

Chapter X

Romance by Other Means: Scottish Popular Newspapers and the First World War

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Introduction

The history of popular journalism in U.K. from the abolition of the stamp duty in 1855 to the First World War offers an illustration of a truism, popular among newspapermen, that war is a very good thing for newspapers. The Crimean War famously made the reputation of William Howard Russell in *The Times*, and subsequent wars, from the American Civil War to the Boer War, served to increase the circulations of existing papers and to create the conditions for new papers to come into being.¹ One of the most significant newspapermen to exploit and benefit from this phenomenon was the founder of the *Daily Mail* and – by the time of the First World War – proprietor of *The Times*, Lord Northcliffe. When asked the question ‘What sells a newspaper?’, one of his editors is reputed to have replied:

the first answer is ‘war’. War not only creates a supply of news but a demand for it. So deep-rooted is the fascination in a war and all things appertaining to it that . . . a paper has only to be able to put up on its placard "A Great Battle" for its sales to go up.²

That this was not merely a newspaperman’s hunch, but an established fact has been shown by John M. McEwen, who plotted a direct correlation between newspaper circulation figures and the major engagements of the First World War, with, for example, events such as the German naval raid on the British East Coast in 1916 doubling the circulations of the *Star* and *Evening Standard*.³

Major battles and circulation figures of newspapers

McEwen’s (1982) analysis of newspaper circulation figures and the major engagements shows that that while there were several failures of newspapers in the war, a pattern emerged, in which established quality papers and middle-market papers more or less held their readerships (rising in the early stages of the war, then settling back to pre-war levels) while ‘the popular and tabloid newspapers increased their sales and circulation hugely during the war years’.⁴

To give examples: *The Times* suffered a decrease in readership from 183,000 to 130,000, while the increasingly respectable *Daily Mail*, which experienced large increases in readership in the early part of the war, gained overall only a small increase

¹ See *The Tradition Established 1841-1884*. London: The Times, 1939, pp. 166-92; Phillip Knightley, (1975). *The First Casualty: From the Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Make*. London: Andre Deutsch, pp. 3-17; Trevor Royle, (1987). *War Report: The War Correspondent's View of Battle from the Crimea to the Falklands*. London: Grafton, pp. 19-33.

² Quoted in Niall Ferguson, (1998). *The Pity of War*. London: Penguin, p. 11.

³ John M. McEwen, (1982), 'The National Press During the First World War: Ownership and Circulation', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 17, p. 481.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 483.

in its figures from 946,000 in 1914 to 973,000 in 1918. The relatively brash *Daily Express* (founded by Arthur Pearson in 1900 and taken over by Lord Beaverbrook in 1916) doubled its circulation between 1914 and 1918 to just under 600,000, while the least respectable of all papers, the jingoistic *John Bull*, also doubled its circulation in wartime from one million to almost two million copies.⁵

Scotland had been no exception to this general British rule – the Crimean War (coinciding with the abolition of Stamp Duty) had brought a number of new, if short-lived titles like Edinburgh's *War Telegraph* and *War Herald*, into being and had allowed regional papers like the *Aberdeen Free Press* to increase both sales and the number of weekly issues.⁶ The Crimean War also brought about the first publication, in 1855, of the *Glasgow Daily Bulletin*, the first daily newspaper in Britain to be sold for a penny. Similar developments occurred during the American Civil War, which, for example, brought the pioneering *Glasgow Evening Citizen* into being – a paper that would last well over a century.⁷ By the time of the First World War, Scotland had a thriving and diverse newspaper sector. Scottish exceptionalism meant that British national newspapers had only a limited purchase on Scottish readers. In a pattern that would persist for much of the twentieth-century, large British newspaper groups chose to publish distinct Scottish titles, or dedicated Scottish versions of their main titles, rather than simply distribute 'national' editions. One such example was Rothermere's, *Daily Record and Mail*, a popular illustrated daily created in 1901 by the amalgamation of the indigenous *Daily Record* and the *North British Daily Mail*, and which by 1914 was claiming on its masthead to have 'a larger sale than any other morning or evening journal in the country'.

For the most part, however, Scottish daily newspaper publishing tended to be regional, based on the nation's four main urban centres: the Edinburgh-based *Scotsman* offered the nearest thing to the Scottish paper of record; in Glasgow, the *Herald* was the pre-eminent paper; in Dundee, the *Courier* and *Advertiser* vied for dominance, as did the *Aberdeen Free Press* and *Aberdeen Daily Journal* in that city. For all their regional basis, each paper still had a considerable circulation. The *Glasgow Herald*, for example, consistently outsold in the years before the war not only *The Times* but its English provincial equivalents, the *Manchester Guardian*, *Yorkshire Post*, and *Birmingham Post*. The war saw the *Herald's* sales rise from around 65,000 to 75,000 daily copies.⁸

Scotland, like Britain, also saw considerable growth in the sale of Sunday papers during the war. In the British context, the Boer War had prompted the creation of a *Sunday Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Daily Mail*, while the First World War brought about the revival of the *Sunday Times* and saw the establishment of Rothermere's *Sunday Pictorial*, the Hulton *Illustrated Sunday Herald*, and, in 1919, Beaverbrook's *Sunday Express*.⁹ By the end of the war, the *News of the World* – whose pre-war sales (1912) were around one and a half million was claiming the largest circulation in the world and selling around three million copies per week.¹⁰ This was closely followed by the new

⁵ Ibid., p. 482.

⁶ William Donaldson, (1986). *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland: Language, Fiction and the Press*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, p. 108.

⁷ See 'James Hedderwick 1814-1897' in George Eyre-Todd, (1903). *The Glasgow Poets: Their Lives and Poems*. Glasgow & Edinburgh: William Hodge & Co., pp. 313-15.

⁸ A. P. Wadsworth, (1955). *Newspaper Circulations, 1800-1954*. Manchester: Manchester Statistical Society, p. 34. *The Times* is estimated to have had a circulation of less than 50,000 until February 1914. When Northcliffe cut the price in that month, its circulation figures increased dramatically. See McEwan, 'The National Press During the First World War', pp. 467-8.

⁹ *A Newspaper History 1785-1935: Reprinted from the 150th Anniversary Number of The Times, January 1, 1935*. London: Times Publishing Company, 1935, pp. 106-8.

¹⁰ Matthew Engel, (1996). *Tickle the Public: One Hundred Years of the Popular Press*. London: Victor Gollancz, p. 221.

Sunday Pictorial (launched March 1915) which was claiming a circulation of 2,600,000 at the end of 1917.¹¹

This situation was even more pronounced in Scotland. Due to the power of Presbyterian Sabbatarianism, there were no indigenous Sunday newspapers in Scotland before the war. Papers such as the *News of the World*, *Observer*, and *Sunday Chronicle* circulated in the country but were considered beyond the pale to many respectable Scots. The accidental fact of the war breaking out on the August bank holiday in 1914 caused this state of affairs to change overnight. Such was the hunger for immediate news that the first issue of Glasgow's hastily-prepared *Sunday War Times* sold 'close on 200,000 copies' on the 2nd of August 1914.¹² A Presbyterian stronghold like Paisley found its customary Sabbath calm shattered, with, as one account put it, the town taking on a 'Saturday night-like appearance with every second man reading a war edition of the Glasgow papers'.¹³ It was reported that in Aberdeen, too, 'the usual Sabbath calm had given place to stir and animation' on account of the news boys 'continually arriving with fresh editions' of the Sunday editions, with another Aberdeen paper describing the scenes on the streets as 'reminiscent of a Hogmanay evening'.¹⁴ Several Sunday papers that began as special editions of daily and evening papers – papers such as Aberdeen's *Evening Express* – didn't last far past the initial excitement of the outbreak of the war. But others followed and would become staples of twentieth-century Scotland, papers such as the *Scottish Sunday Express* (1918), the *Sunday Mail* (1919), and most notoriously the *Sunday Post*. The *Sunday Post* grew during the war from an 8-page Sunday supplement (begun in October 1914) of the *Post* newspaper, into an 18-page newspaper in its own right shortly after the hostilities ceased.¹⁵ It would become a twentieth-century Scottish institution – selling 1 million copies a week at its height – though not a particularly progressive one: it quickly became a byword for everything that was small-minded, sentimental, and regressive in Scottish culture, famously attracting the comment from Tom Nairn much later in the twentieth-century that, 'as far as I'm concerned, Scotland will be reborn the day the last minister is strangled with the last copy of the *Sunday Post*'.¹⁶

