

Headquarters Army No. Va.

Petersburg, Va. 4 Aug. 64.

Mr. President:

In my dispatch of this evening, I informed you of the report that forty six transports (seventeen of which contained cavalry) loaded with troops had descended James River up to last night. This information comes from Lieut. Woodly of the Signal corps, stationed at Fort Boykin. Lieut Welsh of Garey's scouts, stationed on the North side of James river, reported up to last night, nine steamers descending the river with troops, four of them conveying horses. Some of these he stated were wounded men, and some prisoners. He does not therefore entirely confirm Lieut Woodly's statement. I think it probable that they have sent to Washington that portion of the 19th Corps which was lately operating on the north side of James River, with some cavalry. A scout reported that on Sunday, the 31st ultimo. a body of cavalry estimated at two Brigades, moved towards James River in the direction of City Point, and this may be the force of cavalry which has been shipped north.

I fear that this force is intended to operate against Gen'l Early, and when added to that already opposed to him, may be more than he can manage. Their object may be to drive him

out of the valley and complete the devastation they commenced when they were ejected from it. General Grant's place of operations here appears to be to mine and bombard our lines, with a view of driving us from them, and as he is very strongly fortified, he can operate with fewer troops, and enable him to detach a sufficient force for the purpose indicated.

The largest force which I could detach, would be Kershaw's & Field's Divisions, and that would not leave me a man out of the trenches for any emergency which might arise. If it is their intention to endeavor to overwhelm Early, I think it better to detach these troops, than to hazard his destruction and that of our Rail Roads, etc: north of Richmond; and I therefore submit the question to the better judgment of your Excellency.)

On the 29th ultimo: McCausland's & Thonson's (?)
Brigades of cavalry crossed the Potomac at Clear Springs with orders to proceed to Chambersburg; thence west to Cumberland and destroy the bridges over the Baltimore & Ohio Rail Road, and the machinery &c. at the coal pits in the neighborhood, and after gathering all the cattle in Alleghany & adjacent counties in Pennsylvania, to return through Hardy. To cover this movement, two divisions of infantry moved to Williamsport, and a third Brigade of cavalry proceeded to Hagerstown, where they burned a train

[Johnson,
(Bradley T.)]

of twenty or thirty cars, loaded with stores. On the 30th ultimo: Gen'l Early returned to Martinsburg, by the west road to avoid observation. Learning that the 6th & 19th Corps were moving up from Washington, the 6th Corps having reached Halls town, he determined to fall back to Winchester where he could deliver battle, to greater advantage. I do not think that the whole of the 19th Corps - could have reached the valley; but it seems that Gen'l Early's presence in the valley tends to excite the apprehension of the Federal authorities, and to cause a detachment of troops from Grant. If Morgan could have struck the Baltimore & Ohio Rail Road in the neighborhood of Cheat River, and have proceeded into Washington County, Penna. as I had projected he would have created a valuable diversion in Early's favor.

I am with great respect

Your obdt. servt.

R. E. LEE

Genl

To His Excellency

Jefferson Davis

Presd't Confed. State.