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THE TALE OF THE FIRE-FLY.



ON the evening of a hot and sultry summer day, Maria, a poor widow, sat at the open window, of her little chamber, and gazed out upon the neat orchard which surrounded her cottage. The grass had been mown in the morning, but the heat of the sun had soon dried it. She had already gathered it into heaps, and the sweet smell of the hay now blew into her chamber as if to refresh and strengthen her after her labor. The glow of sunset was already fading upon the border of the clear and cloudless sky, and the moon shone calm and bright into the little chamber shadowing the square panes of the half-open window, together with the grape vine which adorned it, upon the nicely sanded floor. Little Ferdinand, a boy of six years of age, stood leaning against the window frame; his blooming face and yellow locks, with a portion of his white clean shirt sleeves and scar-

let vest, were distinctly visible in the moonlight.

The poor woman was sitting thus to rest herself, perhaps. But oppressive as had been the labor of the sultry day, yet a heavier burden weighed upon her bosom, and rendered her forgoeful of her weariness.

She had eaten but a spoonful or two of her supper, which consisted of bread and milk. Little Ferdinand was also greatly disturbed, but did not speak, because he saw that mother was so sorrowful; having observed that his mother, instead of eating, wept bitterly, he laid aside his spoon, and the earthen dish stood upon the table almost as full as when served up.

Maria was left a widow in the early part of the previous spring. Her deceased husband, one of the worthiest men in the village had, by industry and economy, saved a sum of money sufficient to purchase the little cottage, with its neat meadow, though not entirely free from incumbrance. The industrious man had planted the green and cheerful field with young trees, which already bore the finest fruit. He had chosen Maria for his wife, although she was a poor orphan, and her parents had been able to give her