

played and lived; on the flat above them dwelt another branch of the family. And here too were children, but they had slipped their leading strings, they were so big; one son was seventeen, and another twenty; but one of them was very old indeed, said little Marie: he was twenty-five, and engaged to be married. All of them were well off; had good parents, good clothes, good attainments; and they knew their own minds.

"Clear the way! down with the old hoardings!" said they: "a free look-out into the wide world: that is the finest thing we know of! Godfather is right; life is the most beautiful fairy tale of all!"

Father and mother, both elderly people, (older than the children, naturally) said with smiles on their lips, in their eyes, and in their hearts, "How young they are, the young folk! things won't go on in the world just as they fancy; still, they will go on! Life is a wonderful, beautiful fairy tale!"

Higher up—a little nearer the sky, as we say when people occupy the attics—lived Godfather. Old was he, and yet so young in mind; always in good spirits. Many a long story could he tell. Far and wide had he been in the world, and from all the lands of the world were pretty tokens standing in his room. There were pictures from floor to ceiling, and some of the window-panes were of red or yellow glass; if one looked through them, the whole world lay in sunshine, however gray it might be outside. There were green plants growing in a great glass case, and in a globe attached to it there were gold fish swimming—they looked at one as if they knew many things they would not talk about. There was a sweet smell of flowers here always, even in the winter; and in winter-time a great fire blazed on the hearth; it was so amusing to sit looking into it, and to hear how it cracked and crackled.

"It reads old memories out loud to me," said Godfather: and it seemed to little Marie moreover as if many pictures showed themselves in the fire. But in the large carved bookcase close by stood the real books: and the one which Godfather read oftenest he called the book of books; it was the Bible. There was pictured the history of the world, and all mankind; of the Creation, the Flood, the Kings, and the King of Kings.

"All that has happened, and all that will happen, is written in this book!" said Godfather. "So infinitely much in one single book! Ay, and all that man has to pray for, is entered there, in the prayer 'Our Father.'"

"It is the drop of mercy!" said Godfather; "it is the pearl of comfort from God. It is laid as a gift on the child's cradle, is laid on the child's heart. Little child, keep it carefully! never lose it, however big thou mayest grow; and thou wilt not be forsaken on life's changeful way—it will beam bright within thee—and thou wilt never be lost."

Godfather's eyes were brightened by it, till they shone with joy; once in his years of youth they had wept, and "this, too, was good," he said. "That was the time of trial: then all looked dark: now I have sunshine within and around me. The older one grows the clearer one sees, in adversity and prosperity, that Our Lord is in it all, that life is the most beautiful fairy tale: that this only He can give us, and that this goes on into eternity!"

"It is beautiful to live!" said the little Marie; so, too, said the small and big boys; father and mother, the whole family, and chief of all Godfather: and he had experience; he was the oldest of them all; knew all stories: and he said, "Life is the most beautiful fairy tale."

