

Milton Barnes to Rhoda Barnes

NOTE: Capt. Barnes finally catches up with the 62nd Ohio and reports to his regimental commander, Col. Francis B. Pond. He also mentions Lt. Col. Patrick, commanding the 5th Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment. The battle Barnes refers to was that of Kernstown on March 22-23, prior to his joining the regiment, which participated in this defeat of Stonewall Jackson. This accounts for the optimism Barnes expresses. There are references to the Confederate cavalry leader, Col. Turner Ashby, and to Major General Nathaniel D. Banks, the Federal commander, in the Valley. Barnes' sarcastic reference to the Jeffersonian, the pro-secessionist Cambridge, Ohio, newspaper, is a recurrent theme in his and Rhoda's correspondence.

Head Quarters, Camp near  
Woodstock, Va.  
April 10<sup>th</sup> 1862

My very dear wife

I arrived here and reported to Col.

Pond two days ago. all well but pretty tired. I wrote you at Strasburg and sent letter from there. the next morning Capt Hirst & I started on for the camp 10 miles - I got up refreshed - weather still pleasant and roads good - the roads were lined still with wagons, cavelry companies & whole regiments of infantry - I stopp (sic) - am ordered to go to Woodstock on a court martial.

Back again - I buckled on my best regimentals, borrowed the Chaplain's horse, and put off for Woodstock. got about a mile when I met Col. Pond & [Lt.] Col Patrick of the 5th Ohio. R. coming back saying the Court had adjourned till tomorrow morning when I shall put out again - to be (what do you think) a member of Shield's [sic] general Court-Martial! This was a surprise to me - I may be there for several days - perhaps only one day - Well, I dont know where to begin writing particulars - suffice it to say I found quarters with Col. Pond very comfortable indeed - I intended going to a private house for quarters, but it set in raining very hard just after I got into camp and the Col. told me I would fare better here than in a

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house, as the most of them <sup>[are]</sup> deserted and it would not be over safe to venture far - at all events I felt that I was now in the safest place I had been in since I left Winchester, right in the heart of of a camp stretching for miles all around. I was very fearful I would take cold - but to my astonishment I have slept here now three nights and have not taken a sign of a cold - am entirely free from cough or hoarseness, in a word feel better in health than I have for a long time. fare is good, so far. and plenty of it. I am still staying in Pond's tent - he spoke very flatteringly of you he recollected nearly everything you said to him at the Depot. This Reg. has had a hard time of it - but they are getting things straightened up a little now. ---Our company had not had their tents for about 30 days - it is surprising to see what men can endure - they marched 17 miles the morning of the battle, without rest - or rations since the day before and got nothing that night - they lay on the battle field - without any covering of any kind and nothing to eat. But their tents came on the day I got here - and they are comfortable. Phillip Sigman[?] slept night before last on the ground by a log fire in the mud shoe deep - and nearly burnt his overcoat off him - I asked him if he wanted a discharge - "No sir-ee." he replied, said he had'nt been sick a day since he left [Camp] Goddard. Timmy Allison is well [and] nearly all well but 4 or 5 whom I am getting discharged from service[.] There is a large body of troops encamped here - no enemy near us except Ashby's cavalry - skirmishing - coming down the road from Strasburg we heard that a bridge right in front of the camp that had been burnt by Jackson's men and which ours were rebuilding was just completed and a battle was on the tapis for that day or the next certain - came on a few miles farther and we heard the loud booming of cannon for several minutes - I thought they

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were at it sure but soon learned they were only shelling our pickets and with that exception all was quiet on de Shanandoah[.] The impression now is that we will be here for a week or two yet - in fact the valley is pretty near cleared<sup>d</sup> out of rebel troops, and may not have much to do but take things comfortably My company is badly out of gears [sic][.] [Lt.] Adair has been lying back 5 miles beyond Winchester for a month nearly - with Rheumatism at the house of a quaker - but I did'nt know of it till I got here - I just sent after my trunk today ~~which~~ <sup>which</sup> I left at Winchester<sup>[.]</sup> we are 34 miles from Winchester and 16 from Strasburg - we walked till we would get tired - then mount an army wagon and ride till we got tired - the road is a turnpike as good a road nearly as our old turnpike - the Manassas R.R which runs along here is deserted - bridges all burnt and rolling stock all off - in fact from Martinsburg all the way through, it is a faithful ~~picture~~ <sup>picture</sup> of "war's desolations"<sup>[.]</sup> I took dinner with a lady in Woodstock back here 4 miles - as I came through she claimed to be Union - but they are all that now - as a big darkie told me. I asked him how the people felt now - "Oh all Union now" - how were they before our army came along - union or secesh[?] "Oh golly most all secesh afore sure", but my notion is they would be anything at all to get rid of the war - My dear wife you can form no idea of the desolation that an army leaves in its wake - I met an old darkie along with one of [General] Bank's teams - he looked more like an over grown Aurang outang [sic] than any thing else - said he lived on de Shan'doa, had a wife and children - you left them, said I - "yes leff em in de hans o' God - he can take care em better'n I can" leff ole massa too. nothing but hard work dar - Mister I'se seed more fun since I been wid de army than ever I see afore in all my born days." ha! ha! ha!" and he hurried on - This valley is full of

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darkies - Yesterday we got the official news of the capture of Island 10 and the battle and victory on the Upper Tennessee - Col. Pond went around notifying the different companies - and such yelling! some of [them] thought the war was over now sure - but I reckon not. I begin to want to get a letter from home, dear! is there one on the way or not - or it may be you did not get mine? how is it do you get your Wheeling paper? I hope you do - we dont get much news here and it is old when it comes - I just now got a bundle of Jeffersonians and looked over one till I got mad[.] I had the greatest notion in the world to send them back - disunion sheets meet but a cold reception here. I do assure you - our pay master has not got into our Reg - yet - we are looking for him with a wishful eye -

Dont give yourself any unnessary [sic] uneasiness about me, dear. I am getting along fine! - the boys seemed to be glad enough to see me - poor little Lieut. Murphy is nearly used up - from the effects of some of his adventures in Zanesville[?] - I dont pity him much "Ad." Moore is looking fat and hearty - Lieut Johnson is well and getting along finely - but is most too easy with the men[.] the fact is our company are nearly spoiled by doing just about as they pleased - When you write I want to know how your Mother and Tirza are - but of course you will tell me ~~about~~ all about them and yourself - how I would like to know whether she has any more teeth yet - and whether she has got over that pesky cough? You must pardon me my dear wife from referring to these things any more than by allusion -

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because I know the best thing toward keeping my health up is to keep my spirits up - and I could not do this if I should dwell much upon home and the dear ones who are nearest my heart. I will send you some money in my next letter which I will write in two or three days - hoping in the mean time we will get our pay. Now dearest good bye, till I write again - give my love to Mother and kiss the little dear one, and believe me with all my heart your ever faithful husband

M Barnes