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Richard Baxter Foster Letter to his wife July 6 1865

Richard Baxter Foster

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Brownsville Texas

July 6th 1863

My Darling Lucy,

When I wrote to you last, on the 4th, I had just got your letter of the 4th of June. Yesterday an older mail got in and brought me a letter from you dated May 31st.

I suppose that boats come across the gulf now oftener than formerly and that our mail is likely to get to Brazos as often as twice a week. How often it will get to us is entirely another thing. We got two mails last week however, one by stage, and one by a little boat that came up the Rio Grande. If we stay at Brownsville I think we are likely to get our mails oftener than before; but if we are sent 400 miles further up the Rio Grande (as is just as likely as not) then if you get a letter from me once a month you may think you are doing well.

There are already rumors that we are going up the river. I can only find this foundation for them. It is pretty certain that some troops will be sent up soon. The 62nd and 46th are worse as it were not being brigaded while all the other troops now here being a part of the 23rd Corps are fully organized in brigades and divisions. Now that will furnish an excellent reason for sending us up the river if it is desired to send us up; and an equally

good reason to keep us here if it is desired to do that. I don't know whether Steele or Smith will select the troops to go up. I don't know whether Smith would want us to go or stay & the same as to Steele. I do know that Smith and Brown had a fuss the other day, and also Brown and Barrett, and that when Steele came here a day or two afterwards, Brown appeared to be very thick with him: and I have the best reason to think that questions of spite or personal feeling among the generals will decide the question whether we go or stay. In other words, whether I am to get letters from you this summer in one month or two (or perhaps at all) depends upon the issue of a quarrel between 2 generals.

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A new feature has appeared in the case having a possible bearing on the generals. A man called Bucky Jones formerly a soldier in some Indiana Regt but I think discharged on account of his time being out has been at Brazos ever since we were there and was employed by different commanding officers there to obtain beef. He came to Brownsville with us and has been employed in the same way here. It transpired yesterday that he had put 100 head of government cattle across the river and got Mexican gold for them. Bucky eluded pursuit and has taken refuge in Matamoros, but Gen Smith offers him a full pardon if he will come back and tell all he knows.

It is supposed that Smith hopes by this means to catch somebody else; and though nobody says so, there are many who think that Genl Brown would suffer by Jones' commissions. Gen Steele went away again today.

I have not made the acquaintance yet of any officers of Smith's division, I have ascertained that the 37th Daniels Regt is still in the East.

I do not hear anything more from the 29th Iowa, I expected to get an answer before this to the note I sent to Charley. If we go up the river I am afraid I shall not ^{see} him.

In your letter of the 31st May you say that the folks in Tabor thought the 29th would be at home by the 4th of July. I suppose they were at the mouth of the Rio Grande on the 4th - the furthest from home that the regt ever went.

I learn that Gen Steele is not authorized to accept resignations, and I shall probably wait before making a move about resigning for one of three things to take place, for some chance to be mustered out on orders - or for a paymaster to come - or for some chance for a resignation to be accepted without going to New Orleans.

You may want to know how long I intend to wait for one of these events. I think, if none of them happen I shall wait till into August and then make a move.

I hope in August or September to see the

beloved faces of wife ^{and children} and friends.

I am getting along slower with the reports and returns that came at the first of the month than ever before. It is now the 6th and there are 4 of these reports that I have not touched and one other not completed. I have no one to help me write and there are now reports due at this time than any other time in the year except Dec 31st & Jan 1st. I shall get through in about 4 days more if we are not interrupted. I might have got through by this time but I am not going to hurry or hurt my self forcing body. While the war lasted I was willing to die for my country. Now I am chiefly anxious to live for it and for my family. I try to preserve my health by athletic exercises. The exercise that we practice most now is throwing the cannon ball. We throw it over our heads backwards with both hands or out from the shoulder forwards with one hand. At present I stand at the head of the white men though Statten. Coffin. Stewart. Looby and Mead are nearly with me. I throw a 24 pound ball with my right hand 22 1/2 feet. I think Durell can beat that with his left hand. Six black men have thrown the ball that beat me. I think there are about 20 in the regiment that can do it, 2 or 3 of them beat me 3 feet. I can pick out 100 men in this regiment that can march with anything that Sherman or Napoleon could. Good night
Baxter