The popular press

The implication of these trends – the relative flatness of the circulation figures for quality papers, and the marked growth of popular dailies, weeklies and Sunday papers – suggests an emphatic continuation of the readership interests fostered by the New Journalism in the two decades before the war. Which is to say that the readerly interest in war was focused less on the immediate facts of the war - its strategy, politics, and economics - and more on the novel and heightened experiences that it brought about. It is perhaps worth noting here the relationship between the readership for down-market popular papers and the franchise – and in particular the likelihood that the majority of the readers of these papers did not have the vote. Sixty percent of adult men and zero percent of women were enfranchised citizens in the period between the Third Reform Act of 1884 and the Representation of the People Act of 1918, which meant that approximately only three adults in ten in the United Kingdom were parliamentary voters. The Elementary Education acts of 1870 and (in Scotland 1872) had helped

¹¹ McEwen, 'The National Press During the First World War', p. 483.

¹² *Glasgow Herald*, 3 August 1914, p. 6.

¹³ 'Town Talk', *Paisley and Renfrewshire Gazette*, 8 August 1918, p. 5;

¹⁴ 'Aberdeen and War News', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 3 August 1914, p. 6; 'Aberdeen and the Crisis: Evening Street Scenes', *Aberdeen Free Press*, 3 August 1914, p. 4.

¹⁵ The paper's first edition under the *Sunday Post* banner was on 19 January 1919. The *Sunday Mail* first came into being as a Sunday edition of the *Daily Record and Mail*, on 6 September 1914.

¹⁶ Tom Nairn, (1970). 'Three Dreams of Scottish Nationalism', in Karl Miller (ed.), *Memoirs of a Modern Scotland*. London: Faber, p. 54.

ensure that this group had the basic literacy to read newspapers, but this group – the majority of the population – also often lacked access to higher levels of education and a direct say in the parliamentary decisions that affected their lives.

From the point of view of the popular press, then, while the business of informing its readers was important (especially at times of high drama or controversy such as the shell crisis, the introduction of conscription, or significant battles) its columns were speaking not to an electorate but to a form of public opinion that had only an indirect purchase on government. That press's influence, as such, was in helping define, and perhaps contain or harness, a popular mood as much as it was in holding a government to account on behalf of those who had put it in place. What political power popular newspapers had lay not in the arguments they made to their largely disenfranchised readers, but in their ability to mobilize popular feeling. Their aim, then, was not so much to understand the war analytically from a rational, economical or political viewpoint, but rather to promote an experiential apprehension of it – to sensationalise the war (in both senses of that word) and engender feelings of empathy towards its allied protagonists and of antipathy towards their antagonists.

Less cynically perhaps, the popular press also provided an important service to its readers in offering a perspective on war often lacking in the higher-browed 'quality' newspapers. The shifting of emphasis from objectivity and high politics toward human interest – the move from the general to the particular that characterised the New Journalism, pitched as it was to common readers rather than implicit electorates – enabled the war to be understood through individuals' common experiences as much as through their power to rationalize events at a distance. This would become crucial both to how the war was experienced and how it would be remembered.

Unofficial War Reporting and Human Interest

The attitude of those officials responsible for prosecuting the war seemed, at its beginning at least, to be particularly hostile to anything but the most centralized newsgathering and dissemination. The mistrust of the press shown by Lord Kitchener at the War Office and Winston Churchill at the Admiralty meant that there was an effective ban on unofficial reporting from the front – much to the frustration of the head of the War Press Bureau, F. E. Smith, who described the War Office as having a preference for running 'a nice private war of their own'.¹⁷ The War Office might put out official communiques, but the sole official war correspondent until May 1915 was an old soldier, Lt Col. Sir Ernest Swinton, who wrote under the name 'Eye-Witness'. The way that most newspapers attempted to get around this prohibition, and the consequent shortage of genuine eye-witness news was to improvise what was effectively an early form of citizen journalism: collating and printing first-person testimonies from serving soldiers, either in the form of letters home – sometimes passed on by families to local newspapers – or by interviewing soldiers on leave.¹⁸

Several major English papers posted reporters at Victoria Station, to intercept and interview the wounded and leave-taking-soldiers arriving on trains from the Channel coast. These accounts found their way into Scottish newspapers, especially if the reports featured Scottish soldiers, but more often the papers had to look elsewhere for snippets both of hard news and the softer human-interest material that their readers appeared to

¹⁷ Quoted in Philip Gibbs, (1946). *The Pageant of the Years: An Autobiography*. London: William Heinemann, p. 160. See also, Gary S. Messinger, (1992). *British Propaganda and the State in the First World War*. Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, p. 151; and Philp Towle, (1975). 'The Debate on Wartime Censorship in Britain 1902-14', in *War and Society: A Yearbook of Military History*, ed. by Brian Bond and Ian Roy, London: Croom Helm, pp.103-16.

¹⁸ For an account of this phenomenon see, for example, A MacCallum Scott MP, 'T. Atkins, Correspondent: Soldiers Assume a New Role in Warfare: Traits Revealed in Letters', *People's Journal (National Edition)*, 12 December 1914, p. 1.

value. This often took the form of letters home, and occasional diary entries passed on to the local press by families and friends. Several of these first-person accounts had a wider audience in mind and were published as books in their own right. Among these were Thomas M. Lyon's dispatches from the front to the *Kilmarnock Standard* that appeared as the collections *In Kilt and Khaki* (1915) and *More Adventures in Kilt and Khaki* (1917), and Captain Robert B. Ross's *The Fifty-First in France* (1918) that had appeared originally as articles, 'A Ross-shire Gordon Highlander's Diary of the War', in the *Ross-shire Journal*. The most well-known and best-selling Scottish book of the war, Ian Hay's *The First Hundred Thousand* (1915), began in a similar way as a series of bulletins for *Blackwood's Magazine* on the formation and exploits of a Scottish New Army battalion, the lightly fictionalized 'Wallace and Bruce Highlanders'.¹⁹ Although arguably a more polished piece of propaganda, produced as it was by a successful pre-war popular novelist, Hay's book, and its successor volume *Carrying On – After the First Hundred Thousand* (1917), showed the power of the model of first-person reportage that had emerged in the relative vacuum of war news created by the War Office's early-war prohibitions on unofficial reporting.

