White Capitalist versus Black Labourer.

An Episode in the Class Struggle.

By S. P. B.

A dispute has been taking place in Parliament on the Native Affairs Administration Bill, criticised in "The International" of March 9th last. Casual observers might think it was a genuine struggle between the English or Unionist section—the "natives' friends"—and their Dutch enemies. It is really only a debate between two sections of one composite ruling class in South Africa: the Junker agrarian and the up-to-date financial-industrial; the big speculative absentee land companies and the plantation nigger drivers being included in the latter section, from different motives. The Government represents both, and, notwithstanding appearances, and the support it gets from the Nationalists when OTHER Nationalisms are to be trampled upon, it is dominated by the more powerful section, the financial-industrial-Imperialist. This section however allows its Unionist representatives (for it has men in all Parties) to show fight against the Bill, partly in order to pose as the friends of the native and so to counteract such unpopularity among potential labour recruits as the Rand might incur if the Randlords supported the Bill—for with all the millions spent on it, labour is still difficult to recruit; and besides, in the Cape are native votes to be catered for.

The rural resident white landowners are as a class mainly interested to prevent, by however artificial means, "their" land from falling back into the hands of those who once occupied it unmolested by whites, but now work on it for white usurpers; and so they graciously concede the native areas of the Union as a sop to preserve the rest. That is all the alleged segregation in

this Bill, as in the 1913 Act, amounts to

All sections, including the Labour Party with its "White Labour" and Convict Labour policies, desire in any event to make the most of the exploitation of "our national asset," cheap native labour. The farmers must have it to work their farms, the mine owners to win their gold, the land companies to produce their rents.

The native landowner may or may not be segregated, but there was never any question of segregating the native labourer by doing without him and letting him work only for himself and his own people. Oh dear no, quite the reverse! More native labour is just what this Bill is ultimately calculated to stimulate. It gives the native the choice of either starving in a native area or wage earning under white masters outside. Not slavery, not serfage,—that is ostensibly abolished under the Bill—but freedom of contract, just honest modern wagery. Oh yes, the Unionists are only too pleased to get the credit of championing the oppressed, leaving the Bothaites and the Hertzogites to pull the chestnuts out of the fire. Colonel Mentz has quite properly exposed that humbug. "Don't come it on us," he says in effect, "we are all one gang in the long run." The "English" opposition is if anything more unadulteratedly capitalist than the "Dutch" party; and both are equally the enemies of the natives and the workingclass in general