

Milton Barnes to Rhoda Barnes

NOTE: Milton Barnes mentions a recent letter of late April 1862 to Rhoda but it is missing from this collection, as is hers of April 20-21. In addition to receiving copies of the Cambridge Jeffersonian, Barnes also mentions the Guernsey Times of Guernsey County, Ohio, which surrounds Cambridge. He notes that Brigadier General Orris S. Ferry is the new ~~command~~ commander of Shields' Second Brigade.

This is Milton Barnes' last letter to Rhoda in this collection, from the Shenandoah Valley and as an officer of the 62nd Ohio Volunteers. On May 24 he officially tendered his "immediate and unconditional resignation of my commission" on the grounds of a "phisical (Sic) disability which prostrates me both phisically and mentally....." He was listed as a "casualty" on 21 May 1862 and the surgeon of the 62nd reported on 24 May that Barnes "is suffering from spinal irritation accompanied with great prostration, both mental, and physical....." Dr. Hood added: "On our late march from New Market to this place (near Fredericksburg) he found his strength entirely unequal to the task..." [Military personnel Record of Milton Barnes, National Archives].

Camp on the road to Harrisonburg Va.

14 miles from New Market

May 4th 1862

My very dear wife,

When I wrote to you last, some 4 or 5 days ago, I had been unwell. I had the diarrhoea <sup>[sic]</sup> pretty badly for about a week which ran me almost down, but was getting about over it when night before last orders came at one o'clock in the night to move at 8 the next morning - I had not yet gone to sleep when the orders came and of course got none at all that night. we packed up - everything, and started on the hike. it was pretty warm, but I stood it pretty well for 8 or 10 miles when I began to give out. Dr. Hood my very good friend rode up and tendered me his horse as before which was quite acceptable I do assure you. We stopped a few minutes by the way at noon, and [Lt.] Johnston went to [a] house near by and got some butter milk. it was not a very choice article but I laid in a good supply [.] it kept me from getting thirsty, and I drank water once on the way which is much the better plan. That was at one of the

Milton Barnes to Rhoda Barnes

May 4th 1862

- 2 -

boiling springs which are found occasionally in this valley. it gushed up put of the ground strong enough almost to turn a small mill. it was the most pleasant flavored water I ever tasted. the taste was quite peculiar. a little before sundown we turned into a field to encamp, and pretty soon our teams came up, with our tents and we soon had them up and ready for living again. I was as the boys say "up the spout." i.e. was given out. My knees were jambed<sup>[sic]</sup> up, and one of them was so sore and stiff I could not bend it with [out] great pain. our boy George, a black contraband soon got supper and being excessively hungry I ate a very hearty supper. Johnston prepared the bed, and I soon became insensible of all sublunary things wrapt in "tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep." which I enjoyed most hugely I tell you. got up this morning took a cup of coffee, and felt first rate. My knees [are] entirely well and free from stiffness and pain, which was, I suppose, caused by walking on the solid turnpike. I took a good bath, put on clean under clothes and feel like a new man. right glad we got "out of the wilderness." where we had been before. it was a nasty place. we are now in a nice clover field close to the road. It is sunday and a most beautiful May morning, the most so of any I have experienced since I came into Virginia. The fruit trees are just coming into full bloom which fills the air with their aroma. The birds are singing among the branches and all nature seems to be wearing a new aspect, and every body is full of cheerfulness and smiles save the rebels, whose infamous cause ~~cause~~ looks as though it was on its last legs. Oh, how are you all this beautiful morning? are you at home? or have you gone to Pennsylvania? has our dear little Cherub got well yet?

Milton Barnes to Rhoda Barnes

May 4th 1862

- 3 -

how is your health? My dearest wife I do hope it is well with you. I am now entirely well and in good spirits, the most so that I have been since I came out. I have had a pretty hard time of it so far, and had to put up with so much inconvenience that for a while I got almost discouraged. I expect some of my previous letters were rather gloomy affairs - it was no wonder, but things are much improved now, having teams to carry our baggage along with us makes a world of difference. it is so much better. I dont know what our Col. could have been thinking about. I told you in a previous letter I believe how we came to get them. Just before starting day before yesterday I wrote a long letter to your grand father, Mr. Allison. I hope he will get it, but I was so unwell I could hardly write at all, and did not make it as interesting as I might have done. I had received your letter of the 20th & 21st informing me of your receipt of my money, which was a relief indeed, for I was afraid you would almost suffer for the need of some. I dont think you kept enough out for your own use, but we will probably be paid off again in a few weeks. our pay rolls have been made out and sent on to be paid up. preparatory to being paid. I would like very much indeed to be with you at church today, but dont allow myself to think of it much. I am determined to go ahead and see it through now, if it dont last too long. I hope you dear will bear up under your temporary bereavement like a true heroine as I know you to be, and when it is all over and I am through Kind Providence permitted to return to you, our joy and enjoyment will be all the sweeter for our trials and hardships. Oh our dear people in Ohio know nothing of effects of this war. it is not like where it is brought right to their own

Milton Barnes to Rhoda Barnes

May 4th 1862

- 4 -

doors, as it is here, and I sometimes almost wish that some of our home  
secesh could have it so for awhile. it would open their eyes. we are  
occasionally undergoing some changes here. our brigade is now under  
command of Brig. Genl. O. S. Ferry,<sup>a</sup> Vermonter. Shields is still in  
command of the Division. when you write say Shields' Division, 2nd Brigade  
&c. Via of [sic] Winchester, or Via Martinsburg will do. I am sorry you  
didnt get my Winchester letter. I hope you may all have a splendid good  
visit to Pennsylvania. I know it will be good for you. I want you to  
become a big fat woman by the time I come. You know my preference for  
tolerably fat women. Tirza will be a bounding fat little girl, walking  
and perhaps talking by that time. she will be so interesting the little  
dear. the boys are mostly well, except some of the older ones, whom I  
am trying to get discharged. I have discharge papers made out for 7 of  
them. They will be home I think during this month. We are now in  
Rockingham county, within 5 miles from Harrisonburg - the county<sup>3</sup> seat.  
we will probably soon join Fremonts' [sic] forces - at Staunton. We are  
only 25 miles from there now, but how soon we will reach it, is of course  
unknown - you will get the account of our movements in the Wheeling paper -

Now I must close[.] I can think of nothing new here that would be  
interesting to you. we are very much ~~circumstances~~ circumscribed in our  
operations [sic] - ~~we~~ can know but little except what transpires in our  
own regiment - or listen to camp stories which are never reliable and I  
never pay any attention to them. We occasionally get a Baltimore paper  
when it is a week old. We generally get the Guernsy [sic] Times and  
Jeffersonian tho [the] latter is scarcely ever read. They use them for  
wrapping paper. Now adieu my kind, affectionate and ever dear wife -  
write often. Remember me to Mother and Tirza and receive dear for yourself

Milton Barnes to Rhoda Barnes

May 4th 1862

- 5 -

the[?] warmest assurances of my devotion and affection - Your  
ever faithful husband and soldier boy -

Milton Barnes.