

MILTON BARNES to RHODA BARNES

NOTE: A number of the letters written by Milton Barnes during this period (e.g. that dated April 28, 1865) mention rumors of troop movements to the southwest to end Confederate resistance, but this is the only one referring to the foreign policy problem posed by the presence of Napoleon III's puppet emperor of Mexico, Maximilian of Hapsburg. On May 17 General Philip Sheridan was assigned to command west of the Mississippi and south of the Arkansas, with the understanding that he might soon be called on to lead any U.S. land forces needed to oust Maximilian.

Near Nashville, Tennessee.

May 12th '65.

My darling,

We are so built up with the prospect of getting home that it absorbs every other thought and every other theme of ambition. The boys are constantly trying to gather grape vine news to spread around camp to gratify the universal desire for news as to what is coming next [-] how soon we are to go northward - how soon we are to be mustered out and all that, every ten minutes during the day somebody brings a new version of the old story about the troops being ordered to Louisville[,] Camp Chase, Columbus[,] &c. You have no idea, my love, how great is the suspense, just now. The war being over - no longer anything to keep us here, we wonder and wait and long for the Talisman's word that shall transform us from a veteran old army into citizens free - independent men once more, to come again to our long deserted homes, to have our loved ones get up and push the chairs back and make room for us around

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the fireside circle again, resume our old places there and once more be happy with those who are so dear to us. You need not be alarmed, dearest, about my going to war again. I have had enough. I am not in favor of the next war. If I were back to budding manhood again emerging from my teens with the experience I have I should like very well to be a West Point cadet and go into the regular army, but that time is passed and I have no regrets. as for the volunteer service, I have done my full share and am content. I long to be at home where I can cultivate the arts of peace and domestic enjoyment, with those I love and by whom I am loved. I believe I wrote you some account of our grand review the other day? It was a day long to be remembered by the 4th Corps. Yesterday was cold and chilly and wet. having no fire in our tents and being too wet to stand outside we had to go to bed to keep warm, most of the day. This morning Col. McLanahan and Will Clark came over. (We are ten miles apart.) After dinner we rode over to General Harding's place a mile or two from here to see his park. I believe I told you about it before. This is such a delightful country around here, what a pity it is not owned by white people? Day before yesterday we went to the 176th [Ohio Regiment] in the city, got our dinner and supper with some Guernsey [County] boys[,] saw the regiment drill with their white gloves and paper collars on, [they] made a

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"splen'splay". they never had their fine lines broken by the enemy's shot and shell and by marching through cane brakes and thorn thickets, as the old 4th Corps, has.

Since we returned from our ride I have received your letter of the 8th - last Monday. O it is so good to get your kind loving and interesting letters. what will I do for such nice letters when I get home. O never mind, I will then get them right warm from your dear lips. Yes, and that wont be all I'll get from those lips, will it darling? and I'll try to act upon Mother's suggestion and try to take some of the wildness out of Tirza's head. It is perhaps as well now that she runs out a good deal, it relieves you a good deal, does it not? and then she gets fresh air which serves to develope her physically, after a while she must begin to learn her book, and be a little lady. O what tremendous events are upon us as a nation! When I think of what is transpiring around us, I am completely overwhelmed with amazement and wonder. You must not be too impatient my dear for the soldiers (soldier) to get home. I fully realize your anxiety and impatience. you must not forget that our army is a tremendous piece of human machinery. It has taken more than four years to organize it, and certainly it can not be disorganized in a day. The great machine must be unravelled [a] piece at a time and taken apart very carefully. It is now very apparent that we (the [18] 62 troops) will be mustered out first after those in hospitals. Next week,

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it is aserted, we are to be paid a part of our dues, perhaps not more than half however that is coming to us. I understand most fully the importance that attaches to the great sacrifices and heartburnings and self denials endured by our dear wives who have stood sentinel as it were in our little home castles during these long years of fighting and toiling and suffering. no indeed my dear, you too shall have your full share in the glory that shall envelope the returning braves. you too shall have your place in history and live while the memory of this great war shall be cherished in this and in all future generations, and you my dear shall nestle closer to my aching heart, where your legitimate place has never been vacant, but where through the dangers and vicissitudes of this long struggle your image has ever been an anchor of hope, and where your kind[,] loving and burning words of council [sic] and encouragement have ever been a shield and a safeguard. A great excitement is beginning to prevail in the army about going to Mexico to drive Maximillian [sic. Maximilian] out of that country. I have no doubt that thousands will flock there as soon as our forces are disbanded. To a young man who pants for glory and romantic adventure it certainly opens an inviting field, but, as I am, I have but little ambition in that direction, and when the subject is talked of I tell them my wife has notified me in advance that she is not in favor of the next war. That will no doubt be the theatre of

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the greatest excitement for the next few years, and I think I will enjoy it just as well to sit by you of evenings and "read the daily" and with the help of my "Spanish" get what interest there is in it in that way just as well. What kind of a demonstration will we 4th corps folks meet with publicly when we come, I wonder? The good people will have to devise some other form of greeting than the old one "how are you? when are you going back?" I hardly know how I'll do riding up [the] street, on old Bill with people gazing at me all along the side walk. I rather think I'll ride up the back way. With my present habiliments, I wont have to disguise myself in the least to look like an old veteran, for I am getting so shabby I am almost ashamed of myself. It takes me clear aback about Rosey ^[sic. Rosy McCullough] coming back home alone, not much wonder though, is it? all things considered. As to Jim Johnson and Charly. I think perhaps they are well suited in that old hotel stand. They ought to be partners, by all means. I never got Charly's letter that he spoke about, but will send him the desired papers. How will Melissa like to be Land Lady? So they have [Rev.] Milligan back again? Well I am like you, I have'nt anything to say. There dearest, it is getting late and quite cool and the Chaplain is going [to] bed and I must go too. so good night love, would I were with you in your nice little nest instead of lying down on a bed of rails

Your own Milton.