

MILTON BARNES to RHODA BARNES

NOTE: Barnes notes the receipt on April 3, after his last letter to Rhoda, of official dispatches concerning the fall of Richmond and Petersburg. Grant's forces occupied both on April 3. For Stoneman's raid, see NOTE preceding MILTON BARNES to RHODA BARNES, March 16, 1865. Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston had resumed command of the remnant of the Army of Tennessee following Hood's disastrous strategy in Tennessee the previous autumn and had fought a skillful, though hopeless, delaying action to oppose Sherman's advance into the Carolinas. By this date Johnston had been pushed back to central North Carolina. Lee, retreating from Richmond and Petersburg, was trying to join forces with Johnston.

Blue Springs, East Tennessee
April 5th 1865

My darling,

I wrote you a short letter two days ago [April 3] at Bulls Gap, the next day, yesterday, we started on the first foot march we have made this spring, and came to this point about eight miles. it was only a nice little exercise for us and we all feel better after it. we reached here about ten o'clock A.M. and went into camp here where we expect to remain about a week to work on the rail road track, which is all torn up. This is only a small station, no towns of any account. we are about sixty miles from Knoxville and everything is quiet in our front, there being no enemy up here worth talking about, when I wrote last at Bulls Gap I said something about an opinion that Lee would not try to evacuate Richmond, that he was not strong enough, unless Grant whipped him out. It was not half an hour after I closed the letter until the official dispatch reached us, that Grant had attacked him[,] captured 12000 prisoners and that there was no doubt that Richmond and Petersburg were in our possession. this news was read to the boys and they had hardly got done cheering till another dispatch came, confirming

Milton Barnes to Rhoda Barnes
Blue Springs, East Tennessee
April 5th 1865

- 2 -

the first, and that our forces were actually in possession of both cities[.] We have not had such cheering in the old 4th Corps for a long time. So the Great Babylon, has fallen this time sure enough[.] Is'nt this glorious news? my darling? the same dispatch stated that all business was suspended in the north and general rejoicing was the order of the day. We are so far away we only get a little taste of the news, just enough to make us hungry for more but the papers will be along by and by, and then we can know more about it. I went down to see General Elliot yesterday and had quite a talk with him, he thinks Lee will not leave Virginia but make the best fight he can and when he finds he can hold out no longer will make an honorable surrender of all his forces, would'nt that be glorious? but I am not so sanguine quite. yet I am satisfied that the bubble has burst and the balance of the business will be easily accomplished, everything seems to be working admirably now and gives bright hopes for a speedy end of the great troubles. O how glorious would be the jubilee, if before our time is out the war should be over and we all come home together. such a result would be too good almost to anticipate without running into excess of joy. I would like so much if when I come home the war would then be over[.] I want to be a participant of the last closing scenes. I would dislike to have others to say, "after all we had to go and finish the job"[.] An advance cavalry under General Stoneman has gone across the mountains into North Carolina to cut the South side rail road and head of[f] Lee if he should attempt to join [General] Joe Johnson and has no doubt reached that point ere this, but we cant hear anything from [them] for some time.

Milton Barnes to Rhoda Barnes
Blue Springs, East Tennessee
April 5th 1865

- 3 -

We are having rather a pleasant campaign of it, only I am afraid I wont get many letters from you. I have had none since I left Chattanooga, over a week now, but think there will be a mail up tonight perhaps and O I so hope I'll get a good little one, as of yore. I learn that the Pay Master is on the way up and will pay us off soon, so much, so good, if it is only true. There are a few guerillas through this poverty stricken country but they are getting picked up frequently[.] a few days ago, a guerilla captain and three men had the boldness to come into our lines and attempt to steal General Wood[']s horses. the General keeps two very fine black horses and these fellows had no doubt been informed of where his Head Quarters were, so after dark they came right up to his Hd.Qrs and attempted to take them when his guard raised the alarm and soon others were up and they started to run[.] the guard fired on them, the captain got behind in the race and his men[,] turning to fire on the guard[,] hit their captain and broke his leg. they made their escape but the next morning their captain was found lying in the bushes close by with his leg broken he was brought in, his leg amputated and a trial had, but I have'nt learned the result yet. the citizen who gave him the information has also been arrested and will probably be hung [sic]. Gen-[eral] Wood, by the way, is now back commanding his old Division. it seems to have been a mistake about his being appointed to command this District. I saw him at a distance but have not seen him to speak to him, yet, and to congratulate him on his promotion. General Elliot is a very pleasant man to talk to and we all like him very much. [General] Vander-veer [Van Derveer] also is very pleasant. things pass so much more smoothly than when old [General] Wagner was with us. We get our orders now with

Milton Barnes to Rhoda Barnes
Blue Springs, East Tennessee
April 5th 1865

- 4 -

[out their] being accompanied with curses and abuses, which is a [form of] communication long and devoutly wished for by me. The weather has been very pleasant and favorable for campaigning thus far. There is nothing in this country however worth foraging for, we only get our commissaries for eating purposes. still we dont complain, as it is heartly [sic] and good enough for a soldier like me. Wood['s] Division went on to Greenville yesterday, nine miles above here. I saw McClanahan passing along the road, he acts very queer, never comes to see us any more, and I dont care much. I guess Charly Moore got into his affections [?] in the way of money considerably, but he has no one to blame but himself. he knew Charly as well as the rest of us.

We received a circular from Charly's firm in Columbus[.] he seems to be in with Col. Given in the soldiers claim business[.] There darling[,] the P.M. [Pay Master] is waiting on me. May I not hope to get a good letter from my dear one tonight and [know] that all[']s well at my dear little home nest? I will believe so any way. so good by dearest and much love to all[.]

your own Milton