The BOY-FARMS AT FAULT.

The silly season in the newspapers is beginning briskly with a rash of letters from distressed parents concerning their troubles in dealing with their male children home for the holidays. This is a kind of twaddle which is always recurring: this well-fed, well-housed bourgeois on the hunt for some artificial trouble or another, some sham grievance, since he has no real ones, except his own inherent stupidity and vacuity; but on this occasion there is, if the said bourgeois only knew it, a moral to be drawn. I can imagine the "boy," the enemy of the human race," as Dickens called him, retorting on his injured parent somewhat in this style:

Father. Well my lad, haven't you nearly had enough of it? Son. Enough of what, Pa? Father. The holidays, my lad, the holidays. Son. No, Pa. Father. Well if you haven't, I have. No answer! Now you're sulking.

Son. Well what am I to say? You're always badgering me.

Father. There! Say something that isn't mere peevishness. I can see that you are sick of the holidays or else you wouldn't be like that.

Son. Very well; I will then. Why do you want me back at the boy-farm? What have I been doing that's wrong?

Father. Boy-farm! What do you mean by that impudence! As to what have you been doing, that's just it. You've been doing nothing, little fellow, here I am feeding, clothing and housing you, and having you excessively educated (not that I suppose you learn anything) and then you come home and kick your heels about, and do nothing but gorge and squander.

Son. (with grins) What do you do, Pa, when you're not having a holiday?

Father. (seeming to swallow something and turning very red) Why, I do business and make money for you.

Son. (rudely) O ah! I know what that means; precious hard work that is, isn't it?

Father. (with dignity) Yes it is; as you'll know when you grow up and have to face the troubles of life.

Son. (with increased rudeness) Come, I say, Pa, how much will you take to don't? I remember you taking me to your office last Christmas holidays when I was to be measured for a suit of clothes; and there I sat all the morning, and as I hadn't a book to read I fidgetted, and you nagged me; so I said to myself now I'll just take notice of what the girl was doing. Well, I saw you read three books from their shelves; then you came in front of the fire; and then you didn't read the paper and warmed your back; and then you were crusty with me; and then one of the junior clerks came in and asked you a question and you were beastly rude to him and I wonder he didn't punch your head for you (I heard him say he should like to as he passed me). And then you went and talked to the senior clerk, that little dry grey old chap; and you were civil enough to him, and I could see that you were rather afraid of him and that he did all your business; and then that chap came in that dance at home sometimes, and he was deuced smartly dressed, and he asked you to go to lunch at two o'clock; and you said you couldn't, and hitched your head over your shoulder at me; and he said, "Oh, never mind; I'll bring the shaver along." And you were sulky, but you said "All right," and he said, "Well, I must go and order lunch." And then you sat down and wrote a letter, and that took you a quarter of an hour; and then you were crusty and told me to sniff, and I stood and warmed your back again; and all the time the clerks were scribbling away as hard as they could, and chaps kept coming into the office and taking up the head clerk about business; and the head clerk came to you with some papers and a gentleman, and I heard you say "Darn it" to yourself; but you were mighty politeful to him; and you went away with him and were away for half-an-hour; and then you came back and said "Come along and sit down." And then you went with me to an awfully swell place to lunch where there were lots of funkies in blue coats and orange-coloured plush breeches, and then we had lunch without chaps or any other chap and another chap; and it was a grog and very jolly; only you and the other chaps would talk about Russia and France and Austria; awful rot, don't you know, like Mr. Toots and the other fellow in "Dombey." So that took till four o'clock, and the other chap and I were two coats thinner; and you and another fellow, and you couldn't because you had to take me to the tailor's; and then you took me back to the office and the head-clerk said something to you, and you didn't pay much attention to him; and then you said to me "Come along and don't sniff;" and so we went home and you couldn't eat much for dinner, and Ma said, "I'm afraid you're not well dear." And you said I've had a very tiresome and anxious day in the city, my dear." I suppose that sometimes you have a less tiring day than that; and if that's the case I think you are soon tired.

Son. Well what do you mean by all that rigmarole I should like to know? Are you quite happy in your present position?

Father. You know what I mean. You're always bullying me about the holidays and say I do nothing in them; and all the time you do nothing in the days that ain't your holidays.

Son. You're a young fool and don't understand these things.

Father. And then you are always saying that you are spending money on me. Well, I should like to know who spends money on you, since you don't do anything to earn it—not even Latin pressed.

Son. (grinning). Come, Pa, turn to and make me wiser now by telling me how it is that you can't stand me doing nothing and being penned through the holidays, and you keeping me grats all the while; and there are all the white things doing the same thing, and being kept grats; and you would be very much surprised if they were to send you off to the boy-farm and try to get something out of you in the way of work, a big strong chap like you.

Father. Come, I'm not going to stand this any more.

Son. Very well, then, why did you begin bullying me? You may think yourself very lucky to have such jolly long holidays. Why, the other day when you came on that chap who was carpentering upstairs, and he was having a nap after his dinner—my! how you did bullyrag him; till he looked twenty years older! He looked as if he had been caught doing wrong. I say, I wonder why you don't look sheepish.

Father. Just take yourself and your wonder out of the room. I never heard such a parcel of impudent rubbish as you've been talking now you have found your tongue.

Son. Very well, then, why did you begin bullying me?

Father. Yes, indeed!

Son. (Exit.) Father: Really! I wonder what will happen to that boy. Suppose he should turn Socialist when he grows up!!!

William Morris.

INHUMAN ARITHMETIC.

Most words have in the course of human development changed greatly in meaning. Our lords and ladies, our art and commerce, are not more the arithmetic of today than that orderly arrangement to which it originally referred. If, for example, in ancient times a certain number of sheep had to be put up for the night into two sheep-folds of different sizes, the number of sheep put in each would have been accommodated to the size of the fold; if a number of men, women, and children had to occupy tents or houses, they would have been distributed among these with due consideration, not only for the mere number of persons in a tent, but also for the natural fitness to each other of the persons set to occupy the same abode, whether of men or of women or of children. The sheep and people, when so distributed in natural or convenient order, were arithmetical, in the ancient sense of this word. We still deal with sheep in that natural way, but we arithmetical our fellow-creatures in very inhuman style.

Our modern arithmetic has about it a kind of arrangement, a kind of symmetry, at least in words. We take say fifty people, and put forty of them into a house with ten small rooms, and ten of them into a palace with forty large rooms. Here the ten people are counted as of more considerations than the forty; they are looked as being in a better position, and all things about them are in accord with this idea; their palaces are also in a better position, are better lighted, more open and airy. If we were to invent the Hindoes of an Arithmetic of Position is thus applied in quite a surprising way.

Consider the number 10. There is the unit-digit 1, but this is raised into importance by its position, by being placed on the back of the other one. We take off the other-digit 0. The "one" is taken in ten times as much as it ordinarily means, being thrust into a high position by something which has no value of itself, but is only of use in supporting this "one" in its "elevated position." In the same way 100, 100,000 may be represented. And individuals supported in still higher posts, even as princes or millionaires, on the shoulders of a thousand, ten thousand, or a million zero persons, who are of no consideration except for the purpose of bearing up those elevated persons. And it is no light labour to bear them up and to save them from falling. In the treadmill of society it is weight alone, common coarse weight alone,