

Letter From Austin, Matthew S. written Wednesday, October 29th, 1862

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Soldier: Austin, Matthew S.

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Subjects: Commanders, Comrades, Daily Life, Eastern Theater, Family, Politics, Rumors, Strategy, Warfare

Camp "Van? Lear" Fifth NJ Vols

My Dear Father ~

The news from our midst is not very interesting as there is nothing new enough to give special direction to talk. The "enlistment" subject attracts most attention and the recruiting office of Capt. Starr is crowded by applicants daily. Eighty six names have been dropped from our "morning reports" having been sworn into the regular army as cavalry. Had there been no restrictions to the number, two thirds of our men would have joined. Anxiety to join is not confined to this brigade but extends through the division to the new regiment encamped here. Men refuse to work on the new forts and to do duty on the ground that they have joined the regulars or are about to. Some of the reasons for this anxiety to change, I gave in my last. To our men, the chance of getting furloughs seemed to be the main one. None of the old regiments desire to get into active service again with their reduced numbers, yet it is evident they do not court a winter residence in their present camp with the prospects of another year before them. They are dissatisfied as they are - would Jersey fill up their ranks as they should be, their duties would be less arduous and there would be some chance for the old ones to go home on furloughs. If it becomes fixed fact that we remain here for the winter, our camp will be again change so as to give us more shelter from winds and storms. But as this appears to be an impression that the Campaign cannot close without another fight, it is possible we may soon be on our way to Warrenton again. It will be a waste of life and of prestige (if indeed we can claim any) unless it shall be a victory which can be followed to a successful issue - the fall of Richmond and total destruction of the rebel army. I judge, from reading, that nothing will satisfy the worth for this year at least, except another fight. But they will be like all the others very damaging to us, unless they are conducted with some purpose. One of our men was today sent to the Rif-Rafs to serve the balance of his time for cowardice before the enemy and for saying he would not do further service as a soldier. He was a notoriously bad man and is probably justly punished. Capt. Woolsey's wife arrived here yesterday from Washington - said you came from Trenton same morning she did and was well.

30th - evening. Hoping to have something of importance today. I delayed my letter. I have nothing except it be the fact that we hear firing (cannons) towards Centerville which may be the prelude of an attack by the rebels on Gen. Seigel. The firing is just now (7 p.m.) taking place. It is the first we have heard in that direction since the Md. Battles. I notice in yesterday's Inquirer the fact that there appears to be a general belief that more fighting is to take place soon, by the army of the ?, yet the Inquirer acknowledges that the result will be of the most serious kind to us if wanting in vigor and earnestness (purpose) on the part of our generals. The fact is ? through all the Inquirers talk, that is in common with the popular mind, desires to see another stupendous battle before winter. I hope to see no more blunders at least. The popular mind of the north ought to be set against that counsel and advice, which has for its object the gratification of a desire to see ? armies pitted against on another to the end that they may see who can do the other the greatest injury. The army does not certainly desire to lie idle. But it wants (or lacks) confidence in its McClellans, Porters & Sumners and McDowells. We are reduced by the enlistment in the regular cavalry to 358. The other regiments in the brigade not so?. The men left for Carlyle PA today. The services of these men will not be available as cavalry for six months and are nothing more than "Raw Recruits" now. Today has been warm and pleasant - tonight there is some wind - indications of storm. Is Aunt Mary's address "Perry ?" Shall soon write her if so.

Give love to all at Trenton.

Yours very truly

M.S. Austin
Com Serg't
Fifth NJV

31st - Today is ? and inspection. About 13th Nov will be paid for 4 mos. Very pleasant and warm. Nothing new.
M.S.A.