

# Letter From Austin, Matthew S. written Wednesday, October 23rd, 1861

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Soldier: Austin, Matthew S.

Allegiance: Union

Unit/Service Branch: 5th Infantry

Date Written: Wednesday, October 23rd, 1861

Location: Meridian Hill

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Subjects: Camp Life, Commanders, Comrades, Drilling, Eastern Theater, Family

Fifth NJ Vol.

My Dear Mother~

The time passes away so rapidly that it is hard work to keep track of its flight. It seems but a day since I wrote you but upon looking at the record, I find it to be more than a week - considerable once the time I had intended should elapse. There is so little of the daytime unoccupied in this department that I may say I am busy from the morn till night and do not give any thought of the hour from sunrise to sunset. After sunset, there is leisure for reading, writing or conversation until 9 - bedtime - at which time all lights are to be extinguished - although we sometimes ? another hour of tea. We are surrounded by encampments, although only three are discernable. Tents are pitched in every direction but one cannot judge of the numbers. They are in every direction, yet but few of them can be seen from any one point, unless it be from the dome of the capitol and I doubt from that point, as they are hid by any timber. Soldiers are here, however, by the thousands and tens of thousands and when they are properly disciplined they will be put into active service, not before. I witnessed battalion drill this afternoon by Pa. regiments and I am convinced that, as yet, there is great need of , and room for improvement and this of regiments that have doubtless had better advantages than ours have - as yet this brigade has to see its first drill - as such- in regimented drill we are very deficient. Col. Starr has not as yet, taken the trouble to drill the regiment. This duty ? upon the Lt. Col. & Major. I have heard nothing in regard to any movement on our part and it is probable we may remain here some weeks (we) may not remain two days - the indications are that we shall , however. I continue in excellent health - have gained 10 lbs. since coming into camp and upon the whole feel well satisfied. The evenings are quite cool and not very inviting for outdoor amusements - so that all the men retire early to their tents and the camps are comparatively quiet. In a day or two we shall have a desk in our tent and more ? quarters for writing, when I hope to give you a more lengthy letter. Give my love to all in the family and remember me.

Very truly yours

M.S. Austin  
5th NJV  
Com. Department