

9-14-1863

Richard Baxter Foster Letter to his wife September 14 1863

Richard Baxter Foster

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Recommended Citation

Foster, Richard Baxter, "Richard Baxter Foster Letter to his wife September 14 1863" (1863). *Richard Baxter Foster's Letters*. 4. https://bluetigercommons.lincolnu.edu/foster_letters/4

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St Louis Mo. Sept, 14 (Monday) 1863

My Dear Love,

It is ~~eight~~ days since I have got a letter from you, fifteen since your last that I have got was written, I hope to get a letter to day. I think you certainly wrote one last week Sunday and I ought to get by to day at all events.

When I get no letters from you I feel lonesome & sad. Your letters are the chief delight of my life, as the hope of rejoining you at some not very distant day is my greatest consolation.

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We have moved our quarters since I wrote to you last. We have moved to the City, and are now quartered in Schofield barracks and doing guard duty at the prisons.

We came into the City Friday just at night and I was put on guard Sat. Morning & not relieved till Sunday night, That is the reason I did not write to you yesterday. I get no chance to go to Church yesterday either.

I was on guard at Gratiot Street Prison, what used to be Mc Donnell's College, It is filled with rebels mostly prisoners of war.

It is a large fine stone building consisting of a central part with a commanding dome and two large wings. Admirably adapted

to its present as well as its former use.
It is said that McDowell had a very
curious and valuable museum here. He is
now medical director in the Southern Army.
I do not know precisely yet what our duties
here will be, or what prison we shall guard.
We are not well settled yet, I expect to be on
guard about every alternate day.

We live in barracks. We are not crowded
and each man now has a bunk by himself.
I have now three blankets and an overcoat
so that I am able to make a bed that is soft
enough to be comfortable, I would not make a
better bed than I have now. Our bunks and all
the inside of the barracks is whitewashed and the
outside painted yellow.

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We of course can keep the floor and bunks
as clean as we please. The boys complain
of bedbugs, fleas & mosquitoes. You know I am
not very sensitive to such things, and I have
neither seen, felt nor heard any of them ex-
cept one mosquito that bit on my face last
night. I brushed him off and he went to hunt
better blood than mine, In fact it would not
have been easy to keep me awake last night.
Would you like to know how our barracks are
built? Imagine a one story building 18 or 20 feet
wide and extending on three sides of an ~~oblong~~
oblong, here is a sketch of it, thus



d - fence w. water tank
e - barrack p - prison
c - cook house

By guess I should think the short sides
of the oblong were 6 or 8 rods. the long - 10
or 12.

The bunks are in 3 tiers one above another on both
sides the room.

On the whole, at this season of the year, with
the weather as delightful as it is now. I would
rather live in the tents out doors, than here
but in winter this would be very comfort-
able.

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There was a great fire among the Steamboats
just at sundown last night, We were
just changing guard and I could not
go to see it. I understand there were
five boats burned. If you take the Demo-
crat you will see the account of it.

One thing that makes my situation a little
more unpleasant just now is that Jim Clark
& Joe Beardsley & James Bebe are all on pro-
vost guard so that I do not have their soci-
ety. I see them occasionally however.

I mentioned in my last letter a project
of trying to get a furlough about the 15th
of Oct. & visiting father at St Joe. It is not worth
while for you to entertain the hope of my getting
the chance to go home at that time.

Beside one man who has already applied
for a furlough & who will have the first chance
there are two of our recruits whose healths

is quite feasible and who want to go home
to recruit. They won't give them a pick furlough
without counting it against them, so their only
chance is to go when there is a vacancy.

I may get to come home some time this
fall or winter and may not. If I was sure
of going home to stay next summer I would
not care so much about it. In fact I don't know
as I would go.

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My feelings about the service are just here. As long
as the country is in danger I want to fight for it.
but when the crisis is past, when the danger is
over and the army may be safely reduced one
half, even if it is still necessary to keep on foot
1 or 2 hundred thousand men for six months
or a year longer - then I want to go home.
I don't think we ought to relax a single nerve
yet in recruiting the army but if we prosper for the
next six months as we have for the last we
can begin to think of peace.

If I don't get a commission and we are dis-
charged with the rest next summer - I
think I shall come home. And if things are pros-
pering - stay at home. I don't believe if I ⁱⁿ
I ⁱⁿ ⁱⁿ place that I would enlist again ⁱⁿ could
get a commission.

My health is quite good again. During my sickness my
bowels were irregular & as a consequence I had a bout
of the piles. My bowels have become regular again and
I think I will not be troubled with the piles any more.
I would like some of your biscuit and butter though.
Love to all
Abby Baxter