One of the most consistently salient of these groups of citizen journalists, sending back reports from the front, was the self-named 'Fighter Writers' of the Dundee newspapers. Dundee had established itself as one of the main centres of Scottish and British newspaper and magazine publication before the war, a process accelerated by the amalgamation of two notably entrepreneurial publishing groups, John Leng & Co and D. C. Thomson & Co in 1906. Their stable of popular titles (which later in the century would include the *Beano* and the *Dandy*, alongside Scottish staples such as *My Weekly Red Letter*, and the *Sunday Post*) employed many men who found themselves in the war areas, and who provided a valuable source of first-hand news to their erstwhile employer. Perhaps the most celebrated was Joseph Lee, news editor of the *People's Journal*, a popular poet and illustrator who had made his name with the poems published in local newspapers and collected as *Poems: Tales o' Our Town* (1910), who sent dispatches in prose and poetry to the *Dundee Advertiser* before being taken prisoner by the Germans. Another was Joseph Gray, a Northumbrian artist employed by D. C. Thomson, who sent regular wartime dispatches back to the *Dundee Courier*. Following his discharge on medical grounds in 1916 Gray became a war artist for the *Graphic* illustrated newspaper, and drew on his experiences to write a wartime history of his battalion, the 4th Black Watch, which appeared in installments in the *Dundee Advertiser* between 3 December 1917 and 17 January 1918. Other notable Fighter Writers included Linton Andrews, a Yorkshireman and news editor of the *Dundee Advertiser*, and a young staff writer on the *People's Journal*, John Beveridge Nicholson who also enlisted in the Black Watch. Andrews and Nicholson combined to send joint reports to the *Dundee Advertiser* that were picked up by the *Daily Mail*, and which were reported to have particularly impressed its proprietor, Lord Northcliffe.²⁰

The People's Journal

The papers to which the Fighter Writers contributed were mainly the Dundee daily newspapers. But the D. C. Thomson group was also responsible for a weekly paper, the *People's Journal*, that had a justifiable claim to be Scotland's most widely read publication, and which in its blend of news reporting, features, and serial fiction offers a particularly interesting case study of the ways in which Scotland's popular newspapers

¹⁹ See Gordon Urquhart, 'Confrontation and Withdrawal: Loos, Readership and 'The First Hundred Thousand'', in *Scotland and the Great War*, ed. by Catriona M. M. Macdonald and E. W. McFarland, East Linton: Tuckwell, 1999, pp. 125-44.

²⁰ See Bob Burrows, (2004). *Fighter Writer: The Eventful Life of Sergeant Joe Lee, Scotland's Forgotten War Poet*. Derby: Breedon Books, p. 69.

adapted themselves to the new conditions of war. The rest of this chapter will focus on this paper and its sister publication, the *People's Friend*, in order to explore in greater depth the various ways in which the war found its way into their weekly business of informing, educating, and entertaining.

The *People's Journal* had been founded in Dundee in 1858 by an enterprising 30-year old provincial newspaperman from Hull, John Leng. Leng went on to become an eminent public citizen and benefactor of Dundee as well as a Liberal member of parliament for the city. His paper established itself as a mainstay both of Scottish Liberalism and popular vernacular literature for much of the rest of the century, becoming widely-known (both fondly and derisively) as 'the ploughman's bible'. In 1898 John Leng & Co was advertising the *People's Journal* as the 'mouthpiece' of 'Scottish Radicalism' and was claiming for it a circulation of 250,000 which they believed translated into a weekly readership of one million.²¹ This meant that it was read by one in five of the Scottish population, which made it, according to William Donaldson, one of the United Kingdom's most widely-circulating weekly papers.²²

Some of this early radicalism continued in the paper up to the First World War, but the commitment to the vernacular and high-mindedness had become somewhat attenuated. The geographical spread of the paper beyond Dundee – with, in 1914, editions tailored to audiences as far afield as Ulster and the North of England – tied to a policy of continuous technological and journalistic innovation typical of the New Journalism, meant that it had become in many aspects indistinguishable from other popular British papers occupying the lower end of the quality spectrum.

Sensation as much as information had by 1914 become a guiding principle of the paper – seen most clearly, perhaps, in the paper's news headlines, written in a characteristic triplet form, and dealing with the typical subjects of contemporary down-market newspapers:

Don't Cry, Ellen, It was for You I did it': Infatuated Sailor Shoots Himself in Glasgow:
Because his Love is Flouted

Fatal Slash after Singing Song: Young Wife's Head Severed from Body: Husband's
Crime

White Slavers in Scotland: Extraordinary Affair on a Train: 'Come to London'²³

Such sensationalism applied not only to current news reporting, but to the occasional features that dwelt on matters of Scottish history. The paper frequently featured historical accounts and serial stories about the heroes of Scottish culture, William Wallace, Robert the Bruce, and Robert Burns. But it did so in its own distinctive way. A feature, for example, on the Highland clearances of a century before ran in 1914 under the headline:

Houses Burned Before their Eyes: Centenary of Horrifying Highland Eviction Scenes:
Men Go Insane; Deaths from Exposure²⁴

When war came, the *People's Journal* met its challenge in ways that were consistent with many of its pre-war practices. Like many British weekly papers, it greeted the war

²¹ *How a Newspaper is Printed: Being a Complete Description of the Offices and Equipments of the Dundee Advertiser, People's Journal, Evening Telegraph, and People's Friend*. Dundee: John Leng & Co, [1898], pp. 18-19

²² William Donaldson, (1986). *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland: Language, Fiction and the Press*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, pp. 24-6.

²³ *People's Journal*, 24 January 1914, p. 9; 25 July 1914, p. 10; 1 August 1914, p. 9.

²⁴ *People's Journal, Aberdeen City Edition*, 25 July 1914, p. 6.

with an odd mixture of sound editorial sense and somewhat overwrought and credulous reporting. While maintaining a detached, regretful tone in its editorials, its news stories led with misleadingly optimistic and rather fevered headlines, such as those of 1914 that dealt with the successful German siege of Liege ('Germans March to Death: Massed Troops Cut to Pieces at Liege: Brave Belgians' and 'Belgians Triumphant at Liege') and the near-disastrous allied retreat from Mons to the Marne ('Highlanders Battle Against Awful Odds: Germans a Good Mark and Fell like Ninepins: Dreaded Bayonets').²⁵ This tone was to continue throughout the war, from the revelations of German atrocities in Belgium ('Germans Shock Humanity: Appalling Atrocities Committed by Kaiser's Hordes: Men, Women, and Children Burned and Bayoneted') through to the war's end.²⁶ A story which appeared after two weeks of the relentless slaughter on the Somme in 1916, for example, ran under the headline, 'Victory in Sight: Great Events Impending on the West: German Army Exhausted: One Big Effort at Home will Clinch the Issue (by our Military Expert)'.²⁷

Just as the all-purpose new journalistic style adopted by the *People's Journal* had proved able to shape Scottish experience to its particular template, so it was able to mould the new experience of Scots at war into immediately recognisable shapes. After the initial local excitements of the departure of reservists and territorials and the enlistment of New Army volunteers, the *People's Journal* settled behind its front page of war news into its usual habits. The knitting features of the page 'Where We Club Together' and cookery items on 'Our Special Cookery Page' continued, but were now often related to the special demands of war - the need to provide 'Comforts for the Troops' and the new realities of food shortages. The short stories and serials continued to deal with the romantic complications of working girls and the dilemmas of Dukes and the intrigues of industrialists, but now occasionally included the war as a complicating factor. A new short-story hero emerged, in the form of the Glasgow Irishman 'Private Dolan', whose humorous martial adventures were retailed week by week from September 1914.²⁸ Familiar features such as 'Granny's Gossip' continued to provide a reassuring homeliness, while occasionally allowing the latest war crazes to intrude, as when in September 1914, 'John is Taken for a Spy'.²⁹ Popular entertainment continued to be featured, too, with the printing of the latest war songs and humorous anecdotes. The paper also continued its pre-war affiliations with Robert Burns, running in January 1915 a 'Burns Telegrams to the Kaiser' competition in which readers were invited to compete for a cash prize by composing a short message from the dead Bard to the German emperor.

