

MILTON BARNES to RHODA BARNES

NOTE: Soon after this letter was written and mailed, an official dispatch announcing Lee's surrender to Grant on the previous day, April 9, was received by the Union force at Blue Springs, Tennessee. However, Barnes was aware as he wrote this letter that Major General Philip Sheridan's cavalry and other Union troops had blocked Lee's escape route to the South, and were rapidly closing the westward route at Appomattox Court House. Barnes' description for Rhoda of how the 97th Ohio received and celebrated the news is dated April 11. The novel Milton commends to Rhoda, The Maid of Orleans, is by Emma Robinson, who wrote several historical novels and plays. The pre-war edition appeared in 1850.

Blue Springs, East Tennessee
April 10th '65

My darling,

It has been very disagreeable weather for several days - cold and rainy, so much so that I find it difficult to write with any pleasure. it is too cold to sit in the tent with comfort and too wet to be out around the log fire out of doors and we have not put up any chimneys, not expecting to stay very long at this place. In a few days we will move up perhaps to Greenville, or Jonesboro. In fact we have done nothing for the last week but received [sic] dispatches from Grant and Sheridan and cheer over it [sic] and discuss it [sic]. We have the whole of Lee's army surrendered or captured two or three times per day regularly with occasional hints that Joe Johnson's ^[sic. Johnston's] has gone up too &c. the next day it will all be contradicted but enough is true at least to cheer the hearts of the soldiers and never since we have been in the field have we all felt so confident of a speedy termination of the war. in fact I can see no reason in the world for Lee holding out. the great bubble has been pricked and found to contain only wind. It is now a poor vagrant thing, flying

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before our victorious hosts with no surety of a place they can hide themselves in and say " here at last am I safe"[.] Little Phil Sheridan has cut them off from going southward and if they go towards Lynchburg, they will not be there long ere they find themselves confronted on all sides and finally must go up. The further prolonging of this struggle and the further effusion of blood is now little else than cold blooded murder on their part, but the confident belief here among the highest military authorities is that Lee will soon surrender the whole thing and give it up. Be that as it may, if he should succeed in reaching Lynchburg, he will be so far stripped of his power in men and munitions of war that the little old 4th corps think they could whip him, easily enough. Our way looks pretty clear now and they [sic] boys are eagerly counting the days and hours almost that shall elapse before they are mustered out. I am greatly in hopes that the whole army may be mustered out at the same time. it would be so grand to see our whole army coming home crowned with victorious wreaths, and mingle [sic] again with their loved ones so long forsaken and forlorn! would'nt it, love? I received a letter from you two days ago, the first one I've had since passing Chattanooga. So Hoge's and Rood's are just going ahead in the baby business just as though there were no war in the country? perhaps they are preparing for the next war, raising recruits to avoid the draft. Just let them go ahead, who cares? we would'nt give our little nestling for all theirs, would we? I am glad you have concluded to keep Jane, I think it better you should do so, and save yourself and Mother as much as possible, you might have

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time to read a good deal I should think. By the way, do you get anything to read that is interesting or profitable? Send to Cincinnati and get whatever you want in that line. You have the names of the book firms there. if not, you can get them in the Commercial, order what you want to be sent by express and pay on delivery. I have been reading a novel this week[,] the only one I have read for a year and a half, The Maid of Orleans[,] very exciting. you know I dont read romances much, but I had nothing else to read, and it happened to pass away the time. We may sometimes profit by reading them [sic?] of the better class, if read in the proper way. we often get beautiful ideas and a copious use of language, if we read for that purpose and not to be led away by the enchantment of the tale.

So Barnett did call? I was going to send some word by him, but he started off and did'nt say good bye. Wat is a fine fellow if he would let liquor alone[.] I must close this my dear[,] it is so damp and cold. Will do better next time. It looks like leaving off
Your own loving & faithful husband M. B.

[Inverted at top of page 1:]

Enclosed in this I send you photos of Capt[ain] Carlisle and Adjutant Adair, who is recovered from his wound and [has] rejoined his regiment. I want to keep up until I get all the officers of the regiment. You will want a new album wont you? dear? to contain them all.