

MILTON BARNES to RHODA BARNES

Near Nashville, Tenn.

April 28th 1865

My Love,

Two days ago I wrote you a pretty long letter from this our new camp, a place that more resembles what the soldiers call "God's Country" than any place we have been since we commenced the great campaign for the re-conquest of this rebellious country in the fall of '63. After a running fight with Bragg's forces in Kentucky and a severe and trying march during which we suffered much in men and morale[,] the month of November of that year found us under the leadership of General Rosecrans settling down around the environs of Nashville to re-organize for the great work that lay before us. The incidents that fill up that interval of two years & a half have passed into history. The great work has been accomplished. so far as it concerns this Military Department the rebellion has been successfully fought out, and now what remains of the noble and gallant army of the Cumberland is slowly gathering back around the same of [sic] camping grounds that they occupied then. But O, how changed! The feelings of the troops have changed from a melancholy foreboding of hard marching [and] hard fighting - of doubtful victory - of positive defeats [-] to a general feeling of joy and rejoicing - the rejoicing that fills the breasts of victorious hosts returning from the hard won fields of glory! with the proud consciousness of a great and perilous duty to country well performed! And what is still more pleasing, with faces radiant with joy and hope, once more turned towards home! This is now the belief of all, and this the inspiration that paints everything around us with rainbow hues! I remember when here the first time, everything looked sorrowful, and full of despondency [-] our cause was then indeed critical. The

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rebel army swarmed all over the country, proud, defiant and confident of success, revelling in the house of their friends, this was literally true, for every citizen, steeped in perfidy and treason[,] was a spy for the rebel leaders, many of them were citizens by day and rebel soldiers by night. They all wore the same grey back clothes and had the same sneaking, snivelling lean and hungry look, invariably the same treacherous look that awakened distrust and kindled a universal feeling of aversion to the whole race. But now how changed! Even the face of nature wears a more loyal aspect, fields look smiling and gay, in the flowery lap of Spring, farms laid waste in the desolating wake of the army again betoken signs of life and industry, and these [sic] same hitherto contemptible class of miscreants who then boasted of their treason now are the first to manifest their joy at the sight of the "boys in blue," and give assurances of their loyalty to the government and the old flag! One can hardly tell how to reconcile this state of things with the spirit of forgiveness. I spoke in my last of a rumor that our corps would be sent down the Mississippi in all probability to Texas. This was the talk all the way down from Knoxville. There were not wanting plenty of persons who heard it at General Stanley's Headquarters and all that, but General Vanderveer [sic. Van Derveer] says he heard Gen. Thomas say he had no such orders yet and should not send them unless specially ordered so to do. I hope however the exigency may not come to make such a movement necessary. If we have to

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remain in service till our term expires such a trip might be a pleasant excursion but I prefer to remain here, and above all I prefer to be mustered out just as soon now as the case will admit. I received a letter from Ruth the other day, and wrote one to them before leaving Blue Springs. I think Ruth must be a little bit mistaken about what passed between me and Mrs Ellison. I probably remarked that I might join the Methodist Church again if you were a Methodist, but as you were not I preferred when I did join to be with you, or words to that effect. No darling I never accused you of standing in my way in that matter. I dont think I will ever give you cause to complain of me on that score, but we can talk those matters over much more understandingly when we are together. Dont give yourself any more trouble about that money matter. I am entirely satisfied with your action. It was partly to relieve you of that unpleasant embarrassment about giving it in to the assessor that I preferred the disposition to be made of it that I suggested. But you can just let the matter rest if you will. I am glad Mr Suitt treated you so kindly. I will never forget the good old man for his kindness to you and also to myself. I think him one of the best neighbors we have. What has become of Col[onel] Loffland? [sic] I have been thinking of writing to him for a long time but dont know whether he cares about getting letters from me now since I cant tell him anything about Gordon. It makes me always feel sadly [sic] when you tell me of being at public meetings unattended and see other ladies there with their liege Lords. I think you served little Betty just right in giving her a dab about that matter. I suppose Ed Bell had

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as good a chance to serve a while in the field as I or anybody else.
probably it would have cured him of his intemperance! By the way I
suppose we are at last to be rid of Milligan. I dont know that I owe
him anything[,] only that pew rent, you can have money to pay it darling
if you wish, but I wont do it myself. I have no love for [a] man in his
position who can't [sic] find it in his heart to call to see me when I
am home wounded! If they should get Joe Grimes[,] a brother of that Grimes
of Cadiz[,] [Ohio] they will get a pretty good preacher and a pleasant good
m~~an~~. I knew him quite well in Salem, but I dont know how he stands in
political matters[.] he was a democrat when I knew him, but I dont think
he would be or could be a copperhead. It would be quite pleasant for us to
have a pew again together and attend Sunday school and all that. Has Tirza
drop[ped] her correspondence? I have [not] had a letter from her for a long
time. I suppose she is too much taken up with her flowers, poor little darling.
Is Mother any better in health? I felt so sorry when you told me of recurring
troubles. hope that time may yet serve to efface the [inverted at top of page
one:] sad remembrance of the cause of her troubles to some extent at least.
When did you see Charly and what is he doing? he has not written to me.
By the way we have a new Major at last. Capt. Davis has just received his
commission as such. he should have had it six months ago. The Chaplain is
waiting kindly and patiently for this so adieu my love and all the little
dear "famys"[.]

Your own loving husband Milton