One of the more disconcerting elements of the wartime *People's Journal* was the manner in which it covered the actual fighting. In common with other British papers, it was starved of reliable news from the front, especially in the early stages of the war. It made up for this lack of hard content in innovative ways: for example, using drawings and artist's impressions where it could not get photographs, as in its coverage of the arrival of Scottish troops in France in August 1914. But it also took to reporting events, especially those dealing with fighting, with a latitude more characteristic of fictional rather than news writing. In late 1914, for example, it ran a story which detailed the circumstances in which two members of the Royal Field Artillery had each won the

²⁵ 'Germans March to Death', *People's Journal*, 15 August 1914, p. 1; 'Highlanders Battle Against Awful Odds', *People's Journal*, 5 September 1914, p. 1.

²⁶ 'Germans Shock Humanity', *People's Journal*, 19 September 1914, p. 1.

²⁷ 'Victory in Sight', *People's Journal*, 15 July 1916, p. 1.

²⁸ A close fictional relation, perhaps, of Spud Tamson, another Glasgow Irishman of dubious background who transforms into an exemplary, if incorrigible, soldier in R. W. Campbell's *Private Spud Tamson* (1915). Both, perhaps, might be said to be younger brothers of J. J. Bell's 'Wee MacGreegor', a fictional scamp made famous in the columns of the *Glasgow Evening Times* and then in *Wee MacGreegor* (1903) who was also pressed into service in *Wee MacGreegor Enlists* (1915).

²⁹ 'Granny's Gossip', *People's Journal*, 19 September 1914.

Victoria Cross. The story was presented beneath an artist's impression of the heroic action and a variety of headlines that read, 'The Gunners' Last Stand: When Comrades Fall Two Men Defy Kaiser's Hordes. A Story of Marvellous Heroism: Daring Fighters Survive to Wear Victoria Crosses: Maintaining the Traditions of a Deathless Army.' An excerpt from the story gives an indication of the way in which this real-life event was dramatised:

There was a momentary lull in the firing, and Nelson had a chance to get to the rear which might not come again.

'I'm staying here,' gasped Nelson. 'I may be useful yet.'

As the words left his lips there came the scream of a shell. They felt the wind on their faces. It was the best-aimed shell that had come as yet, and as it struck the earth and burst, they were half-paralysed for a moment by the shock of the explosion. Brown whirling earth: green choking fumes blotting out everything next moment. The green fumes curled away, and revealed the shattered body of Lieutenant Campbell. 'Fight on Boys!' he gasped; then he crawled under a limber and died.³⁰

There is a marked blurring of the boundary between factual reporting and fictional romancing here, seen for example in the readiness to report, or more likely invent, direct speech ('"Fight on Boys!" he gasped') and to describe physical sensations ('they felt the wind on their faces'). The use of a formulaic thriller style ('the green fumes curled away, and revealed the shattered body') suggests, too, a greater concern for dramatic, sensational effect than for accurate observation. Here the expected commitment of a newspaper to truthful reporting is clearly being replaced by a fiction magazine's desire to thrill and to please, to entertain while telling us just a little bit about conditions at the front.

Another instance of this preference for the modes of sentimental fiction over hard reporting comes from an article which appeared in 1915 under the title, 'The Corporal's Capture: Sing-Song, Shells, and a Sequel'. This story, of an ostensibly real action, told of the unusual ruse by which a handful of men from the West Kent Regiment, led by a Corporal 'Nobby' Rogers, had captured a trench holding 70 Germans:

Among the rubbish at the bottom of the trench was a broken gramophone. The trumpet was still intact. 'Nobby' picked it up, seized with a sudden idea.

'Boys,' he said, 'we're going to 'ave a little concert, just to keep our spirits merry. We ain't going to come crowdin' all to one end o' the trench and get firing lop-sidedly just because them Germans keeps on handin' out their Chinese crackers. So what I suggests is this: we considers as yonder end o' the trench is the stage o' the old Oxford music 'all, which, bein' brother Londoners, most of us knows. And, takin' our turns, we goes to that end o' the trench and does the 'Arry Lauder or George Robey stunt, singin' through this here 'orn to make our voices louder. And when the song's over, the chap as has been holdin' forth swings up his rifle and let's bang at any 'ead that comes poking up across the way to see what it's all about. [. . .] 'As it's my idea I takes first go. What shall it be - a little thing o' Lauder's or a selection on the mouth organ?

They declared in favour of Lauder, and with a nod and a grin the ex-'bus driver splashed away to the other end of the trench, where the green reek of lyddite fumes still hung above the gurgling water. [. . .] The scream of a shell drowned the end of the second verse. With a speed that no quick-change artiste ever equalled, Corporal 'Nobby' left the stage. The shell burst horribly close, and his left arm dropped queerly to his side. But he did not fall. Pulling himself together with a supreme effort, he swung the rifle forward. A howl of rage from the German trenches followed

³⁰ 'The Gunners' Last Stand', *People's Journal, National Edition*, 21 November 1914, p. 6.

the tingling crack, and a storm of bullets thudded on the breastworks of the British force or came tearing through the shell gaps.

'I got an officer that time, I reckon,' said 'Nobby,' as he reached his comrades. 'Here, tie my arm up, somebody,' he added; 'there's a shrapnel bullet through it. . . . 'Ow did ye like my song?''³¹

Here we see, even more clearly than in the first example, the ways in which the coverage of factual stories has become governed and shaped by the tropes of fictional style. The characterisation and speech patterns of the generic chirpy cockney, Nobby Rogers, clearly owe as much to the representations of page and music-hall stage as to actuality. Nobby's direct speech - itself a device more familiar to fiction than journalism - is aimed, in the manner of fiction, at his readers rather than his comrades (why, for example, should he need to remind them of something they already know - that they are all 'brother Londoners'?). The Germans, too - stupidly popping their heads up to see what's going on as Nobby sings through his improvised megaphone - resemble the sausage-eating ex-waiters of popular fiction and music hall more than the efficient and disciplined soldiers they were much more likely to be. The style of the narrative (does anyone in this kind of fiction ever pull themselves together with anything other than 'a supreme effort?'), the understated bravery, and the doggedly optimistic (and rather wearing) insistence that the war is little more than an extension of playground larks would be familiar to anyone who had grown up reading the *Boys' Own Paper* or attended a music hall.

By allowing its fictional house style to infect its coverage of real events, the *People's Journal* was able to reassure its readers. The war could not be so terrible; it seemed to suggest if its terrors and deprivations could be comprehended in the manner with which its readers were so familiar and comfortable. But if the war was, in fact, unprecedented in its scale and horror (as was quickly becoming clear) and if its new conditions were beyond the imagination of the pre-war mindset, then clearly this type of coverage was no longer wholly adequate. Reading it, one can perhaps get closer to understanding the rage of Siegfried Sassoon, C. E. Montague, and many other serving soldiers at the ways in which associated journalists, fiction-writers, and 'Yellow-Pressmen' were distorting and falsifying the experience of war.³²

What was particularly strange was that a paper which had had no compunction in printing the gory details of assorted stranglings, stabbings, and decapitations in peacetime now had such difficulty in applying this style of sensational news reporting to the events of the war. The death of Lieutenant Campbell of the Royal Field Artillery was presumably as bloody and horrific as the murder and decapitation of the Preston woman of six months earlier ('Fatal Slash after Singing Song: Young Wife's Head Severed from Body: Husband's Crime'). But Campbell dies behind the curling green fumes of sentimental fiction rather than under the forensic glare of serious war, or sensational crime, reporting.

Having been able over many years to resolve everything into the sensational and sentimental goo of its adopted style, the *People's Journal* now found it difficult to talk about the war in ways that were adequate to the conflict's unprecedented enormity. The paper of the 1870s described by William Donaldson would no doubt have made an attempt to confront these realities honestly and report them confidently in its vernacular voice. The new conditions of popular culture in Scotland appear to have made that far less possible.

