

Richard Baxter Foster Letters to his Wife

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

Brazos Santiago Texas

March 8, 1865

Dearest Lucy,

It is somewhat discouraging to attempt to write letters home, or anywhere else since my return to my post for there seems to be no mail to carry them. No mail has arrived at this Post since I came here. One went out one day on the Skimishen and I had one long letter in it. I had another letter just finished but just missed the connection. There is no possibility now of making any guess when another mail will be in our (the U is struck out) a chance to send letters out.

Meanwhile all I can do is to write letters occasionally and wait patiently for a chance to send them.

The Commission that I asked for as soon as I got here to investigate my stay met yesterday. It was charged with the investigation of Col Branson's case as well as mine. They took our testimony in the forenoon and were to meet in the afternoon to form an opinion on the facts. I have not heard yet what report they concluded to make but from what they said to us and the opinions they seemed to hold I ☐ that their report will be favorable. I do not expect to lose any pay for absence without leave though I suppose I will lose half my

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pay for one week for being absent "with leave" that much more than 30 days in one year. According to existing orders if an Officer is absent more than 30 days in any one year except for sickness though his absence may be justifiable he loses half his pay for the time over 30 days. The order is unjust and is only another instance where we in the West who never ask for a leave out once in 3 years suffer for the fault of officers in the East who continue one way and another to stay at home half of the time.

I am enjoying myself now very well. Just at this time my duty is lighter than it ever ~~was~~ has been before since I have been an officer. If it continues this way I am going to find a substitute for hand work to keep me from being homesick ☐ studying. There are a good many books in the regiment and among others we have the last edition of Webster's dictionary bought with regimental fund and of course belonging to the regiment. I have been studying it nearly all day except when drilling and it makes my headache to find so many things in it that I want to learn. When I ask you and my boys to improve every chance to learn I only ask you to do what I intend to do myself.

The fact that in the judgment of the same Board I had improved in 18 months ☐ the qualifications of second class first Lieutenant to

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those of first class Major shows that I had done something. I had to work too hard last summer to have any chance to study and do not know now what I may have to do this, but if I can I shall study a good deal. I am also teaching a school of the Sergeants and Corporals of the Company about one hour each day. I take great pleasure in that. The men are very much interested and thank me every night for the lesson. I never saw a body of men so anxious to learn as our regiment now are. I wish father could be among them. I think he would find himself more at home than he is in a sawmill. And enjoy himself better.

Several of the younger officers of the regiment also are studying and have spoken to me to hear them recite Arithmetic, History, Geography, Grammar & Algebra, which I am glad to do for the sake of reviewing these studies myself.

As for this new dictionary of Webster's I shall buy it and send to you when I can get a chance and you have a home so that you can take care of it. The drum is beating for dress parade. I must quit now and after dress parade supper & school –

9 O'clock P.M. I am informed that the Steamer that Genl Wallace is on will go tomorrow and that she will take the mail so I hasten to finish this letter in

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order that it may go.

I do not forget my Dearest that it is ten years ago today that you and I were married. Do you?

I do not forget our ride that day. I do not forget that at this time of night that day I was at a temperance meeting leaving you alone during the evening, an act that I was always ashamed of, and that I would not be guilty of tonight if I could join you. The speaker that night was McFarland afterwards Lieut Col of the 19th Iowa and he nobly gave his life to the country at Prairie Grove Dec 7 1862 the very Sunday I first joined the 1st [] regt at Patterson []. Peace to his ashes and let his name be held in deathless remembrance. But as for us dearest love, do we not love each other better now than we did 10 years ago? I need not ask the question. From the distance of 3000 miles our spirits flash to each other the answer that we do a thousand folds I say a thousand folds and mean all of it. Even our separation since Nov 20 1862 (except those 15 days of love and joy in Jan last) has not diminished but increased our love. Can we not feel a well grounded confidence now that our love can sustain all shocks and all dangers and can survive any unfavorable circumstances! I cannot I must not on this anniversary night of our union forget the dear children