

Confidential

Camp Orange Co; 8 March '64

Genl

I was in Richmond when your letter arrived, & have been so much occupied by the west movements of the enemy, that it is only to-day that I can reply. I think the enemy's great effort will be in the west, & we must concentrate our strength there to meet them. I see no possibility of mounting your command, without stripping all others of arrivals and rendering them immovable. If horses could be obtained for you, where is the forage and the equipments to be procured? The former is not to be had nearer than Georgia. I could not be furnished by the R. R. & I do not think equipments could be impressed through the country. If you & Johnston could unite & move into middle Tennessee, where I am told provisions & forage can be had, it would cut the armies at Chattanooga and Knoxville in two & draw them from the \_\_\_\_\_ where either portion could be struck at in succession as opportunity offered. This appears to me at this distance the most feasible plan. Can it be accomplished? By covering your fronts with your cavalry, Johnston could move quickly & rapidly through Benton across the Hiwassee & and then push forward in the direction of Kingston, while you taking such a route as to be safe from a flank attack would join him at or after his crossing the Tennessee river. The two Commands upon reaching Sparta would be in position to select their future course, would necessitate the evacuation of Chattanooga & Knoxville, with rapidity & skill unite on either Army. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the country to do more than indicate the general plans. The particular routes, passages of rivers you & Johnston must ascertain & choose. The condition of roads etc, ma oblige you to pass through the Western portion of N. C. But this you can soon ascertain, if you do not already know that country. But this should be investigated too. It is also believed by those acquainted with the people, that upon the entrance of the army into that country that its ranks will be restricted by the men from Tenn & Ken\_\_\_\_\_. A victory gained there will open the country to you to the Ohio. Study the subject, communicate with Johnston & endeavor to accomplish it, or something better. We cannot now pause. I will endeavor to do something here, to supply them if I cannot do more. I hope Alexander has joined you with his new commission - - The promotion of other officers of Art was ordered as proposed, during my last visit to Richmond. Walton retains his former position in the W. Bat\_\_\_\_(?). Wishing you all success and happiness. I am very truly R.E. Lee Genl

Genl J. Longstreet\_\_\_\_\_