**Richard Baxter Foster Letters to his Wife**

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

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 ~~y~~ the better you are pleased. I shall write all that I find inclination & leisure to. The mail went out yesterday on the [E\_] and took some letters that I had written to you but my latest that was written failed to get in through my own fault. 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 when 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 write 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 serve 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 [E\_]. At least Col Barrett indicated as much to me this morning.

[Page 2]

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

Although I am talking about a Captains 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 Captains or Majors commission comes in my 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 over 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

[Page 3]

would want to go home the black men don’t, they would rather stay in the army awhile than 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 reorganized with a view to becoming part of the a permanent force for the defense 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 Corp 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 200,000. That is an [\_] mistake. The highest numbered Infantry regiment that I have heard of is the 124th. If [\_] confident the numbering is [\_] 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 thee are not more than 150 regiments now in the field. Our regiment has 432 men today ready to fight 540 on its muster rolls. Other regts have had recruits & 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

[Page 4]

out the hospitals and discharging all who are not [\_] and hardy.

Out as soon as I am satisfied that my resignation will be accepted I shall put it in if I do not want a short time on account of money matters. For instance if I had reason to think a paymaster would come soon after the 30th of June I would wait for that payment other than run the risk of waiting a good while to settle up accounts. McMaken was discharged July 4th last year and has not got his accounts settled yet. Ella had not got Charlie’s 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 me. 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 won’t we? Will the boys get to go to school this summer?

Affectionately,

Baxter