The Beast in Our Schools.

The Pollution of the Coming Race.

By S. P. Bunting.

Everyone has heard of the German Navy League, that sinister expression of Hun ambition which notoriously contributed to the outbreak of war. We have heard again of Dreadnoughts and Dividends, of British Navy Leagues promoted by armament manufacturers or their relations. The "Appeal to Reason" has recently exposed the close connection of pretty nearly every leading member of the American Navy League with the big corporations supplying steel, shells, or other war material. On every side these bodies, so virtuously public spirited, so purely zealous for defence, leave an unpleasant taste both of individual boodle and of Imperialist aggression.

The Victoria League of South Africa was formed to unite its members in a sense of comradeship as fellow citizens of the Empire: in particular no doubt to promote good feeling between British and Dutch. Whether there is any suspicion of boodle in it we cannot say: there is certainly a very strong Navy League flavour about it. It stands "outside all party politics"—within the British Capitalist Imperialist sphere of course. It "holds out the hand of comradeship" to the Dutch—provided that they will disavow their own national sentiment and toady to the Power that mortified it a few years ago. It "promotes good feeling" among fellow citizens of the Empire (not of the world, mark you: oh dear no)—on condition that they all wag the Union Jack or bawl the National Anthem with the required degree of ardour or servility.

For servility it surely is in a conquered people. To bow the knee to Baal, to allow a worshipped ideal, even a false one, to be trampled and dishonoured, to be bullied or cozened into saluting the despoiler, is surely degrading and demoralising, to the annexed as well as to the annexor. It would be so if the Germans conquered the English or if Christians were driven by force or moral coercion to embrace Mahommedanism. It has been so in South Africa, where some of the Dutch have been willy nilly Anglicised. Any fair minded Britisher must in his heart feel disgust at the ultra loyalty of some Dutchman (especially when he sees from what class of man many of such loyalists are typically drawn) and respect for the sturdier pride and stamina of the Africander patriot, i.e. the simple minded Nationalist, not the exploiter and wire puller of Nationalism. The Internationalist indeed can rise above patriotism; but these burgher Imperialists sink below it.

Such is the deadening steam-rolling action of modern capitalism, militarism, Imperialism—which you will. For it is the capitalist that pulls the strings: Governments and public bodies obey his "aids" as well as promote his interests. The Corner House once promised that "OUR representative on the Town Council" would see to it that the Council repaired a certain road. They don't attempt to hide it nowadays in America; public officials and representatives are generally and openly acknowledged to be the puppets of big business, which is the power behind the throne. The Transvaal Chamber of Mines aspires to an analagous position in South Africa, though not so grossly avowed. The Beast can boast that since Botha's last stand over the Chinese, every S.A. government has done substantially whatever it has been told to do by the Chamber. The other day Solly Joel granted some Johannesburg school children a holiday, the order being carried into effect by the Education Department.

This degradation of our schools into slave nurseries is among the most shameful achievements of Capitalism in South Africa. Your pestilent flagwaggers, not satisfied with poisoning the minds of grown up Britishers, infest our Education Department too. It must no longer even be allowed

> That every boy and every gal
> That comes into this world alive
> Is either a little Liberal
> Or else a little Conservative.

No, nowadays all alike, British or Dutch, must be forced into the one mould. Our schools are flooded and debauched with Victoria League literature, and the Inspectors of schools are told off to see to it. Little brats, by home breeding indiscriminate haters of "the English" (rather than of British or any other Imperialism and militarism) but in this case intelligibly though not intelligently so—are to be "dragged up" at school as fervent little Jingo King-idolaters, to the ruin of their childish self-respect. Dutch menus and bilingual tickets may be conceded to the adults, but Rhodes-worship and British Kultur are slithered sugar-coated down the innocent children's throats. Jingo-craft displaces priest-craft in the control of their little minds: to a Dreadnought, not a crucifix, their homage must now be paid. British Imperialism oozes through every line of the relevant history books adopted at our schools.

