

MILTON BARNES to ROBERT L. ALLISON

Rhoda's grandfather

NOTE: This is the only letter in this collection written by Milton Barnes to ~~his father-in-law~~, Robert L. Allison, who apparently lived in or near Cambridge, Ohio. Towards the end of the letter he refers to a proposed visit of Rhoda, Tirza and Rhoda's mother to Hickory, Pa., where apparently some of the Allisons lived. Several such visits to Hickory are chronicled in the correspondence.

Camp near New Market Va.

May 2nd A. D. 1862

Robert L. Allison Esq.

My dear friend:

I intended to have written you a letter ere this, but have been so busy since I joined the regiment, that I have had but little time for correspondence. I have now a moment's leisure and will improve it as suggested above.

My route through to Winchester was highly interesting to me, as I had never been over the B & O. R.R. before. It could not fail to be, to any lover of travel and grotesque natural scenery. The two points of special attraction, to wit, Cheat river and Harper's Ferry, were particularly, I have almost said, intensely so. But I will not add to the innumerable efforts already heretofore made, to describe them in public print and elsewhere, which are no doubt familiar to you, if they are not indeed familiar from personal observation. Stopping overnight in Wheeling, by the way, I got a peep at Genl. Fremont, whom I had so much desired to see, but was not close enough to give you a very accurate description of his personnell. [Sic] Suffice it, that I was very much deceived in his appearance, his hair was closely shaven, brushed to one side, mixed with grey, temples almost white, with beard neatly trimmed - and withal, looking more like a Presbyterian clergyman looking out for a call, than had been my ideal of his gallant mountaineership.

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But while I am writing, rumor fills the air that he has moved his forces through the interminable mountains of his Department already and occupied Staunton ahead of this Division some 20 miles, with whom our advance has formed a junction and effectually driven the terror-stricken rebels from this part of Virginia, so much for the Pathfinder. Well, after resting a few days at Winchester I started on a march to find my regiment, some 35 miles ahead. I took my time to it and occasionally mounting a wagon with which the road was almost lined, then footed it again. So in two days I made the landing - I found the regiment encamped in the wet and mud, our company without their tents, with nothing to shelter them but booths of brush and sticks, with a few oil-cloths. They had not seen their tents for 28 days. They bore evident marks of hard usage, and even of demoralization. You may imagine my feelings, at the prospect before me. Lieut. Adair had been sick at a private house near Winchester since the 21th [Sic] of March. I had forebodings concerning my own health when I saw this specimen of soldiering, but I have stood it finely indeed, but it has been better ~~since~~ with us. our boys got their tents on [?] in a few days, and all fixed and just beginning to live again, when on the evening of the 16th [of April] we were accosted by the Adjutant [.] in almost a whisper, [he] announced, "be ready with 3 days cooked rations, we move tonight at one o'clock"[.] all was silent in camp that night save the "busy note of preparation" [-] a short nap - a cup of hot coffee. our

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brigade was in line of march, precisely at one. I might have been excused, but here was a new class of sensations, and I determined to see it through. Our course was by the turnpike, the night dark but clear. about a mile on the way, we halted not knowing what was the matter, but presently three or four powerful volleys of musketry broke out on the still air, away ahead of us. it was our cavalry driving in the enemy's pickets on the opposite side of the bridge which the rebels had destroyed and our men had just rebuilt (as usual) [.] it ceased and on we went, without hindrance until the dawn of day breaking over the Blue ridge mountains on the east, revealed to us at once, the full view of our whole division, for miles either way along the road, and the most beautiful country I ever beheld. we were approaching Mount Jackson where it was reported Jackson was to fight us. The bridge across the river here was in flames, and our column again halted, while our cavalry could be seen in all directions reconnoitering the position. All at once Ashby's artillery let loose on them, with perfect fury. a passage was soon found over a rail road bridge, and our artillery wagons went ahead with great rapidity in full gallop, and soon gained an elevated position and in less time than it takes me to write it, Daum had them planted and was homing shot and shell into them at [a] rapid rate. our brigade then moved up in double quick time and crossed over immediately in the rear of Daums battery to support it. we remained in that position until the battery ceased. The enemy had as the boys say, "Skedaddled".

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We then deployed as skirmishers, through the woods for two miles, passing through the enemy's camp. Our cavalry made a charge on them with a yell that made the welkin ring, but the enemy again escaped. we again took the pike in double quick time into the town. here just at the foot of the town another bridge was in flames, and we had to ford it, passing on a mile beyond, where they attempted to make another stand with like success. here we gained a fine position on a hill, but again in a few minutes the firing ceased and we took a cup of coffee - marched back to the town, took off in a circuitous route, over the roughest road I ever saw, for 12 or 15 miles, intending to come on to the main road ahead of them and surround them, but arriving just at sundown, all exhausted [Sic] with fatigue and hunger, to find no bridge to cross the river again we encamp'd for the night - on the naked ground. the next morning forded the stream with our whole brigade, marched about 5 miles and entered this town, New Market, where we joined the rest of Shields['] and Banks['] forces, who had kept the main road. in the meantime we learned that Jackson's whole force had left here that morning before breakfast. on being asked why he run so, he replied "who in the h-ll would'nt run with 20 miles of Yankees after him.["] Our march the day before was through or under a very hot sun all day, and was continued about 18 hours on but one cup of coffee, and a few crackers. [It is] considered by some to have been one of the hardest of the campaign. I was fortunate in getting to ride a portion of the time, and also to ride across the stream, was very tired but suffered more from it afterwards. But I must close this already too long account of what may not be interesting to you.

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I have procured a live specimen of Confederate scrip, which I send you in this. If you should be indebted to any of your Secession friends in Ohio, you might make a tender of this bill to them. They certainly could not object to it, for it is all the kind used by their bretherin down here. I have been unwell for a few days but am over it now. camping out agrees with me pretty well, if the weather were good all the time. I received a letter from my wife day before yesterday - I was grieved to learn that our little darling had been worse since I left home, but Rhoda says its better now. uneasiness about them is my greatest trouble and care, but I hope they may get along well. I was glad to learn that they had concluded to make a visit to Pennsylvania. I think it will be beneficial to them all.

Remember me to Mrs. Allison and believe me

with much regard

Yours truly,

Milton Barnes