³¹ The Corporal's Capture: Sing-Song, Shells, and a Sequel', *People's Journal, Dundee Edition*, 16 January 1915, p. 6.

³² See, for example, Montague's *Disenchantment* (1922) and Sassoon's poem 'Fight to a Finish', for a flavour of the antipathy some soldiers felt towards popular journalists. Arthur Ponsonby's *Falsehood in Wartime* (1928) drew on such antipathies to expose, as he saw it, the extent to which the press had connived with wartime governments to foster popular ignorance and prejudice in order to suppress dissent.

The People's Friend

The People's Friend, founded by John Leng in 1869, had originally been an offshoot of *The People's Journal*. Edited between 1870 and 1884 by the popular novelist David Pae, the *People's Friend* had been used initially as an outlet for the surplus serial fiction and readers' fiction of its sister paper and though aimed more squarely at women it had, like the *Journal*, been established as a radical paper serving a distinct linguistic community. But it too had lost much of its early political and communitarian drive and its commitment to the vernacular by the outbreak of the war. It is difficult to gauge exact numbers, but it has been suggested that by 1914 the *People's Friend* had outstripped the *People's Journal* to become Scotland's most popular weekly title. When war broke out it was selling a little over 250,000 copies—a circulation that continued to rise steadily throughout the war and after.³³ It had achieved these sales by a characteristically shrewd application of New-Journalistic business principles to Scottish conditions, in combining large amounts of romantic fiction (of which the novelist and literary celebrity Annie S. Swan was the *Friend's* doyenne) with practical pages of cookery and 'home hints'. The emphasis on readers' contributions and competitions was as strong as it had been in the nineteenth century, but took on forms closer to those of the typical women's penny weekly of New Journalism than of a community news sheet. Readers' correspondence now tended to be confined to the 'Your Health' column, and to the faux-domestic correspondence columns of 'Our Weekly Chat: Uncle Jack and his Nephews and Nieces' and 'The Home Circle: Where Eleanor and her Many Sisters Exchange Confidences Weekly'—themselves cognates of features such as the 'Mother's Chats', the 'Cheery Corner' and articles by 'Sister Rachel' to be found in a British-wide magazine like *Home Chat*. Competitions in the *People's Friend* were for 'Grand Scone Baking', 'Record Needle Work', or, as in 1914, a 'Love Gives Itself' competition in which readers vied with each other by way of word and slogan games to win copies of Annie S. Swan's latest work.

As with many other publications of the New Journalism, the intimate manner and tone of good-neighbourly domesticity fostered in the *People's Friend* disguised the fact that the paper was by 1914 effectively an industrial product written, edited, and distributed according to a tried and tested business formula – a formula partially devised by the Leng and Thomson groups themselves but also based on successful models like the American *Ladies' Home Journal*.³⁴ Like many other commodities emerging into the marketplace of the period, the paper can also be seen to be employing the latest techniques of branding in constructing an identity and maintaining customer loyalty. This fact did not necessarily invalidate the paper's status as a component in a meaningful communal culture – many women still clearly identified with and willingly subscribed to its virtual community. But in rendering the complexities of that culture in reductive familial and domestic terms, the *People's Friend* arguably narrowed the conceptual world open to its female readers – maintaining their focus on the domestic rather than the public sphere. Its imaginative scope, too, was limited by the genre expectations of its fiction and its practical pages, with fictional plots that invariably resolved themselves in domestic felicity and financial stability, and practical advice that did little more than show readers how best to manage their limited means and express themselves in the domestic arts. There was, in short, very little in the paper that might ripple the calm expectation of housewife and mill girl that their one hope of happiness

³³ Joseph McAleer, (1992). *Popular Reading and Publishing in Britain 1914-1950*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 163 and 73.

³⁴ The *Ladies' Home Journal* was, like the *People's Friend*, a sisterly guide to domestic and personal self-improvement that had devolved from a largely agricultural parent paper, in this case, Cyrus H. Curtis's *Tribune and Farmer*. See Richard Ohmann, (1996). *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century*. London: Verso, pp. 27-8.

(and the proper end of Romance) was to be the capable supporter of a husband and the resourceful mainstay of a settled and well-run family home.

The possibilities of linguistic engagement with a vernacular culture had also become circumscribed by 1914. The paper had been founded with the aim that it 'should be the exponent and conserver of Scottish literature, and should contain Scotch stories, poetry, and other articles written by Scotchmen.'³⁵ But this had changed. Although it still published the work of many writers who were Scottish, including stalwarts such as Maude Crawford, Agnes C. Mitchell, May Morison, and Charles Procter, that work was often only incidentally Scottish in nature. Stories and serialisations might have Scottish settings, but their vocabulary and tone belonged, with the exception of the odd Scots dialect word, wholly to the world of British magazine romantic fiction. With characteristic titles such as 'Love Made Perfect', 'The Man Who Came Back', and 'Ashes of Vengeance', they were drawn to a standard pattern across the English-speaking world - parodied mordantly by James Joyce in the characterisation of Gertie MacDowell in *Ulysses* - in which love blossomed with mysterious strangers, romances and fortunes were broken and mended, and in which tender hearts ever found their just reward.³⁶

The coming of war did not so much change this world view as intensify it, giving the paper's fiction writers a tragic world-historical backcloth before which they might play out their domestic dramas. The stock devices of magazine fiction, usually relating to the overcoming of impediments to love, financial security, and domestic bliss could take on a new dramatic charge and significance when set against the larger events of war.

Otherwise unremarkable stories, of, for example, virtue under trial, were able to gain a new frisson and immediacy from the events of war, as in the story 'Ian Stuart V.C.: A Hero of the War' by M. C. Ramsay, which appeared three months into the conflict.³⁷ The story offers a formulaic account of the triumph of self-sacrificing love, in which a young man, passed over by his fiancée for a rival, risks his life for her sake in saving the life of the rival. This bravery wins him the ultimate military accolade and also, predictably, the hand of his beloved as she quickly realises her error. What would have been a mildly diverting and partially implausible story in a peace-time setting gains a new credibility and glamour in war—the traditional romantic qualities of faithfulness and honour take on a new aspect when it is not merely pride or reputation that is at stake, but life itself and the winning of medals and military rank in a contemporary war.

In a similar manner, familiar generic stories of nurse-patient romance or holiday romance could take on new patinas of pathos and glamour under wartime conditions as in, for example, 'Wounded Soldiers, Welcome!: The Romance of the Notice Board' by Gus Gordon, and 'The Zebra Girl: A Wounded Warrior's Seaside Romance' by Hilda F. Moore.³⁸ Conventional stories of the humble but virtuous love affairs of the working classes were also given a new edge, as in 'Susie the Flower Girl: A Romance of the War'. This is a story from 1915 that would appear to owe more to the values of 1815. In it, the eponymous heroine gains both the hand of her beloved, Joe, a packer in a post-card factory, and the patronage of Lady Denby after Joe receives a sabre wound while saving the life of his officer, Lady Denby's son, in the course of a cavalry charge.³⁹

Another standard trope reinvigorated by war conditions was that of the redemptive power of the love and example of a good woman. J. B. Trenwith's 'A Man and a Briton: The Story of One whom the War Redeemed' offers an example.⁴⁰ In the story a worthless

³⁵ *How a Newspaper Is Printed: Being a Complete Description of the Offices and Equipments of the Dundee Advertiser, People's Journal, Evening Telegraph, and People's Friend*. Dundee: John Leng & Co, n.d. [1891], p. 53.

³⁶ In the 'Nausicaa' episode of *Ulysses* (1922).

