

"Boys," John Fairmeadow drawled, significantly, "this is the only sort of church we have in these woods."

There was a laughing stir and shuffling: but presently a tolerant silence fell, in obedience to the custom John Fairmeadow had established; and caps came off, and pipes were smothered.

"A little away from the bar, please," the big preacher suggested.

Pale Peter nodded to Charlie the Infidel; and the clink of glasses ceased—and the bottles were left in peace—and the hands of the bartender rested.

"Now, boys," said John Fairmeadow, letting the foundling fall softly into his arms, "I'm not going to preach to you to-night, though God knows you need it! I'm just going to pray for the baby. *Dear Father of us wilful Children of the Vale,*" he began, at once, lifting a placid, believing face above the smiling child in his arms, "*we ask Thy guardianship of this child. In us is no perfect counsel for him nor any help whatsoever that he may surely apprehend. In Thine acceptable wisdom Thou settest Thy little ones in a world where presently only Thou canst teach them: teach Thou then this little one. Thou alone knowest the right path for a little boy's inquiring feet: lead then this little boy. Thou alone art saving helper to an adventuring lad: help then this lad. Thou alone art all-perceiving*