bent a look on the boy like chill lightning. "Just one point. You got a hell of a nerve hanging around that kid of mine. Oh, I seen y'; and you drop it, d'y' hear?—or I'll skin you alive. She'll fetch a white husband any time, that girl—and by God, I'll have no more tar-brush in my family. . . . Now you clear!"

Henry cleared. With that glance piercing his shoulder blades, with that final insult in his ears, he scuttled up the after companion and stumbled on deck.

And there Tito met him again.

Out to seaward the moon had swung high, the swelling moon of Samoan nights, like a vast, golden bread-fruit in the sky. It gave light—light to show off silks and satins and tricked-out finery and mincing steps, perhaps—plenty of light for grand manners. But Henry did not think of them; and neither, somehow, did Tito. She met him at once; her hands fluttering towards his,