

Letter From Austin, Matthew S. written Saturday, October 25th, 1862

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Soldier: Austin, Matthew S.

Allegiance: Union

Unit/Service Branch: 5th Infantry

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Location: Near Alexandria VA

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Subjects: Commanders, Comrades, Eastern Theater, Enemy, Family, Rumors, Strategy, Warfare

Camp Fifth New Jersey Vols.

My Dear Father ~

Nothing serious has, as yet, resulted from the "order" of last night. I do not know that the intervention of a day has sufficed to destroy the force of the order I presume we are under it yet have not learned what prompted so ? a command. Seriously, we do not see any indication of activity on the part of the powers that be in the way of aggression. The order I have referred to does not indicate that the rebels are about to make a descent upon us - only the contrary. In the Quarter Master's Dept. all is quiet with no indication of movements. "Details" from the Division and from the Parolled Camps are daily employed on new defensive works to the South and West of Alexandria - which (being completed) will make it an impossibility for Johnny Rebs to make a raid (cavalry or otherwise) upon the city. There is a very large supply of Gov't stores here and these works are to issue its safety, allowing the Government, it occasion requires, to withdraw somewhat of its infantry force to other points. So it looks to me. I cannot discover upon review of the operations during the past year, that there has been (or was) any purpose or end aimed at (or had) on the part of our Young Napoleon. (Witnesses of the battle of Williamsburg for instance). Those who fought that day will ever point to Gen. Hooker's report and ask the questions there suggested. And the same (or worse) thing again took place at Fair Oaks in which Gen. Casey up to the present hour seems to have been the safe (scapegoat) for others sins. I believe what I say when I write that McClellan will never lead our armies to a decisive victory over rebeldom because he lacks force, bravery and purpose. The soldier in the field knows better than all others who will lead to sure victory and who will be surely defeated. A few days (nay, hours) before Richmond, told the soldiers who had and who had not purpose in the work and who, when the battle raged, (or when all was calm) was sure to be there to see, know, feel, act and direct. Alas, but one of the member remains to witness the final triumph (if it ever comes) which he risked his life day by day and hour by hour and moment to achieve. When I see Gen. Hooker at the head of the armies of Virginia, I shall look for a victory over Rebeldom, which will sink it forever from sight.

The recruiting office I spoke of yesterday has been in operation today and Capt. Starr has sworn in some 40 from the 5th. As soon as he gets through with this Reg't he takes the 6th, 7th & 8th in succession from all of which he will get the number the Gen.'s order will allow him to enlist. He is making himself a nice command. If NJ intended to keep up this Brigade, it is a shame that he is so slow in regard to its interests.

Today has been very pleasant (on the Indian summer order). Tonight wind is strong from NW with indications of storm.

91/2 o'clock - every indication of a quiet night - will write on the morrow if any of importance occurs. Lt. Col. Sewell is recommended (by Col. S.) for Col.; Maj. Rawsay for Lt. Col; Capt. Augel for Major; lt. Berry is adjutant - a change from Q.M. - Lt. Kelly is Q.M. 0 change from adjutant.

Love to all

M. S. Austin

C.S.

Fifth NJ

Sunday 4 pm - has rained steadily since morning - and is quite cold - nothing new.

MSA