

6 The Shadow of a Great Rock

was thick with the reek of laden breaths, with pipe-smoke, and with the smell of hot men's bodies. Two Omaha Indians, smoke-stained and frowsy, squatted together upon the floor in a corner, speaking sometimes in deep gutturals and regarding the strange scene with furtive eyes; three or four half-breeds, mongrel offspring of the early French traders, had a table to themselves, where they chattered noisily in the *patois* of the border; now and again a weather-tanned woman passed through the throng to barter with the busy clerks at the long counters. But the great majority of those present were men of the master-race; one type was strongly dominant—the type of the American pioneer.

One entered presently from the night and stood in the doorway, looking about him, as though he was a stranger to the place. The marks of hardship were plain upon him; his heavy boots were white with road-dust, and the dust lay thick upon his black hat, upon his shoul-