³⁷ 'Ian Stuart V. C.', *People's Friend*, 23 November 1914, pp. 450-51.

³⁸ 'Wounded Soldiers, Welcome!', *People's Friend*, 17 April 1916, pp. 370-71; 'The Zebra Girl', *People's Friend*, 4 September 1916.

³⁹ 'Susie the Flower Girl', *People's Friend*, 25 January 1915, pp. 76-7.

⁴⁰ 'A Man and a Briton', *People's Friend*, 15 May 1916, pp. 456-7.

young ne'er-do-well tries and fails to rob a Colonel's daughter. Her spirited resistance and nobility of character prompts the young robber to mend his ways and enlist. In the manner of these fictions, he is redeemed by war and wins the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Wounded in the process, he sends the young lady the medal in gratitude, and dies fulfilled (singing on his deathbed 'Pack up your Troubles in your Old Kit Bag').

This appropriation of the general conditions of war to enhance well-worn stories could be given a further twist, and an even greater immediacy, by tying the stories more closely to specific actions and events. This is illustrated in an anonymous short story, 'On Her Wedding Day' which appeared in the *People's Friend* early in 1915.⁴¹ Set in Scarborough in the previous month, December 1914, the story follows the fortunes of Elaine Weston. Like much women's-magazine fiction it draws on the stories of the Scottish ballad tradition – in this case, that of 'Auld Robin Gray', a ballad that was often revisited in the popular cinema and fiction of the war.⁴² In this variant on the story, Elaine is a twin, and her brother Jack serves in France with the man who is both his best friend and Elaine's fiancé, Ted Wilton. When the story begins her father is under threat of bankruptcy at the hands of Richard Merton, a rich man long embittered by failure in youth to win the hand of Elaine's mother. Driven by Elaine's resemblance to her mother, Merton offers to cancel the debt owed by her father if Elaine will end her engagement and instead consent to marry him. She is agonising over this proposition when she reads of Ted's death in a newspaper. In her grief, and in the expectation of saving her father, she reluctantly agrees to sacrifice herself to a loveless marriage with Merton, choosing the 16th December, her birthday, for the date of the service.

Fate, cruelly, does not answer her nightly prayers that she might die before the allotted day. It does, however, arrange that she walks out on the promenade with Merton on the morning of her wedding. This date and time - as contemporary readers would no doubt have already realised - happens by a happy trick of cosmic irony to coincide with the notorious bombardment of the town by the German fleet.⁴³ Merton hands Elaine the promissory note that will release her father just before the shelling starts. Shortly afterward, he is hit by the shrapnel of an exploding shell and is killed instantly (and bloodlessly, in the accompanying illustration). Elaine's restoration to fortune and happiness is completed when she runs home to find a letter telling her that Ted is, in fact, still alive – he has been wounded in the right arm and so has been unable to write and tell her of the misunderstanding. As the story closes, Elaine, with material and amorous fortunes restored, sets off for London where she will be reconciled with Ted and her wounded brother.

There is plainly little sense here that the war is exerting a major effect on the ways in which people conduct their everyday lives, or promoting either deep or revisionary thought about their attitudes towards service and sacrifice. It would seem, rather, that for the fiction writers of the *People's Friend*, at least, War was little more than a continuation of Romance by other means - a slightly more plausible and immediate source of the reversals, misunderstandings, and sudden deaths and disappearances on which their business depended.

This straightforward co-option of war to the domestic agenda was however complicated, especially as the war went on, with other and sometimes less frivolous

⁴¹ 'On Her Wedding Day. A Tragic Intervention. A Story of the Bombardment of Scarborough', *People's Friend*, 11 January 1915, pp. 26-7.

⁴² For example, Vitagraph's *Auld Robin Gray* (1910) directed by Laurence Trimble; Ideal's *Auld Robin Gray* (1917); and *The Master of Gray* (1918), directed by Tom Watts.

⁴³ An event that became the subject of a wide range of women's writing. Sylvia Pankhurst visited the town at Christmas 1914 and wrote movingly of the devastation. See E. Sylvia Pankhurst, (1987). *The Home Front: A Mirror to Life in England During the First World War*. London: The Cresset Library, pp. 114-23. Winifred Holtby, who came under fire in the bombardment, would later write about it in her novel *The Crowded Street* (1924). Holtby's novel would, however, take a view on romance and marriage that was antipodal to that of the *People's Friend*. See Diana Wallace, (2000). *Sisters and Rivals in British Women's Fiction, 1914-39*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp. 132-7.

considerations. The *People's Friend*, like other Thomson group publications, was understandably anxious to place in a positive light the contributions made by the women who were - especially in war - its main audience. Part of this effort lay in registering the importance of the traditional domestic role so that women were seen to be crucial to the war effort for the maintenance of the family unit in a time of crisis, for maintaining morale on the home front, and for husbanding crucial resources by careful domestic economy. This was a message that was coming through strongly, too, in popular books such as J. E. Buckrose's *War Time in Our Street: The Story of Some Companies Behind the Front Line* (1917) and Annie S. Swan's *An Englishwoman's Home* (1918) which hymned the significance of the vital, nation-preserving battles being fought by the household infantry on the Home Front.

The most visible way in which the contribution of the domestic women to the war effort could be marked was in the provision of comfort and assistance to the troops. Throughout the war, the Thomson papers prided themselves on their encouragement and practical advice to readers on the manufacture and distribution of 'comforts' for servicemen and the provision of foodstuffs, or so-called 'Tit-bits for Tommy'.⁴⁴ In November 1914 'Eleanor', convenor of the paper's Home Circle, exhorted readers to help the troops by knitting them 'the Dundee Helmet'—a balaclava, featuring ear holes, that had been 'specially designed for the *People's Friend*'.⁴⁵ The *People's Journal* ran a 'Comforts for the Soldiers' column which solicited contributions of clothes and tobacco, and which patted the backs of the other D. C. Thomson papers for their efforts in this direction.⁴⁶ In addition to this direct assistance, the *People's Friend* contributed in some useful, and some not so useful, ways to the sense of a unified war effort. The more useful interventions dealt with physical and moral wellbeing. The paper tailored its food and cookery pages to wartime conditions: with 'Kitty's Kitchen Club' advising its readers, for example, on economical recipes for the likes of 'Delightful Cheap Pickle', 'Economical Meat Pie' and 'War-time Pudding'; and on the acquisition of allotments and the cultivation of vegetables in articles such as 'Home Food Production: Why not get a Garden Allotment'.⁴⁷

A series of articles on the contributions of Colonial and Dominion troops to the larger war effort in 1916 provided information on the sheer scale and diversity of that effort—though pieces such as 'The Gallant Anzacs: Tales of our Heroic Kinsmen from 'neath the Southern Cross', 'Canada's Contingent: How Sons of the Maple Leaf have Fought for the Empire', and 'Dusky Sons of the Empire: Battle Stories of Our Indian Fighting Men' are, as their titles suggest, rather longer on unreconstructed celebration than on military or political analysis.⁴⁸ That these were most likely state-sponsored articles, produced for the dissemination of a complaisant press, is perhaps best indicated by the article which began the series, 'Pat's Part in the War: Bravery of Irish Regiments on all Battle Fronts'. Appearing only months after the Easter Rising, and just as the Battle of the Somme was kicking off, the piece was a fairly unsophisticated attempt to allay British fears and discourage any incipient Scottish Sinn Féinism. It described not only the continuing patriotism of the Irish troops generally but also, more specifically, a purported incident involving the soldiers of the Royal Munster Fusiliers. These soldiers were taunted by placards raised above the facing German trenches which referred to the troubles and

⁴⁴ 'Tit-Bits for Tommy', *People's Friend*, 8 February 1915, p. 119.