Bioscope shows promoted by the "Children's Aid Society" (F. Handel Thompson, School Inspector, Chairman of the Education and Recreation Sub-Committee of the Society) depict the glories, or rather horrors, of naval and military power. Songs about "Britain's Naval Might", or "Our Gallant Boys in Navy Blue" are mouthed daily, and the question "How long, Oh Lord?" in the Provincial Council is ruled out of order by an ex-burgher Chairman, obsequious to his present loads. School girls are set to make pillowslips and socks for the said "gallant boys." Money is repeatedly collected from the scholars to pay "for something to do with the British Army," the children dont know exactly what (one hopes it reaches a proper destination), and to the same nebulous object go the proceeds of picnics, treats, concerts, bazaars, celebrations in glorification of British Navalism, etc. etc., to all of which the children are expected, besides attending, to bring cash contributions.

At one Johannesburg school the class which puts up the most cash gets a whole holiday. What boy will not plague his mother, whatever her convictions, for a 'bob' or two to earn such a bribe? Suffer, or rather compel, little children to celebrate Navy Day, for of such is the kingdom of Moloch. This week we read of a 'fine large' Union Jack, the gift of Lady Wernher (who said Britisch?) being hoisted at the Government school, Boksburg North. "The visitors will be saluted by the cadets, and the scholars will provide the musical honours. It will be a Navy Day for the children of the Reef." (The songs will no doubt include: "We've got the ships, we've got the men, and we've got the money"). At Germiston this week at the Government School a Navy Day demonstration and Lecture was organised, the lecturer being Mr. Acheson, Inspector of Schools, and the collection realising £20. And so on daily ad infinitum.

The children cannot resist. The fear of being thought singular if they refuse to anti up acts as a most efficient blackmailer. What child dares to say 'No to such insidious pressure? No child indeed, ought to be asked to stand apart from his schoolfellows. That only makes a prig of him. He yields, and quite properly, to the vis major of his schoolfellows' opinion, insinuatingly directed by those in authority.

Rebel-gezind teachers are penalised for taking part in politics; but a teacher who declined to join in this imperialist political curriculum would be penalised for *not* taking part in politics.

Surely, surely, our schools were not built for this? In particular, in this country of all others, the teaching of British Imperialism and Jingoism in schools should be religiously eschewed if only out of respect for the feelings of the annexed, to say nothing of the notoriously pernicious effect of juvenile militaristic training. The Germans may be trying that sort of thing in Belgium and Servia, but are we to copy them? Milnerism, or Bismarckism, or Bernhardism, should be discredited here if anywhere by now. Why, even in England, thirty years ago at any rate, they never dreamt of teaching *us* Imperialism at school. (If things have altered since that may help to account for the war). Let grown ups get involved in war if they will, but for pity's sake keep the children out of it. Let them grow up without hymns of hate or glory. Let us crush militarism in their minds at least, if we cannot do it on the stricken field.

The Cart Before the Horse.

> Our business system has its base
> On one small thought that's out of place;
> The merest trifle—nothing much of course.
> The truth is there—who says its not?
> Only, the trouble is—you've got
> The cart before the horse.
>
> You say unless a man shall work,
> Right earnestly and never shirk,
> He may not eat. Now look—the change is small,
> And yet the truth is plain to see—
> Unless man eats, and frequently
> He cannot work at all.
>
> And which comes first! why, that is plain
> The man comes first. And, look again—
> A baby! with an appetite to fit!
> You have to feed him years and years,
> And train him up with toil and tears,
> Before he works a bit.
>
> So let us change our old ideas,
> And learn with these advancing years
> To give the oats before we ask for speed:
> Not set the hungry horse to run,
> And tell him when the race is done
> That he shall have his feed.

Mrs. Charlotte Stetson.

The bourgeois clap-trap about the family and education, about the hallowed co-relation of parent and child, becomes all the more disgusting, the more by the action of modern industry, all family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder, and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labour. Karl Marx.