

# Letter From Austin, Matthew S. written Saturday, December 27th, 1862

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Soldier: Austin, Matthew S.

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Camp Fifth NJV

Dear Father~

Since my letter of recent date, there has nothing occurred with us or with the army of special interest, unless it may be comprised in the rumor that a rebel force of cavalry and artillery had (or has) crossed the river below us. It can hardly prove true as their chances for returning would be very limited and it would be impossible for them to get to the west of us, with the Rappahunnack one side and Acquia Creek the other. We must in a measure, be in greater ignorance of what is actually taking place in our immediate vicinity, than you are, for while we are in a measure, confident to our camps, newspaper correspondents have free access to the sources from where comes information. We depend upon papers for news from our own midst, yet we are continually overrun with rumors, which are almost always without foundation.

Gen. Burnside is taking the whole responsibility of the late battle upon his own shoulders, whether others are in anyway to blame or not. It will be much easier and less hazardous to change the commander of the army than to reconstruct a cabinet at this time of trouble. I suppose it will result thus, Gen. Hooker will be placed in command - you will then hear of fighting in which the rebels will not have their own chosen fields altogether and besides, when the army fights-Gen. H will be there to see. I believe him to be the best field officer in the entire army. That is what is wanted most of all. The most elaborate arrangements may be made in council - all of which may utterly fail for want of that one requisite, which all who know Hooker, give him the credit of possessing above all others. I have long hoped and believed he would finally be appointed to the Supreme Command.

It is cheering to read of the success of Gen. Foster - may the government sustain him promptly. The success of Gen. F will change the scene of operations from this point to the more immediate door of Secessia where is ought to have been transferred long ago.

Since the morning of the 16th, we have had very good weather for business - cold but dry. Some nights have been too cold to sleep with comfort but it has moderated and is quite pleasant, night and day. Indications now are of rain - wind is strong from west.

Yesterday (Christmas) was as quiet in our camp as the most strict in military discipline could have desired. I thought of home and desired earnestly to be with you and I know that the thoughts of thousands were that day with the army. We had hard pulling to get up an ordinary dinner. Flour we could not obtain - beef was so tough that four hours was not sufficient to make it tender. A few potatoes and onions were all the extras we could get. We attempted a pudding but failed (nearly) in its preparation, no butter to assist in making a sauce for a poor pudding. Notwithstanding, our failure in a good dinner, I believe we all satisfied hunger and acknowledged we had been singly blessed in the preservation of our lives with health, strength and a degree of happiness, which we hope may be continuous to us throughout one continuance in the army. This through the blessing of God. I am not able to say I will have anything sent me by express, because we have not been paid yet and before time, we may change our place of residence. It does not appear whether active operations are to continue here or not. There is doubt about remaining here much longer. Today it has been intimated we are soon to move.

Gen. Mott has been assigned to, and took, commander of this brigade yesterday. All like the change. Gen. Revere was in command and is known by the name of "Bustamento". Capt. Eayre, formerly of this regiment is Ast. Adj. Gen. to Mott. Revere goes to the Second Brigade (Sickles).

I wish it might be so that I could meet you all New Year's Day but it will not be possible. I must content myself in praying that each member of the family may be kept in health during that and many succeeding years and let it be my privilege, ? many days to meet an unbroken household.

Love to Mother and the family and [?] I must mention by name. I always include her of course.

Very truly yours,

