

## Richard Baxter Foster Letters to his Wife

Unknown words or letters are represented by the lines in the brackets

[All indentions are meant to reflect those found in the original letter.]

St. Louis. Sept. 14 Monday 1863

My Dear Love,

It is ~~eight~~ (7 is written above the scratched out 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 today. 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 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 got no chance to go to church yesterday either.

I was on guard at Gratiot Street Prison, what used to be McDowell's College, It is filled with rebels. It is a large fine stone building consisting of a central part with a commanding dome and two large [ ] wings. Admirably adapted

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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 sit [ ] a better bed than I have now. Our bunks and all the inside of the barracks is whitewashed and the outside painted yellow.

We of course can keep the floor and bunks as clean as we please. The boys complain of bed bugs, fleas, and mosquitoes. You know I am not very sensitive to such things, and I have neither seen, felt nor heard any of them except one mosquito that lit 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 burnalks are built? Imagine a one story building 18 or 20 feet wide and extending on three sides of an ~~oblong~~ (crossed out) oblong [hansallelopan] (he inserts a diagram and a legend here)

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By guess I should think the short sides of the oblong were 6 or 8 so as – the long – 10 or 12. The bunks are in three 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, O would rather live in the tents out doors, than here but in winter this would be very comfortable.

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 [ ]. If you take the Democrat you will see the account of it.

One thing that makes my situation a little more unpleasant just now is that [ ] Clark & Joe Beardsley & Dane [ ] are all on provost guard so that I do not have their society- I see them occasionally however

I mentioned in my last letter a project of trying to get a furlough about the 17<sup>th</sup> of Oct. & meeting father at St. Joe, It isn't worth while for you to entertain the hope of my getting the chance to go home at that time. Besides one man who has already applied for a furlough & who will have the first chance there are two of our recruits whose health

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is quite (mold on upper edge of paper) feeble and who want to go home to recruit. They won't give them a pick furlough [ ] counting it against them. So their only chance is (fold lines in paper)[ ] when there is a (fold lines in paper) [ ]

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

My feelings about the service are just [ ]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 [ ] if it is still necessary to keep on foot 1 or 2 hundred men for six months or a year longer - then I wa –( hole in paper) to go home I don't think we ought to relax a single [ ] yet in security 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 discharged with the rest next summer – I think I shall come home and if things are prospering, stay at home. I don't believe if I were in [ ] place that I would enlist again unless could get a commission.

My health is quite good again. During my sickness my bowels were irregular & as a consequence I had a touch 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 biscuits and butter though.

Love to all

Affly Baxter