

Hq Qr C S Armies
Febry 22nd 1863/5

Lt. Gen. J. Longstreet

General,

Your letter of the 16th inst. is received. It arrived during my absence in Richmond, and has not been overlooked. I agree with you entirely in believing that if we had gold, we could get sufficient supplies for our army, but the great difficulty is to obtain the gold. It is not in the coffers of the Govt. or the banks, but is principally hoarded by individuals throughout the country, and is inaccessible to us, I hope under the reorganization of the Comy Dept; if we can maintain possession of our communication, that this army will be better supplied than heretofore, and that we can accumulate some provisions ahead. As regards the concentration of our troops near the Capital, the effect would be to produce a like concentration of the enemy, and an increase of our difficulties in obtaining food and forage. But this, whether for good or evil, is now being accomplished by the enemy, who seems to be forcing Gens. Beauregard & Bragg in this direction. If Sherman marches his army to Richmond, as Gen. Beauregard reports it is his instruction to do, and Gen. Schofield is able to unite with him, we shall have to abandon our position on the James River, lamentable as it is in every account. The want of supplies alone would force us to withdraw when the enemy reaches the Roanoke. Our line is so long, extending nearly from the Chickahominy to the Nottaway, and the enemy is so close upon us, that if we are obliged to withdraw, we cannot concentrate all our troops nearer than some point on the line of railroad between Richmond and Danville. Should a necessity therefore arise, I propose to concentrate at or near Burksville. The route for the troops north of James River would have to be through Richmond, on the road to Annelis C.H. The cavalry passing up the north bank of the river, and crossing at some point above Richmond, Pickett's division would take the route through Chesterfield C.H., crossing the Appomattox at Goode's bridge. With the army concentrated at or near Burksville, our communications north and south would be by that railroad, and west by the southside R.R. We might also seize the opportunity of striking at Grant, should he pursue us rapidly, or at Sherman before they could unite. I wish you to consider this subject and give me your views. I desire you also to make every preparation to take the field at a moments' notice, and to accumulate all the supplies you can. Gen. Grant seems to be preparing to move out by his left flank. He is accumulating near Hatcher's Run depots of supplies, and apparently concentrating a strong force in that quarter. Yesterday & today trains have passed from his right to his left loaded with troops, which may be the body of 8000 which you report having left Signal Hill yesterday. I cannot tell whether it is his intention to maintain his position until his other columns approach nearer, or to anticipate any movement by us which he might suppose would then become necessary. I wish you would watch closely his movements on the south side of the run, and try and ascertain whether he is diminishing his force. If he makes the move which appearances now indicate, he may draw out his whole force, abandoning his lines of defense, or hold them partially and move with the remainder of his troops. I should like very much to confer with you on these subjects, but I fear it will be

impossible for me to go south of James River, and I do not know that it will be convenient for you to come here.

Very respectfully

Your obt. servt.

R. E. Lee

Gen.

P. S. Can you not return Pickett's brigade to him in order that I may withdraw
G ? brigade from his line, its division having been ordered to our right?

(Grimes')

R. E. L