

5-24-1865

## Richard Baxter Foster Letter to his wife May 24, 1865

Richard Baxter Foster

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Brazos Santiago Texas  
Wednesday May 24. 1865

Dear Lucy,

If I choose to write a letter to you every day is it any body's business but ours? If you get more than you want to read you can tell me so and I won't write so many, but so long as I have reason to think that the more you get the better you are pleased I shall write all that I find inclination to. <sup>I presume</sup> The mail went out yesterday on the Exeget and took some letters that I had written to you but my latest that was written failed to get in though my own father I was duly notified that the ship would leave at 6 or 7 o'clock and was a few minutes too late in sending our last mail to Post Headquarters. The mail had been sent the day before but quite a large package was left behind. The man who would make such a mistake in such a place as this where the mail is so irregular, where it may be a month before the next mail goes out, is not fit to have any responsibility. That's the way I feel about it.

As I have mentioned in one of my letters written before this but not yet sent. Col Barrett is now in command of the regiment. Brig. Genl. E B Brown of Missouri being here in command of the Post. I suppose I am likely to remain as Acting Adjutant till I hear from my Captain's Commission the recommendation for which started to Washington a week ago by the last mail before the Exeget. At least Col Barrett indicated as much to me this morning.



Whether any more commissions will be given in Colored regiments I do not know. If so I may hear from him about the 4<sup>th</sup> of July or soon after. There is a mustering officer now on the Island and if I had a commission and thus the mustering regulations which are very hard to understand, would allow me to be mustered I could do it without going to New Orleans. Charles Orndell has gone out to be mustered as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. If he had waited 2 days longer the mustering officer would have come here & saved him the time and expense.

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Although I am talking about a Captain's Commission and all that, I am thinking first, last and all the time of home, and when the right time comes I shall allow nothing to stop me so far as my power goes. If a Captain's or Major's Commission comes in any way before I have a chance to go home I shall take it, but I shant stay a day longer for that. Better men than I am will have served longer than I and go home without any rank and still more and still better men have died for their country without ever holding any rank will never return to their homes.

The two things that I am waiting for before offering a resignation are first, to know that it would be accepted. Although the army is being largely reduced that reduction does not seem to have reached us yet. I do not know what the government proposes to do with the colored troops. I have thought of one thing. that the white troops



would want to go home. The black men  
don't. They would rather stay in the army  
and take their chances any where  
else for which they are sensible. The army  
cannot be reduced before the next session  
of Congress to the old standard and no  
volunteer troops white or black can be re-  
organized with a view to becoming a per-  
manent force for the defence of the country  
without the consent of Congress. In view  
of these facts will not most of the colored  
troops as well as Gen Hancock's Corps be  
kept in the field till Congress meets?

There are very vague and erroneous ideas afloat  
as to the numbers of colored troops now in the  
service. Some place the figure at 250,000  
That is an entire mistake. The highest num-  
bered Infantry regiment that I have heard of  
is the 124<sup>th</sup> Inf. Confident the numbering  
is but a little above that, and many of the  
lower numbers have ceased to exist by being  
consolidated. I am sure that counting  
Infantry Artillery and Cavalry there are  
not more than 150 regiments now in the field.  
Our regiment has 432 men today ready to fight  
3240 on its muster rolls. Other regts have had re-  
cruits & may have more men than we. If that  
150 regts average 666 men there are 100,000 in all.  
If they average 500 only there are 75,000. I believe  
the actual number of effective men to be not over  
the former figure, not under the latter.  
I presume one of the first cares of the government  
will be to get rid of the non-effectives by cleaning



out the hospitals and discharging all who are not hearty and hardy.

But as soon as I am satisfied that my resignation will be accepted I shall put it in if I do not wait a short time on account of money matters. For instance if I had reason to think a paymaster would come soon after the 30<sup>th</sup> of June I would wait for that payment rather than run the risk of waiting a good while to settle up accounts. Mr. Maken was discharged July 4<sup>th</sup> last year and has not got his accounts settled yet. Eliza had not got Charles' accounts settled last winter and although she writes that she has got his life insurance she does not mention his back pay & I presume has not got it. If I should get paid up pretty well to date I would not mind the final settlement, but I could not afford now to wait a year for what the government owes. The govt will owe me by the end of May \$400. by the end of June over \$500. I have no debts now in the army & have \$50. If I can get out about the first of July & get paid up to June 30 I can bring home \$500. except what it costs me to go home.

When I get home then what? I am not making any calculations for that. I am willing for you to make plans and I will help carry them out. I guess we can make a living if my health continues as good as it has been and I guess we will have a good time wintering. Will the boys get to go to school this summer?

Affectionately  
Father