

How the Assinarians went to War

MEANWHILE Cuanduine and Mr Robinson, sitting in the Strangers' Gallery of the Parliament House, heard the Prime Minister move a vote of credit for a thousand million pounds for the war against Faraway. The cause of the war was this. Faraway was at one time a backward undeveloped country, without banks or buses or picture houses, or any others of the essentials of civilisation. A few years ago it had been provided with these appurtenances by the enterprise of Assinine capitalists who thought that if it were properly developed it would provide them with a market for the goods which their own people were unable to buy. All these investments were now imperilled by a civil war which had broken out in Faraway between the Thingumajigs and the Thingumabobs, as the local factions were called; for as these were now well furnished with civilised weapons, there was danger that the railways and factories might be damaged. It was feared also that the receipts of the picture houses might be affected. An expeditionary force had accordingly been despatched, and had already established itself on the soil of Faraway.

'In taking this step' said the Prime Minister, 'we have acted in defence both of our honour and our safety and of our legitimate interests. The lack of central authority in Faraway made it impossible for us to negotiate, and the chaotic conditions which jeopardised our investments compelled us to intervene for the restoration of law and order, not merely in our own interests, but in the interests of the Faraway people themselves.' Cheers. 'Critics of the Government have said that this action is a violation of the Treaty for the Renunciation of War; but let me tell them that it is nothing of the sort. By that treaty we promised "to renounce war as an instrument of national policy." Let our critics note the exact wording of this document on which they rely in their nefarious purpose of defaming their own country in the eyes of the world. In the first place, this action of ours is not war at all. We have never declared war on the Farawavian nation. We have merely despatched what might be called a force of armed guardians of the peace to protect our legitimate interests. It is true that these guardians of the peace have bombarded several towns and routed several Farawavian armies, but that was because their purely pacific intentions were met by violent resistance.

'In the second place, this war (if it is a war) is not being used as an instrument of national policy. Our national policy is one of peace, and such a policy could not possibly be served by recourse to war. Finally, I do not think that anyone can contend that it was the intention of the signatories of the treaty, in outlawing war, to outlaw any use whatever of armed force to settle political questions. Such an interpretation would have made agreement among the nations that signed it impossible, and would have rendered nugatory any progress in the direction of true peace. I repeat, therefore, that neither the spirit nor the letter of the treaty has been infringed in the remotest degree by this action of ours.'

At this point a Socialist member interrupted, and pointed out that by the second clause of the treaty the nations had agreed 'that the settlement of all disputes, of whatever nature or whatever origin, which may arise among them, shall never be sought except by pacific means.'

'That' replied the Prime Minister 'is exactly what we have done. We have sought the solution of this difficulty by pacific means, and the responsibility for violence rests on the Farawavians.' Cheers.

The vote of credit was carried almost unanimously, and the great Assinarian nation girt itself for war. From that moment there was employment for everybody. Mac ui Rudai got a job in a munition factory, and forthwith bought himself a new suit of clothes, and ate all day like a cow. Mr Robinson was sent by his paper to the front, but before he went he used his good offices to secure a post for Cuanduine in the Propaganda

Department. 'It's not altogether a job suited to a demigod' he said apologetically, 'but it'll keep the wolf from the door anyway.'

'I am much obliged to you' said Cuanduine, 'though I have here a weapon'—putting his hand on the Cruaidin Cailidcheann—'that an army of wolves could not withstand.'

'I meant hunger' said Mr Robinson, who was not naturally a poet, but used imagery because he had never learnt how to talk. He then went on to explain the duties that would be required of Cuanduine in his new post: how he would have to write up the justice of the Assinarian cause and the wickedness of their adversaries, and tell the world what an entirely base and worthless people the Farawavians were, and how their soldiers were contemptible cowards, so that one Assinarian was a match for ten of them.

'If that is so' said Cuanduine, 'the Assinarians will have no great honour in overcoming them.'

'Don't you worry about metaphysical questions like that' said Mr Robinson. 'All you've got to do is to write the stuff and draw your pay.'

Cuanduine was well contented to do this, remembering that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. So he hired himself out to the Propaganda Department, and wrote whatever he was commanded. And now Cuanduine had reason to be thankful for the gift of unscrupulousness that had been bestowed on him in the Fourth Heaven. For he had to tell the world that the Farawavians were the most abominable race that ever was spawned, unclean, uncivilised, cruel, treacherous, haughty, overbearing, mean, cringing, slavish, irreligious, blasphemous, superstitious, given to adulteries, fornications, and unnameable vices; that the rich among them oppressed the poor, and the poor, without reason or excuse, detested the rich; that the nation in its policy was rapacious and tyrannical, hating freedom, and aspiring to world domination; and that the Assinarians were fighting purely and unselfishly for truth, justice, freedom, and religion, and for the real benefit of the Farawavian people themselves; but that nevertheless the rights and interests of Assinaria, nay, her very existence, were at stake. He told also that the ferocious Farawavian soldiery used weapons that grievously hurt the gentle Assinarian warriors, who, for their part, always wrapped their bullets and bayonets in cotton wool; that the Farawavian troops always ran away, or surrendered in multitudes, the moment an Assinarian soldier looked crossly at them; and that the Assinarian troops fought with a gallantry unparalleled in the world's history, enduring the most horrible slaughter, and winning victory after victory against the most obstinate resistance and the most overwhelming odds.

In writing all this Cuanduine enjoyed himself immensely; but he enjoyed still more the faces of the public as they swallowed it all down to feed the stomach of their righteousness and wamble in the guts of their hatred. It moved him to exquisite laughter to watch their goggling eyes and gaping mouths as they poisoned their souls with the stuff they paid him to write and would have hanged him for refusing to believe if it had been written by someone else. In a very ecstasy of mendacity he poured out more and more of it into their insatiable maws until even his supporters remonstrated that if he laid it on so thick he would spoil the effect. They need have had no such fear, however, for the credulity of the Assinarians was so inexhaustible that when presently he fabricated a story that the ordinary drink of the Farawavians was the blood of Assinarian babies served up in the skulls of their fathers, they believed him more firmly than ever.

The happiest of his inventions was his announcement that this was a War to End War, and that when it was over all poverty and injustice would disappear from the earth; for by this bait all the Socialist leaders and advanced thinkers, who had formerly held discreetly aloof, were now induced to give it their support; not however by fighting in it, but by writing about it; and these writings gave Cuanduine the most rapturous amusement. For his services he was very well paid, and, as he did not eat so much as a mortal man, he was able to put some money by, so that when the war was ended by the conquest of Faraway, he was no longer a slave to necessity.