

## COMPETITION.

## BOLTON HALL IN THE RAM'S HORN.

I have a letter from my friend Singh Duhlee saying that my accounts of the Black Hole of Calcutta labeled, "Competition," are censored reports (he called them "lies," but this word looks like a reflection upon General Otis, so I strike it out). He says that the Indian war of Independence, which we dub the "Mutiny," was really an uprising against English landlordism. He says that when the Rajah put the English into the great round room that we think of as a prison, the first comers at once re-established private land owning, and marked off all the space that they thought they could "hold," so that when the Rajah sent others into their little world, there was no place for them.

All the breathing holes had been pre-empted, and the rents demanded for space near them were so enormous that the pioneers actually piled their countrymen on top of one another, in what was called "the poor quarter." Of course, great misery ensued, and "the poor," whose all had been taken for space in which to stand, became a discontented and criminal class. The upper classes, therefore, paid a few of the poor to suppress rioting among the rest. These were called "the regular army." They contributed generously, also, to other poor people to allay discontent by promises of future comfort.

Still other prisoners arrived, and the pressure upon this class became so great that the death rate almost equaled that of our American slums.

These degenerate types acquired unnatural and disgusting habits of drinking, which the better classes regarded as the chief cause of their turbulence and crime.

Nor were the aristocracy themselves exempt from the sufferings and vices incident to their organization of society. Notwithstanding all their luxury, they too caught the diseases due to unnatural food and to overcrowding, and they lived also in continual fear of attacks upon property and vested rights by the abject and submerged nine-tenths.

The upper class organized a fresh air fund, and occasionally dragged some of the children of the poor from their degraded surroundings and took them for two minutes to the open spaces. This unfortunate interference with natural law, however, by saving the lives of some, really increased the over-population, and it was finally abandoned, because it made the children dissatisfied with their lot in life.

All the food that the Rajah threw into the prison belonged, of course, under the law, to the owners of the spaces where it fell, and these owners either refused it entrance except at prohibitive prices, or charged high prices for permission to gather it; all in the community, therefore, were driven either to eat one another, or to live upon the food that was necessary to prevent the rest from eating each other.

A curious feature of the case was that the eaters and the eaten, the payers of the rent

and the collectors of it, all considered themselves guiltless, and charged the cannibalism to "society," and to "the system" which they themselves supported and lived upon.

Naturally the heat in the principal centers of population became intense, so that the main sources of employment were speculating in standing room or fanning the prudent and well-to-do people, who by foresight and economy had established positions of advantage.

Some of the industrious poor proved themselves ingenious in devising means of serving their fellows, and acquired such wealth as enabled them in their turn to become space owners, for they bought the rights of those whose hereditary failings or imprudence had reduced them to want.

It is to be regretted, however, that most of the proletariats either sank into hopeless pauperism or else pandered to the baser appetites of their superiors. This led to the formation of a "Society for the Suppression of Vice" among the poor.

Many of them also, being unable to pay rent even for a place to work, became a burden upon their fellows, and necessitated an "Association for Improving the Condition of Poor Tenants."

The better classes, however, did all that they could to alleviate suffering by organizing an "Anti-Sweating Association," and by making a "white list" of those who sucked the blood of the tenants quietly and gently, and would not eat the bodies of their employees until after they had died.

My friend Singh, who is a very reverent man, complains bitterly that I charge all this misery to the Rajah. He says that there were only seventy million (he probably meant to write seventy persons), and that the Rajah had provided ample room for a hundred times as many. I will write Singh and tell him that he is mistaken; that some people, like me, are better than the rest, but that "The poor in a lump are bad."

## THE QUEEREST TAXES.

Saddened taxpayers may be interested to know that some of the most peculiar of taxation records are to be found in the archives of Holland. In 1791, for instance, there was in existence a tax imposed on all passengers travelling in Holland, and it had been in force since 1666. In 1674 a duty of 2d. was levied on each person who entered a tavern before noon, on those who entered a place of entertainment, on marriages and deaths, and on many other things. If a person was buried out of the district to which he belonged the tax was payable twice over. Even boots and shoes were not exempt, for in 1675 a scheming government put a price on leather footwear, regulated by the size of the articles. So, we imagine, arose the feminine ambition for small feet.—London Chronicle.