

Richmond Feb. 23rd 1863

To His Excellency,
Jefferson Davis

President of the Confederate States,
Sir:

In addressing a letter to ^{the} Secretary of War on the 7th inst., resigning my commission as Major General in the Provisional Army; I had supposed that my letter and the accompanying papers, contained all that I would have to say upon the subject. But your endorsements thereon are of such nature, that I feel compelled to notice them. The insinuation conveyed in your first remark was uncalled for. I tendered my resignation, it has been accepted; ~~there was~~ no alternative in it. I have not directly or indirectly applied to you for promotion, and thus was no proper occasion afforded for your saying that, "If the alternative of resignation, or appointment as Lieutenant General, be presented, the resignation must be accepted, because my appointment as Lieut. Genl., would be in disregard of the consideration due to services rendered in battle and campaigns". My gratification on account of your handsome allusion to the distinguished services of my esteemed friends Generals Longstreet and Jackson; is I regret to say diminished

See letter of 7th Feb.
first sent with resignation
as being of this

interpolation
to me by the
man in possession

by the painful necessity thus imposed upon me, of asking you: what "consideration was due", at that time, to Generals Holmes & Pemberton; for "services rendered in battle and campaign". I stated that I was overslaughed by Wholesale. It is not an answer for you to say that "Generals Longstreet and Jackson, while I was absent sick, were winning fresh laurels on fields which a grateful country can never forget. There are four more names on the list. Can the same be said of all of them. In stating my own case, I refrained from alluding to individuals; delicacy, good taste and proper regard for the six Lieut Generals, all forbade an irrelevant discussion on my part, of their real or relative merits. Besides, I had to take my place below all or none of them. But your allusion by name to Generals Longstreet and Jackson, gives me the opportunity, and makes it necessary for me to say; even at the risk of drawing comparisons, which I had hoped to avoid; that I told the Secretary of War, and many others, at the time; and now say again, that I was glad these two Generals had been promoted over me. Although not conceding, that either of them had fairly won that advantage over me, whilst we were all in the field; it had been my misfortune to be absent sick, at a time, when they more favored than I; had rendered the most important services to their country and won for themselves on many hard fought

Who was to come of Genl
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fields, the right to command! You state that they were Brigadiers when I joined our cause.

And, as I was appointed Major General over them, you commend their example to my imitation; and read me a lecture because I made a plain statement of facts. I preceded my own state in joining our cause. Did they? Did they come so early, and did I come so late; and without reason for delay; that you now find it necessary to draw comparisons as to order of time in coming?

Had I ever served under them. Had their brigades been taken from them, again and again. When I was appointed to rank them; had they been for nearly a year commanding as Major Generals. They continued to command their own proper brigades long after I was appointed Major General and when promoted, retained their Brigades as a part of their new commands. Which was proper and right. I do not know whether General Longstreet was satisfied with your action in appointing me over him or not. That is for you and himself to settle. But I do know that General Jackson was. At any rate it was not the first time I had ranked both of them. But in commending their example to my imitation, you should not have ignored my statement, then before you, to the effect that, if I had been allowed to retain my own proper command, the old 1st Division of the Army of the

See his letter to
me what first undid
to

Potomac; you might have promoted six hundred,
instead of six of my juniors to rank me;
it would have been no concern of mine;
I would not only have been content; but proud
to have commanded the old 9th Division, and
it alone; to the end of the war.

But you transferred to my division Brig.
Gen. G. S. Jones - whose brigade was soon to go
out of service - My division was composed almost
entirely of War men. You then ordered me away
from the division, and left General Jones in
command of it. You say that "when a General
of division for an uncertain, and probably a long
period leaves his command; it being in the
presence of the enemy; he should select another
officer to be selected to succeed him; the public
interest rather than personal wishes being the
proper rule of conduct." This is all well enough,
in the abstract - but I do not see what
it has to do with the case in point.

And I consider it equally inapplicable
to the second case in which my division
was broken up. There is nothing in my letter
about another officer being appointed to command
my division whilst I was absent sick.

Before the battle of Seven Pines I commanded
the left wing of the Army. My division was
commanded before, during, and after that
battle by the Senior Brigadier General; W. B.
C. Whiting. The division was separated, and
I objected. General Lee assured me that this was
only temporary, and promised that the division
should be reformed - this has not been done.

The third division to which I was assigned
was ordered off; and I ordered to remain here.
You say that if you had known Genl. Smith's
inclination to take the field you would have been
pleased to gratify it. My answer is that

Are I am responsible of the fact
of War & myself on the subject
whether known or believed
and the steps induced an
opposite opinion -

you decided this, as you have done nearly all
other matters concerning myself, ^{without} ~~without~~ ^{that} regards to my
wishes. I have reason to believe, at the time I was
ordered to remain here ~~that~~ you did know that
I desired to go with my division. You had no
reason to think otherwise: and you might have
easily informed yourself, had you desired to do so.
In imposing upon yourself the task of correcting "a
few" of my "errors"; you begin by stating that "all
that is said of his (my) position as the commander
of a Corps is valueless, because there was no such
organization then sanctioned by law, or recognized by
the Department". And you add, "If there had
been properly two Corps then in the Army of the Poto-
mac, Generals Johnston and Beauregard were there,
and for a part of the time General Van Dorn, all
of whom ranked General Smith". Whether sanctioned
by law and recognized by the Department, ^{or not,} there were two
separate General's commands in the Army of the Po-
tomac at that time. And they were called and known
as Corps. General Johnston commanded the one,
General Beauregard the other. It was at your
suggestion, that I visited the Army of the Potomac,
almost immediately after my first arrival in Richmond
from the State of Kentucky. Within twenty four
hours after my arrival at Fairfax Court House
Generals S. E. Johnston and Beauregard, ^{on their own accord,} united

