

TO KILL REFUSING

BRISTOL'S WORLD WAR 1 CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

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Title: Letter from Hope Squire 6/6

Description: A hand written letter

Details: Letter from Hope Squire (Frank Merrick's first wife) to Frank in prison on Armistice Day 1918.

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Credit: With permission of Frank Merrick's family - Celia Boor, Phoebe Merrick and Paul Merrick

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874 + Merrick Nov. 11th 1918. 12 P.M. Evening 7^{PM}.

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64.39
My own beloved Hank - This is I suppose a very great day! I wonder if you know the news - the Armistice is signed & I expect somehow it will have filtered through to prison even, every one is so full of it and so excited. Great shouting & attempts to decorate with flags, & to shut up shops. The baker boy (who found Woden) brought me the news, then I sallied forth to find out if it were true. (10.30. pm) The first person I met, of course, was old Mr. Brooke, who burst into tears & thanked Heaven he had lived to see the day I rose nobly to the occasion & petted him up a bit. This evening Eric Payne called & told me that they are quite mad in town. Soldiers & nurses prancing about round the Infirmary, & girls embracing soldiers with hazard in the streets. He was out with a wounded soldier's friend who, when they were told the news, said, "My word! won't all the 'Tommys' be jumping out of their trenches & swooping cigarettes with Fritz & changing hats." It is a blessed relief to think that the slaughter has stopped, that is all I mind about - (what a wicked sentiment, eh?) Of course I cannot join in the "Victory" excitement, but I have saved the two leading articles out of the Queen Daily Telegraph for you in case you should ever get any crazy ideas about the present situation being due to anything or anybody except Heaven & The Prime Minister. You'll think I am horribly sarcastic, but I do so dislike the D.V. vit's fulsome style, especially as it used to be such an Anti-L.G. paper! I have been struggling all day with an idiotic temptation to look out of window every time any one passes in case it should be you! I wonder if the Government will be suddenly magnanimous & liberate all political prisoners as one more master stroke before the coming election. For the life of me I cannot help feeling bitterly about the dead, & asking "why not have negotiated sooner, - & why have we reached the present

day without substituting arbitration for bloodshed?"
well, thank my own dear high thinking, clean minded
Thank, I can never express to you or any one how
thankful I am that one day - please Heaven - I shall
lie by your side again reflecting "those hands have never
taken the life of a fellow man, have never made some
woman a widow, some child an orphan - that dear
true face has never gazed into another's human face
filled with little mortal fear, or un natural savagery -
that placid mind has never been clouded into justifying
deeds of brutality & madness. As for the argument ^{of}
that your refusal to fight has indirectly caused the
death of the Britains, let those believe it who have
refused to fight against the white slave-traffic - &
sweated labour - in any case I don't admit it because
I'm so convinced that the refusal to fight now had
to be made by some however few men, in order to lay
the foundation stone for the saving of whole populations
in the future. And who am I? Only Hope Merrick, but
as long as I - even if I stood alone - stand to my opinion
I am "the leak in the dyke", & no one can truthfully say
Great Britain was solid for war. Yes, you are right
about your convictions having upheld you during your
dear imprisonment, & you are right in thinking they
have strengthened you & made you grow - just as I
at my end have been growing & suffering & strengthening
in one way (but not in any beautiful or saintly way!)
only in more fully fledged Hopeness; but you (I think)
exaggerate very much the influence your early
bringing up has had on your character. First
the "teaching" atmosphere is reflected much more
faithfully in Horace & Margery, together with more
qualities which make them emphatically the children
of your father & mother. All these qualities you also
possessed up to a certain point, but where as

they were only skin deep with you, & you "peeled" & became something quite different, they are flesh & bone & blood of the the two, & there's no peeling to be expected now. I'll explain all this in details some day. Mean while I can't help thinking, if prisoners are suddenly liberated you'll be in a fine fix! You've only got about 9' I believe & your shoes & other things are worn so awful when you went they must be mouldy now! And Wandsworth is so far from any of our friends. Mother is in a most curious state at this moment, & rather for the last hour, she has had the window open, door open, fire out bed clothes thrown aside & yet it is so cold, the pavements etc are all frosted & I am shivering with a rug & a hot water bottle on my knees. Another time when the room is stifling she will be perishing with cold. It may look unkind but I honestly hope she won't live a long time as her life is such a misery to her. I think hourly these days how strange it is that we should still be so ^{subjected} by our unreasonable hearts. Why can't I feel about Mother like I did about Father, but I can't! I do all I can just as conscientiously for her as I did for him, but there's a mysterious barrier somewhere which I can't break down. The fault is in me, I know that, I don't feel Mother's sufferings, I'm very sorry for her, but I can't treat her like a child & pet her & manage her like I could do in Father's case; & the inability to do so makes me very unhappy & causes me to be very unkind & irritable. Tuesday. I couldn't finish last night, was overcome with tiredness. Lucy left on Sat. & I'm beginning to realize how truly I suffered during her sojourn here - 9 weeks - I had suddenly the chance of another girl so I took her & sacked Lucy. I feel no compunction, I gave her some extra money, & sent her to a lodging recommended by the G.F.S. & told her to get a factory job of some sort, there are any amount to be got well, we know me enough to know that a deformity is

a disfigurement would make me extra kind to anyone,
& for 9 weeks I battled with Lucy, because I feared no
one else would ever put up with her. She had a golden
chance here, 10¢ a week, every thing found, lots of help, but
she knows neither gratitude nor fair play - the word
"Cassations" was a dead letter to her, & worst of all the
only thing she appreciated at all was brutality. You will
be shocked at me, no doubt, but I assure you, after I had
utterly lost patience & roundly abused her, she would go
about her work for several hours singing cheerfully & doing
it properly, & quite well in fact. After the first bit of returning
kindness on my part, she would be as dirty, sly, & selfishly
lazy as ever she could. Jealousy, or kindness, or teaching
made no appeal to her, it is terrible to realize that there
are such people, especially when they are afflicted with a
hideous facial disfigurement - but it's a fact! The new
one, Florence, can cook very well. She works like a trojan (so
do I until we have recovered from Lucy's efforts) &
talks incessantly (worse luck.) But she is very competent &
wonderfully pretty - rather french looking, very dark, slim
& tall & handsome. No more news from your family.
Your "heat wave" amazed us, we have been perishing with cold
we also have no coal & can't get any, when I neuralgia will
let me I shall do some log sawing - it is getting better since I
put on two woollen sleeves & made myself a large pair of thick
wool mittens. My hand now ceases to be painful though
the arm still hurts & is very stiff. Linde is expected to stay
to stay for a few days and convalesce! Winkler is still very thin,
very haughty, & bordering on loving. Matthew & Hughball terrific!
Dearest One, I think you had better generally wait till I answer a
letter before writing another - unless you hate waiting - there might
be things you could answer. Thekla has just asked Harold for
a job - as foreign Correspondant. Eric Payne got a job last week
& first time he appeared, the staff struck because he had been
on cons. grounds! The headmaster said he knew before hand
was O.K. & was in sympathy, but couldn't lose all his staff, so
must end, I wonder how soon we shall meet - cheer up
will go faster now. Ever & ever your loving Hope. X X X