⁴⁵ 'Eleanor', *People's Friend*, 16 November 1914, p. 426.

⁴⁶ See, for example, 'What Women Are Doing in War Time: How the 'People's Journal' Has Helped the Tommies', *People's Journal, Dundee Edition*, 9 December 1914, p. 9. The 'comforts' effort was largely co-ordinated by Elizabeth Craig, who would go on to become a well-known cookery writer. See Linton Andrews, (1964). *The Autobiography of a Journalist*. London: Ernest Benn, p. 87.

⁴⁷ 'Kitty's Kitchen Club', *People's Friend*, 1 November 1915; 'Home Food Production' *People's Friend*, 22 January 1917, p. 77.

⁴⁸ 'The Gallant Anzacs', *People's Friend*, 17 July 1916, pp. 56-7; 'Canada's Contingent', *People's Friend*, 10 July 1916, pp. 29 and 38; 'Dusky Sons of the Empire', *People's Friend*, 31 July 1916, pp. 93-4.

alleged the abuse of Irish womenfolk by English soldiers. The unfazed response of the doughty Fusiliers, according to the article, was to riddle the offending placards with bullets (while singing 'Rule Britannia') and later to capture the trench in order to destroy them altogether.⁴⁹

While it tended to steer clear of covering war news directly (presumably the preserve of the more masculine *People's Journal*) the paper provided occasional, informative pieces on the ways in which the military effort was being organised. Articles such as 'The Battle Front: What it is Like', 'The Feeding of an Army: How Tommy Gets his Grub', 'Passed by Censor: How Letters are Dealt with at the Front', and even 'Fighting A-Wheel: How Army Cyclists Do their Bit', were typical of the kind of gossipy, informative articles that Alfred Harmsworth had made the mainstay of his popular newspapers.⁵⁰ They satisfied the curiosity of readers and were basically educative, but necessarily offered a rather limited sense of life in the war zones.

Humour had a part to play in this too. Articles, like 'Tommy's "French"', 'Fun in the Firing Line: Tommy the Irrepressible Joker', or 'Newspapers in the Trenches: How Tommy makes Fun', offered well-meaning attempts to humanise the war and maintain morale by offering glimpses of the persistent good spirits of its participants.⁵¹ Though well-intentioned, pieces such as these effectively falsify the experience of war by concentrating only on the parts of it which the paper considers palatable and acceptable and which it can render within the bounds of its conventional style. The paper's overweening assumption that all experience is a form of sentimental grist for its human-interest mill denies expression to the full range of war experiences—both the heights of exhilaration and magnanimity and depths of boredom, degradation, and fear. This feeling is perhaps exacerbated when one sees a similar human-interest tone being applied to stories such as 'Mascots of War: Pets Beloved of Tommy and Jack' and 'Four-footed Fighters: Touching Stories of Our War Horses'.⁵²

The paper's coverage was not always this reductive, it needs to be said. The *People's Friend*, like the other newspapers, noted above, published informative first-hand accounts of the conditions on the front. An example from a frequent contributor, Captain Horace Wyndham, is 'Encamped in France: How Men are Prepared for the Fighting Line' which does a similar job to Hay's *First Hundred Thousand* dispatches for *Blackwoods* in familiarizing readers with the war preparations taking place across the sea.⁵³ Informative pieces with titles 'How Tommy Gets his Wages', 'How Tommy Gets his Grub', 'How Tommy Makes his Will', might have been light in tone and larded with humorous anecdotes but were likewise able to offer useful information for those curious on matters of military organisation. More helpfully, in the month after the Battle of Loos, at which many Scottish new army battalions received their first terrible blooding, the paper published a piece, 'Killed, Wounded, and Missing: How the Casualty Lists are Prepared', which offered practical information and a more straightforward acknowledgement of the grim nature of the war.⁵⁴ In the same year, 1915, the *People's Friend's* 'Uncle Jack' sought to ameliorate the emotional difficulties of the enforced separations brought about by the war with his correspondence column, 'My Soldier

⁴⁹ 'Pat's Part in the War: Bravery of Irish Regiments on All Battle Fronts', *People's Friend*, 3 July 1916, pp. 13-15.

⁵⁰ Harmsworth had encouraged snippety gossip pieces such as 'How Time-Tables Are Made' and 'About Smoking in Cemeteries' in the *Evening News* and would go on to use the device extensively in the feature pages of the *Daily Mail*. See S. J. Taylor, *The Great Outsiders: Northcliffe, Rothermere and the Daily Mail*. London: Phoenix, 1998, p. 29.

⁵¹ 'Tommy's "French"', *People's Friend*, 4 October 1915, p. 273; 'Fun in the Firing Line', *People's Friend*, 1 November 1915, pp. 365 and 372; 'Newspapers in the Trenches', *People's Friend*, 1 January 1917, p. 14.

⁵² 'Mascots of War', *People's Friend*, 13 November 1916, pp. 409 and 415; 'Four-Footed Fighters', *People's Friend*, 20 November 1916, pp. 429 and 433.

⁵³ 'Encamped in France: How Men are Prepared for the Fighting Line', *People's Friend*, 11 January 1915.

⁵⁴ 'Killed, Wounded, and Missing', *People's Friend*, 25 October 1915, p. 350; 'Nerves in Battle', *People's Friend*, 5 February 1917, pp. 101 and 109.

Friends at the War', in which the mothers, sisters, and sweethearts of those away at the war were encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings with other readers.

Although the *People's Friend* made some effort to reach out and comprehend the realities of the war, its outlook and journalistic style most often proved ill-suited to the task. The paper did, very creditably, run a small number of articles throughout the war which gave some indication of the conflict's horrors and potential for psychological damage. Articles such as 'Facing Death at the Front: How Soldiers Feel Under Fire' (27 March 1916) and 'Nerves in Battle: When the Brave are Tested' managed at times to break through the paper's relentlessly homely assumptions and provided honest, compassionate accounts of the degrading and unmaning effects of war-induced psychological breakdown. The overall message of 'Facing Death at the Front', for example, was one of the cheerful stoicism of the troops, but it did not wholly shy away from the paralyzing fear felt by many servicemen, including, perhaps surprisingly, the admission of one soldier of his 'sobbing hysterically' in the face of danger.⁵⁵ But more often, good intentions were undone by the paper's inability to reconcile the realities of war with its dominant house-style of meliorative domestication. For example, at a time when popular interest in all things relating to the tragic fate of 'little Belgium' was still high, the *Friend's* readers were encouraged to show their solidarity by following some of the patterns in *The Belgian Crochet Book*, issued as a free supplement with the paper on 25 January 1915. Featuring on its cover a picture of a crocheted Belgian Lion cushion cover, with lion rampant shield and motto 'L'Union Fait la Force', the supplement contained tips on making 'The Bruxelles Nightdress Top' and 'Louvain Insertion' (having lost its famed medieval library to German barbarism the Belgian town had, it seems, gained a commemorative crochet stitch). The *People's Friend* commended the crochet work to its readers in familiar terms, noting that a towel or tea cloth incorporating 'this pretty lace is one that will be welcomed by every girl who owns a bottom drawer. No matter though the boy is in khaki, his little sweetheart should not neglect preparing for that happy nest which is to be theirs when the cruel war is at an end.'

One wonders what the boy in khaki would have made of this. Or what he might have thought of the ladies' military-style velvet 'Tipperary Cap' promoted by the paper as a gesture of stylish support for his efforts, or of the many souvenirs given out free with the Thomson papers.⁵⁶ Among such gifts were the *People's Friend's* 'Silky-Finish Pictures of the Royal Engineers', a 'silken souvenir' of the Battle of Mons, and a 'Charming War Song' (a 'four page song in praise of the Black Watch'), not to mention *My Weekly's* 'The Battle of the Somme. A Charming Permanent Memento of the Big Push; Beautifully Reproduced on Silken Fabric.'

