

MILTON BARNES to RHODA BARNES

Cumberland Hospital

Nashville, Tennessee

"Sabby day" Dec. 19th 1864.

My darling,

I wrote you a hurried note yesterday, giving you an idea of my situation. Today I have very little to communicate in addition to what I then said, only that I am doing finely [sic]. My back and shoulder is pretty sore and keeps me looking very dignified, but the Surgeon thinks it will pass away in a few days. I did not go to ~~the~~ Officers Hospital, that institution being full. The Surgeon with whom I came in from the field, having charge of the ambulance train[,] very kindly asked me to come with him to the Cumberland Genl. h.[ospital] where he introduced me to a Surgeon Ayers, having charge of one of the wards, a very clever little fellow[,] and he fixed me a place in his room, and I am sitting around, reading the newspapers and enjoying a smoke "mit mine pipe"[.] This is a very extensive Hospital arrangement put up last summer just out of the edge of town a little, and a very comfortable and pleasant place. Surgeon Thorp, who brought me here, and of whom I spoke before, I met last fall, while in Cincinnati. He is a clever gentleman. He has my horse[,] taking care of him for the use of him. He was out last night to the front and returned just a few minutes ago, having found our army at Franklin twenty miles from here still driving the enemy and capturing large numbers of prisoners, artillery &c. Hood's army is a complete route.

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This will end our winter campaign, if not end it entirely in this Department. Capt. Davis is here with me, slightly wounded in the head again. These little affairs dont bother us much. I received your good letter of the 13th inst. yesterday. The Chaplain came in with it, puffing and blowing. [The] poor fellow had walked in from the field 5 or 6 miles and was hurrying out again to catch up with the regiment before it would get too far out. He is the only fighting ~~par~~son I know of in this army. he stays right up under fire and rallys [sic] the men and is just as useful as any line officer in a fight. he is worth half a dozen ordinary Chaplains. But to your letter, C, it is so kind of you to write so often and just such tender, sympathizing and loving letters as you know suits me. I know not how I could live in the army without them. "Poor sing" [-] was it troubled about my reputation at Franklin? The next time Charly wants to find me in a fight he had better come up a little farther to the front, and he will always find me at my post. I dont think he intended to corvey the impression you got, he knows better. It was difficult however to find anybody that night. The fighting was mostly done after dark, when it was so dark you could not tell one man from another. I was not two rods away from the front line at any time. I worked two or three hours drawing my men off, had to hunt around in the dark. they were all massed up together with a dozen other regiments

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all fighting together. Genl. Wagner was down at the [Harpeth] river a mile in the rear, pretty well "how [come?] you so," but these things are for your private ear[.] his removal from command explains it, but dont mention these things, my dear. I saw nothing of Charly until we crossed the river at 12 o'clock when he came riding up and told me what he had been doing. I felt very grateful to him for the interest he manifested in my behalf and I think it was sincere. I am very sure he did'nt mean anything by the remark which gave you uneasiness. No my dear[,] you must not think for a moment that I will ever act in that way. I would much rather come to you a lifeless corpse than with a ruined reputation. I hope it will be neither. My regiment [in the Battle of Nashville] was fighting behind a small breastwork when I was wounded. we were confronting the enemy's strongest position on the Franklin Pike. I had been on my horse till just a few minutes before. I got notice that the Brigade on my left was going to charge, and that I should keep up a strong fire from the works. I had given the orders to my men, and was standing in my place in the line directing the firing when I was hit. Chaplain [McFarland] was by my side. The shell burst over my head and apparently came straight down, passing my head and striking below. I didn't have my back to the enemy my dear!

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It is one of the annoying incidents of this war that a man has to watch the enemy in front and at the same time watch a factious and contemptible public sentiment at home. Well[,] my little swan is all right. O, Pa likes so much to get her cute little sayings and doings. she has'nt forgotten the little joke she got on Pa about the shirt? Would love to see you all very much indeed, but I will not think of coming home now. I dont know what to say about the box[.] If you send one let it be a very small one. I may be gone to the front before it comes, and then I am faring very well. Yet I would enjoy [inverted at top of page 1:] a nice treat from home on Christmas very much. If I knew I would be here at that time. Tell me how you are off for ~~money~~<sup>money</sup> my dear - Direct your letters to the regiment as usual. Love to all the "famy"[.] Your own Milton