

MILTON BARNES to RHODA BARNES

Franklin Tennessee

Thursday, Nov. 10th 1864

My own dear wife,

I write this beautiful morning under peculiar circumstances. You will see by the date of this that I have not yet reached my command. I have been trying since last Saturday [November 5] to reach it, but have not yet succeeded. I will give you a short history of my pilgrimage. I reached Nashville one week ago today [November 3]. On the following day I took a freight train (there is no other kind runs on these military roads) for Chatta. [Chattanooga] [-] reached there the next morning [November 5] through rain and darkness and mud interminable. found our corps had gone to Pulaski [Tennessee]. I could find no one that I knew, so I took the first train back to Stephenson, ^[S.] [Alabama] expecting to go on the road running down by the way of Huntsville Ala. I reach[ed] Stephenson ^[S.] after dark, ^[when it was] still raining and very dark and muddy. I prowled around until I found the "soldier's home" and such a home! but it was a shelter from the storm at least and I stayed there for the night, and wrote you a short note, which I hope reached you.

Here I met some officers from our corps who had been down that road and returned, not able to get through. I then took the next up train for Nashville and after a very tiresome and sleepless ride all night, reached there the next morning (Sunday)[.] On Monday morning [November 7] I took the Pulaski train on the other road, running directly south from Nashville, by the way of this place and Columbia. everything progressed well until

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about ten o'clock A.M. [-] after getting to Thompson's station about ten miles beyond this place, we felt a sudden jar. the train stopped and [we] heard a volley of musketry. we made a rush for the door of the car, saw the engine was off the track and some soldiers crying out, guerillas!! There happened to be about two hundred armed soldiers aboard and they immediately deployed out and commenced firing on them but the cowardly whelps had escaped. we afterwards learned they were a scouting party of Forrest's men, the main body numbered one hundred and fifty, but not more than seven or eight were seen. They had cut the track in a deep cut eight in the midst of which was a short curve so that one could not see ahead more than twenty yards. the engineer saw it and reversed his engines but was not quite quick enough. it went over with a crash but hurt no one. the rebs fired at the engineer, thinking no doubt to kill him and capture the train, but finding so many soldiers aboard fled in haste. Finding myself the ranking officer on the train I took command, threw out pickets and [we] prepared to defend ourselves as well as we could and had to stay there forty eight hours. I was a little frightened at first and confess that unpleasant visions of Libby Prison flitted through my mind for a few minutes, but I soon recovered my self possion [sic], threw out pickets and felt secure against what might be brought to bear against us. But although we might have been in a much worse fix, we didnt think it a very desirable situation to be placed in, so yesterday, having failed in getting our engine on the track and learning that three bridges were washed away further ahead, I send a dispatch to the command out of the Post here to send us another engine to haul us off. in the evening it came and brought us back to this place.

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we reached here a little before night and an Illinois Capt[ain] & I found a very comfortable place to stay in a private boarding house. We have everything as pleasant as could be desired, with the exception that we are broke. I have'nt had a dollar since I first reached Nashville, but I have not wanted for any thing. My shoulder straps are sufficient vouchers. an officer of Genl. Schofield's staff offered to loan^{me} all the money I wanted, but I declined taking more than five dollars. I was sorry afterwards I did'nt take more. it is all gone again. I dont know when I shall get through. Last night some seven or eight trains of troops passed down towards Pulaski but they did'nt get much farther than we did until one of them ran off the track and the whole are detained or will have to march afoot through. But I am very comfortably situated and guess I will remain here until the road is open again, which may be several days.

As soon as the accident occurred at Thompson's Station, I sent out and arrested all the citizens for a mile around and held them as hostages, and had a notion to burn all the houses near, but thought I would'nt. An old gentleman[,] Dr. Thompson[,] living near came down and invited me and two or three officers to his house. when we went up I found a member of his family. he besought me to release him[.] I did so, and the old man fed us while we stayed and treated us very kindly. So you see I am doing finely [sic], and dont intend to get in a splutter about getting to my command if I dont reach it for a month. There is [sic] plenty of our troops around now and the road is safe enough as soon as the bridges are repaired. I felt a good deal of anxiety about not reaching the regiment in time to vote, but fortunately we had enough Ohio soldiers and

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Pennsylvania soldiers, to open polls where we were and by accident an officer with us had a lot of poll books and tally sheets, so we opened a poll for each state and voted for "old Abe"[.]

I am enjoying fine health, and although it has rained constantly ever since I left Louisville, I am about rid of my cough. This morning however it has cleared away. [Inverted at top of page 1:] Now[,] my dear darling[,] I have given you a pretty full account of our mishaps [but] you ████ must not be uneasy about me at all as I am doing finely [sic] I assure you. This is a pleasant little rebel town, with a garrison of our troops stationed here. I would love to see you this morning my dear and also have a romp with Tirza the dear little child. does she say much about me since I left? I reckon not as she will see so many others to attract her attention. I am so sorry I cant get your letter before I reach the reqiment. There dearest[,] good bye for the present[.] if I should not get off for a few dsys I will write again from here Love to all our good folks, and lots of love my own dear ones.

Your loving Milton