

## ARTHUR AND THE NEW BOARDER.



ARTHUR CHASE'S father was dead. His mother was very poor. But though reduced in circumstances, though Arthur could not dress as nicely as the other boys, yet Mrs. Chase managed to provide him with good wholesome food, send him regularly to school and keep him looking clean and neat: that is, of course, as clean and neat as a healthy boy desires to look.

In return for her kindness and self-sacrifice, he was loving and respectful, but it was right there that his devotion for her stopped. The trait of true gratefulness in his character seemed lacking or undeveloped. For a sixteen-year-old boy, as his mother used to sadly observe, he was at times sadly negligent and thoughtless.

By keeping a boarder Mrs. Chase was greatly helped in the support of herself and son. A room was set apart and rented, usually to a gentleman who had his meals with the family. But at the opening of this story, the former boarder had been called away to the city and the apartment was empty. However, a gentleman had engaged the room and was expected that evening.

When Arthur returned home after a day's sport on the river with some other boys, he found their new guest already installed. He bashfully entered the dining room, where his mother introduced him to Mr. Wheeler Vibber. Mr. Vibber appeared quiet and reserved, but pleasant and anxious to make as little trouble as possible. During the evening Arthur's mother, glancing at the fireplace, said:

"Arthur will you please bring me some coal?"

"O, dear," remonstrated the boy, for the moment quite forgetting the third occupant of the room. "I'm awfully tired, mother; can't the fire just go out—it ain't very cold."

With an expression of pain and annoyance, Mrs. Chase started to leave the table, deciding to do the errand herself and reproach him in secret afterwards. But Mr. Vibber had also arisen.

Smiling pleasantly, he remarked:

"Let me get that coal for you, Mrs. Chase; you look too tired to do any more work to-night," and without glancing at Arthur, who was both astonished and mortified, he took the bucket and quickly went into the cellar. While he was out of the room, mother and son regarded each other

with chagrin and amazement, it being difficult to determine which was the most ashamed.

When the young man returned, he resumed his seat and the reading of his paper as though nothing had happened to cause a little flurry in the domestic relations of the family. Mr. Vibber did not seem to act very cordially towards the boy during the balance of the evening.

Arthur wondered how he could set himself right; he was not always so unkind, and did not want him to think so. A boy likes to be esteemed by those older and stronger than he is. But between Arthur's bashfulness and his perplexity in finding the right words to clothe his thoughts, he remained silent, and went to his room feeling that he had acted unmanly.

The next morning his mother asked him to chop some wood, and in his eagerness to get to the woodpile without any delay, he almost tumbled over the old dog asleep in the sunshine. Mr. Vibber, who passed him on his way to the street, nodded encouragingly as he saw the chips flying in all directions.

Several days went by and the incidents related were forgotten. Another evening came, and with it the close of a hard day's work for Mrs. Chase. As they gathered about the table, her extreme weariness was plainly evident; but Arthur did not notice how tired his mother looked.

Immediately after school he had engaged in an exciting game of ball, sending the curves over the plate with speed and effectiveness. The recollections of the game and his own fatigue made him rather absent minded. Mrs. Chase asked him to go to the grocery for her, but he neither answered nor heard.

"If Arthur is too tired," observed Mr. Vibber, bending his eyes on the boy. "I will be glad to go for you."

Arthur blushed, gathered his scattered thoughts together, and said:

"I'll go for you, mother. I'm sorry you're so tired and will go right away." His mother looked pleased.

"Suppose we both go," suggested Mr. Vibber. Arthur liked the idea, and they started down the street in company.

"You're awfully kind to us, and considerate of mother," said the boy, with the directness of his years.

"Do you think so, Arthur? Well, I try to be. When I was your age I had a mother as kind and loving as you have. We were very poor in those days, and mother had to work early and late.