

Milton Barnes to Rhoda Barnes

*NOTE: Barnes' reference to the "Battle of Winchester" is to the previously noted engagement at Kernstown on 22-23 March 1862. The troops were following news of events at "York Town" (Yorktown, Va.) where General George B. McClellan was assembling Federal troops for the Peninsula Campaign to end the war quickly by taking Richmond.*

Camp near New Market Va.

Shields Division, 2d Brigade

62d Reg, Ohio Vols. April 22d 1862

My ever dear wife.

I wrote you a few pencil marks from this place day before yesterday and now I will snatch a moment's time to write again though I almost despair of it getting to you. our mail facilities are so temporary, and uncertain, that I fear you will not get my letters at all. I am in excellent health, although we have had a hard time of it as a regiment, our regiment has had no teams for tran[s]porting tents, baggage &c, and when we stopped here, coming off of a hard march, had to encamp in the mud and rain without tents. I came here to this hotel to stay, where I have been for 2 nights, and am very comfortable, but to see my men enduring such hardship is too much to bear. and yesterday the company officers held a meeting and I drew up a petition to head quarters for setting forth our grievances, and last night, I in company with Capt. Roundstone went to Gen. Banks himself and presented our case and fumed that some of the Regiments had as high as 30 wagons while we had but 2. after our statements to him of the facts, and that we had appealed to our Col. in vain, he at once ordered us ten teams to be furnished forthwith. Our court martial was adjourned when the order came to march and I dont know when it will convene again, perhaps here in a day or two, if we stay here, which we may do, as I have just learned that Jackson has escaped from this valley and gone towards Richmond. We will probably form

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a junction with Fremont's forces coming across to Staunton. We are about 40 miles yet from Staunton. at all events we will have no more fighting to do in this part of Virginia. Have you ever got your Wheeling paper? I sent my money home to you by our sutler to Barnesville to be there sent up to you by express, which I earnestly hope you have got by this time as I know you need it. I drew [Lt.] Adair's money for him and sent it to him by our Chaplain yesterday. Poor fellow he is sick at a Quaker's house beyond Winchester, and has not been with the Regiment since before the battle of Winchester, I heard from him about a week ago when he was some better but very weak. I have found all my clothes except that odd towel. [Lt.] Johnston has five or six blankets he has gathered up along the road. indeed the boys have had to snatch at everything they could get, and it has become a grab game, all around, and our company officers yesterday just concluded we would take the matter in our own hands. I expect to see some queer looks when Roundstone and I go back to camp this morning with the result of our efforts. our regiment is the largest one in Shields['] Division, and when on the march and full makes a magnificent appearance[.] It looks grand to see them fording a stream. When we came through Mount Jackson 8 miles back we had to cross a small creek. The rebels had burnt the bridge. Dr. H. [Hood] lent me his horse and I rode over ahead, and stood on the bank and looked at them. I would have given anything if I could have painted the scene for you. in fact there is something wildly romantic and constantly exciting about military life, and one remarkable feature is the exemption from cold when the men are so exposed. I have taken no cold yet, and feel first rate, in body, and in mind for I hav'nt time to get the blues, nor to think long enough

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at a time to despair, but still we would all be very willing to quit and go home again to our dear ones. Jud Murphy started home the other day on furlough and I intended to send a letter by him to you, but just at that time the order came to "forward march" This was a sore disappointment to me but perhaps he will call and see you anyhow. I told him to, and if he wants anything to eat, give it to him - my dear never turn a soldier away hungry[.] I have seen so much of it along here that it makes my heart sick, though I get enough myself - but often the boys cant get it. it will be better now though since we got these teams to haul it. The Capt and I are considerably elated with our success. This town New Market is still in Shanandoah [sic] County, and is a pretty little town, beautifully situated in the most beautiful valley in Va. and surrounded by some of the finest farms I ever saw. ok if it wasn't for Slavery and Secesh. I would so much like to live here, but it is sour very sour, the people have nearly all left, and what are still here can hardly look you in the face. The town is chuck full of soldiers. every house is occupied by as many as can get in with our army encamped all around it. Col Ashby of the Secesh cavalry had his horse killed by one of our cavalry men the other day and his forces are scattered every where[.] our boys are bringing them in by piece meal. every day or two they bring in some of them prisoners. It has cleared off this morning very nicely. and hope the bad weather is over for the Spring. We are awaiting the news from York Town as the result of that must be the decisive stroke of the war and perhaps end the struggle as it did in the Revolution, so mote it be.

I must now close as it is time to go to church

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I do hope you have got my former letters. I have written five or six times. I have gotten none from you yet but think I certainly will get one today for I know there is one or two on the way from you my dearest. I want to hear from you so bad, and how your Mother is and little deary Tirza. I believe she is nearly eight months old by this time though I have lost all idea of time nearly - but is well of her cough and growing & write often dear wife. and dont give yourself any uneasiness about me for I am getting along very well and enjoying myself as well as a man could who is away from his family which he loves as he loves his life -

Now goodbye my dear wife, and believe me as ever your loving and ever faithful husband my love to all - When this affair is over and I am safely at home again which I believe and trust I will be for I put my trust in Him, who is all, and in all, and over all.

So adieu for the present my dear

ever faithfully yours

Milton Barnes

address as before directed and it will be forwarded to me as there is none but military mail arrangement

Shields Division. 2d Brigade

62d Reg Ohio Vols.

Via Winchester Va.