A Woman's Place...

One wartime development that the *People's Friend* had of necessity to deal with was the new relationship many women now enjoyed in the workplace. The pre-war *People's Friend* had often dealt with the experiences of mill girls and domestic servants, but usually as the subjects for romantic serial fiction. But the conditions of war meant that the paper was now producing articles as well as stories that reflected the wider range of occupations open to women. One such article from 1916 was 'Machinery and Humanity: A Sketch of "The Works Pal"' by Monica Cosens, billed as 'author of "Lloyd George's Munition Girls"'. Another, 'Queer Trades for Woman. Girls of all Nations in Odd Occupations' by WBC in the same year was ostensibly a celebration of the new possibilities open to women, but it betrayed in both its title and its tone a strong sense that such employment remained a series of interesting exceptions rather than the new

⁵⁵ 'Facing Death at the Front: How Soldiers Feel under Fire', *People's Journal*, 27 March 1916, p. 301; 'Nerves in Battle', *People's Friend*, 5 February 1917, pp. 101 and 109.

⁵⁶ 'Eleanor' on 'The Tipperary Cap', *People's Friend*, 4 January 1915, p. 10.

normal.⁵⁷ The paper pushed, in a number of different ways, messages of empowerment through work as well as through domestic virtue – one such was the advertisement that featured in 1916 for Milkmaid Brand Milk Cocoa, which featured a statuesque Land Girl above the slogan ‘The Lady with the Plough is doing a Man’s Work and needs a Man’s strength’.⁵⁸ Such empowering slogans were also present in the serial fiction published in the paper. The serialisation of Annie S. Swan’s *Peggy Fordyce: A Story of Women’s Work in War-time* (begun on 2 October 1916), for example, featured above its title line a heading which proclaimed that ‘In this Great World Crisis the Country has been Saved by its Noble Women’.

Other serial fiction which explored the new working roles open to women, and which might be said to welcome such opportunities included Maude Crawford’s *Marjorie M’Leod: Munition Maker*, begun on 8 January 1917, and Agnes C. Mitchell’s novel *The Wartime Woman*, the first instalment of which appeared in the *People’s Friend* on 4 December 1916. The latter book followed the fortunes of three sisters who take up war work – one as a munitions worker, one as a gardener, and the other as a chauffeur.

Such combinations of fictional representation, factual reporting, and advertising imagery in the *People’s Friend* undoubtedly bespoke a new confidence in women’s abilities to take on the new roles of wartime. But there remained a strong sense, too, that this was simply romantic business as usual – only dressed up in working clothes. The ways in which exciting possibilities for employment and adventure could easily be reduced to a repeating and familiar formula is perhaps best illustrated by the titles under which much of the short fiction on these topics appeared. Titles such as ‘Phyllis, the Mill Girl: A Romance of Woman’s War Work’, ‘Lynette Leigh, Land Girl: The Romance of an Autumn Dawn’, and ‘Her Country’s Call: The Romance of a Girl Munition worker’ perhaps speak less of marvelous opportunities for individuation and empowerment, than they do of the possibilities of finding reassuringly familiar forms of romantic fulfilment in the somewhat unfamiliar conditions of wartime occupations.⁵⁹

The *Friend’s* view on female empowerment can perhaps best be summed up by a short article that appeared in July 1916. Developing an argument made by the Bishop of London, that the expectations of male and female workers will have changed by the end of the war, the article suggests that, men ‘who have been taught to think for themselves’, who ‘have developed initiative and resource; and so have learned what great things they are capable of’ will no longer be content to carry out menial jobs, like those of drapers’ assistants, in which they had been employed before the war. Instead, however, of finding in this an encouragement for women to develop similar initiative, the article points only to the vacancies in relatively low-status jobs now open to women—roles they might fill which are beneath the dignity or initiative of ex-servicemen. As the article puts it, ‘the man who has been trained to do a man’s work, who has tasted life and adventure and faced danger in the trenches will not go back to work that can be perfectly well done by girls.’⁶⁰ This is progressive in that it acknowledges that women have indeed made a useful contribution—that there is work that they can do perfectly well—and that the workplace should now be open to them. Much less progressive, though, is the attendant assumption (one that seemed to be shared by most employers and trade unionists⁶¹) that their labours should remain ancillary to those of men—that their hands and minds are useful only insofar as they liberate the ambitions of men.

⁵⁷ ‘Queer Trades for Women’, *People’s Friend*, 7 August 1916.

⁵⁸ ‘The Lady with the Plough’, *People’s Friend*, 4 December 1916.

⁵⁹ Hilda M. Shaw, ‘Phyllis, the Mill Girl’, *People’s Friend*, 8 November 1915, pp. 395-6; M. C. Ramsay, ‘Her Country’s Call’, *People’s Friend*, 15 November 1915, pp. 418-9; Dora Fowler Martin, ‘Lynette Leigh, Land Girl’, *People’s Friend*, 21 September 1918, pp. 136-7.

⁶⁰ ‘After the War. Things That Are Going to Happen’, *People’s Friend*, 10 July 1916, p. 28.

⁶¹ For examples of this see Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield, (1987). *Out of the Cage: Women’s Experiences in Two World Wars*. London & New York: Pandora, pp. 47-56.

Conclusion

The *People's Friend* was, perhaps, a typical example of the way popular newspapers in Scotland as well as the rest of United Kingdom responded to the war. If it was a truism that war sold newspapers, it was also true that conflict brought out in them – in this war, at least – a strong streak of social and political conservatism. One of the most interesting features of the New Journalism was the kind of inverse relationship that it fostered between journalistic innovation and progressive social thinking. The more technically innovative a paper was, the less likely it was to be politically progressive – something that could be seen from Northcliffe's *Daily Mail* all the way to Thomson's *People's Journal* and *People's Friend*. It might be expected that war would exert a centrifugal effect on culture, its violence blasting apart the weak social bonds and inter-class structures that held it together. But as far as popular newspapers are concerned, the war appeared to exercise instead a centripetal effect, pushing readers back into the formulas and familiar certainties that had enchanted, consoled, and reassured them in the happier times before the conflict.

Scotland had, like the rest of the United Kingdom, to deal with a number of unprecedented threats to its economic and social stability in the war—much more than simply the existential threats and the dangers to families caused by warfare itself. The fundamental, though largely temporary, shift in gender roles and expectations was one such threat, domestic shortages and the rising cost of living were others, while rebellion in Ireland and revolution in Russia offered glimpses of wider instabilities massing on the horizon. In this context, popular newspapers played an important role in anchoring their readers in the stock certainties of their everyday worlds—amusing, diverting, gently advising, entertaining, and to a certain extent informing—and in so doing reinforced the resolve of their imagined communities. As such, they undoubtedly played a part in sustaining domestic morale, as well as assisting the continuous flow of matériel, that helped ensure an allied victory. But they did so at the cost of limiting the horizons of their readerships, of continuing to confine them in the narrow precincts of pre-war conventions and customary expectations. Their continuing popularity spoke directly to the need for consolation and comfort, and for solidarity and a sense of common purpose. But what was neglected in the process was an opportunity to open their readers' eyes fully to the actual, often discomfiting and disagreeable, facts of the war and to the potential for dynamic social change that their realization might bring about. Instead of helping their readers understand fully the consequences of war and push confidently into the new world they had won, the popular press continued to insulate its readers in the comforting certainties to which they had long been accustomed, pushing them back gently but inexorably into the world they had lost.