

RHODA BARNES to MILTON BARNES

NOTE: Many internal references made in clear that this letter dated "Christmas" could only have been written on Christmas Day of 1864: viz, according to his immediately preceding letters, Milton had been wounded at Nashville and was in the Cumberland General Hospital at Cincinnati. His favorable comments concerning Chaplain McFarland occur in his letter dated December 19.

Our Home, Christmas  
8 O'clock P M  
[December 25, 1864]

My very dear husband -

My last letter written Wednesday night [December 21] I addressed to the Hospital - & unless you have been deceiving me about the condition of your wound I fear you will have gone to the Front [(] as Tirza says) before it reaches you - but I hope it may be forwarded - I wrote such a long one [and] I wanted you should get it my dear - I feel so glad that you got a rest & shelter from cold & from bullets - & a tolerably comfortable place to smoke & read - still it was'nt like being at home, was it ["]pocr sing["]? but I mus'nt tempt you with saying anything about home - The thought would keep stealing into my mind today that maybe you'd drop in home tomorrow - just the day [ ] after Christmas, one [week?] since I heard you were hurt - as you did last summer, but 'spose I'll be disappointed, perhaps it is better so - oh I hope your opinion as to the fighting being over for the winter may prove correct - some of our very wise people here are prophesying bad luck to you if you are again struck - I presume upon the strength of that old saying "The third time is the charm" - If I was superstitious these things would make me very unhappy - but I try to entrust those who are dearest to me into the care of One who does not in our day

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reveal his designs to us by such signs & symbols - That God whom we  
have reason to believe has been with thee in six troubles in the  
seventh will not forsake thee - Let us hope and trust & pray - my  
husband - God surely will have mercy & spare <sup>[you]</sup> - Your nice long inter-  
esting letter written last Sabbath, [but dated December 19, not 18]  
is by me, tis so good in <sup>[sic]</sup> you to write so often - Your dispatch is of  
still later date - & you say "send small box" [-] as usual my dear  
when you ask for anything of the kind, I never can get what I want  
done at the time I want it - always something else must be done first,  
inc [?including?] twas so very cold & Jim was coughing around so I  
could'nt get any thing done out of the house - when I last wrote I  
thought surely we might have have [sic] a small box ready by Monday,  
but no indeed - Mother thought it was better to wait until things were  
more settled & you were with your Regiment as you would need it more  
then - & [on] account of the trouble at Thomsons we had to be back &  
forward so often - but I think just while you were in Nashville would  
be the best time for you will not likely be as convenient to Express[,]  
perhaps not this winter - I'm so vexed about it I dont know what to do -  
["]poor sing" hardly ever asks for anything of the kind, it might be  
gratified - I know it is very troublesome & expensive but dont mind that -  
Mother is very willing, but [I] can't get her in a hurry - & I am such  
a nobody -

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Will Thomsons funeral was yesterday - I think this is the saddest Christmas ever they spent - Dr Wellens[,] who is at the Hospital, had him embalmed - he looked so natural, it was such a comfort to them - still they were much distressed[.] Mrs Thomson is so anxious that Benny should get discharged - or even a furlough - Could [Chaplain] Mac [McFarland] not do something towards getting him a leave or a detail[?] - will you mention what you think about it in your next letter, she is so anxious poor woman - Benny has been out so long -

Milton my dear I am so sorry if I hurt your feelings about that Franklin affair - you didn't suppose that I thought you would run or hide - I have begged of you not to be reckless, but I've never said dont shirk duty - nor did I think there was any need for me to say so - I have confidence in you my soldier husband - I've never had reason to blush for you as such - Dont be troubled about it, for I am not - We happened to tell at Thomsons what you said about the Chaplain being a fighting parson &c [-] It seemed to please McCracken as much as if he had been their own son (maybe he is to be) - so Alex came up last evening to hear it read, he said he wanted to make one attempt to get Lanfesty [sp?] to publish a good word for a decent man [-] I couldn't give him the letter you know - so I copied those few sentences of [f] & gave [them to] him, so if you see it in the 'Times' you need'nt think it was me [sic] had it done - do you care my love [?] - a private puff of

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that kind, I would value much more than a public one - but still  
he hardly deserves such from you - maybe it may have a good in-  
fluence - Charlie spreads himself considerably [-] lodges at  
Bushfields - is very dignified - Folks can't understand about  
[General] Wagner but I keep my own council [sic] - Farrar talks  
of resigning, guess it dont pay. You ask me about money - I  
have been pretty scarce - but had to borrow some from the bank to  
get some flour and meat & apples - but hoped the interest that will  
be due again [next] spring would lower it - I feel mean to borrow &  
meaner to go in debt - but will try to be as economical as possible -  
even then money flees at the present prices, flour [\$]10.50 per barrel -  
&c &c - You must try and keep yourself as comfortable as you can[.]  
My dear, (I wish I could see you)

[Unsigned]