

308 THE SHADOW OF THE MOSQUE

"Child," said the hakim earnestly, "were you ten times an Arab you would be my wife."

The cries of the crowd in the street grew louder; stones battered against the gate; the full throaty sinister voice of the Muslim throng filled the air, and rose under the stars. Galt strained his ears for another sound that would mean that the Gurkhas were at hand. They were very long in coming. A rifle bullet struck the wall at Galt's feet and he hurriedly drew Uyuni back into shelter. The shot was not repeated, but the noises in the street redoubled, with clattering blows on the gate. Luckily it was heavily buttressed, built to repel the raids of thieves. The shebanas from the roof fired into the crowd, and they drew back leaving a body huddled beneath the light. Galt grew anxious. With the people in their present mood it would not be long before the house would be invaded; his arm tightened about Uyuni.

A resolution came to Galt. It would simply be an expedient to gain time, but it might be efficacious. He would tell the people the story of Uyuni's birth. He would show them that though she was bred a Muslim she was born a Nasrani. He was certain that many would scoff at the tale, but it might give a further respite. If it did not serve . . . he must fight to the last. He felt cold at the thought of Uyuni in the hands of that mob.

Relief came from an unexpected quarter. Even as he moved towards the edge, with Uyuni striving to keep him back in shelter, a sonorous voice broke on the night air, heavy, monotonous and weary unto death, but instinct with the mystery of the desert,