See this letter, not true as to
insertion for which I am sorry

in writing a letter to you; requesting you to appoint
me a Major General and order me to the Army
of the Potomac; that I might relieve General John-
ston of the command of his, the 2nd Corps of that
army, and thereby enable him to, ^{fully} his whole time to
the general command of the army. I delivered
the letter to you, and was asked if this would
be satisfactory to me. I answered that it would
and stated that I was only fearful I would
not be fully equal to the task - you told me
that you would give the necessary instructions in
the case. I arrived here in the early part of Sep-
tember 1861. For several years previous to the war,
I had been living in the ~~city~~ of New York; to
which place I moved from New Orleans. Two
weeks before the bombardment and capture of
Fort Sumter, I was suddenly stricken down in
New York City; by a fearful disease; which confined
me to my room for several months. Immediately
after my recovery, I went to my own state, Kentucky,
and before my strength was re-established came here.
The lamented General A. V. Johnston, arrived here
a few days before me. Unsolicited by me he urged
you to appoint me to the highest military rank
within your power, and order me to the West,
as second to him if possible. You appointed
me Major General, I was ordered to the Army
of the Potomac - was assigned to General G. E.
Johnston's corps; and placed in command of it.

of the false. You were not appointed at same time as I and I refused the appointment to wait at Smith's house Sunday, when I thought I had the best chance of being appointed.

You knew that this was intended, and ²⁴you knew that it was done - And I am satisfied that you know it now. For you can hardly have forgotten a conference, which was held at Fairfax Court House, between yourself, General Johnston, General Beauregard and myself, soon after I took command of the 2nd Corps. It is true that General Vandorn received soon after an appointment as Major General, and was ordered to the Army of the Potomac. His appointment was made to date the same day as mine. And he ranked me by virtue of having been a Brigadier General; whereas I was appointed from private life. But you knew then, and you know now: that General Vandorn was assigned to the 1st Corps; which was commanded by Beauregard, and that I continued to command the 2nd Corps after General Vandorn joined the Army of the Potomac. At any rate the facts are as stated, and no selected phrases, or even flat denial: can alter them. You say that I complained of being superseded by General Lee during the battle of Seven Pines. I stated the fact, nothing more. Is it denied? - As to your lengthy argument, endeavoring to prove that because I "reported sick", the next day; I "was not able and willing to command the army in active operations" - passing by the covert

insinuations). I have only to say, in answer to the plain substance of the remark, that no symptoms of the disease which commenced on the next day, the same by which I had been stricken down more than a year before, had shown themselves until the battle was over; and I had been actually superseded by General Lee for more than eighteen hours. of course a longer time had elapsed after your order was given to General Lee, directing him to take command. You speak of "conversations reported to have been held with the former Secretary of War", and they state that there was neither haste nor want of due consideration, on your part, in making the appointments of Lieut. Generals. You saw proper to place over me six of my juniors in one day - and that at a time when I was commanding by your order, more as a General, than as Lieut. General. My division, the proper command of my rank, had been taken from me. I asked you respectfully through the Secretary of War, in writing, to give me the reasons for this. An answer in writing was refused; the official paper was returned to the Adj. & Inspector General's office, endorsed "this will be answered orally". Had you given, or allowed a straight forward answer to have been given me in writing: there would have been no "conversation" on the subject. If, in my recollection that night, when I appended the substance of the "oral answer" to the records of my office: on which my letter of resignation of that date had been placed, I have in any manner misapprehended Mr. Randolph, I am perfectly willing to accept, and abide by, any corrections or changes he may desire to make. You treated my respectful written request with contempt. And but for ^{the} consideration shown me by the Secretary of War, my letter of resignation dated the 2nd of October last, would then have been forwarded. And I would have left the service - forced out; but not as you endeavor to make it appear. because Longstreet and Jackson were promoted over me. Nor yet because

Gen. Lee was on the field of battle when I was promoted

When promoted to Major General

See his own statement

disappointed & disappointed in myself
 be in a poor state of health, but
 not capable of promotion.

because I was not appointed Lieut. General.
 The appointment of some of the Lieut. Generals
 over me, had a certain influence in producing
 that ^{the} deep conviction forced upon my mind,
 that I was not respected, supported, and
 confided in; by the government; to an extent
 sufficient to authorize my remaining in its
 service. But I have no disposition to repeat
 here my letters of resignation, nor to give even
 a synopsis of them. I have only to add
 in comment upon your endorsements that, in
 giving up the rank of Major General; whether
 "importance it might be supposed" I attached to
 "provisional rank", I attach much more to
 the Confederate cause. And you may rest
 assured, that I was in earnest in saying to
 you, that no consideration on earth, would
 induce me to hold rank, and position, at
 the hazard and risk of the vital interests
 of the country. Having disposed of your
 endorsements, it remains for me to notice
 the endorsement of the Secretary of War upon

my second letter of the 7th ins. That letter referred to two cases, in which important orders had been given to my command, without even informing me.

Mr. Seddon is entirely mistaken in supposing that these orders were given, "while it was known Genl. Smith was en route for Richmond". I have a copy of his telegraphic order, in regard to the movement of troops within my command: dated Feb. 2nd 1863. I had then been in Richmond at least five days. I heard of the order by telegram from Generals Whiting and Evans on the 6th and it was only after inquiring on the 7th, that I learned from the Adj. and Inspector General's office, that the order had been given. Mr. Seddon says nothing upon the second case alluded to in my letter. But that interference was as nothing compared with the order of the Secretary of War issued to me in writing, on the 15th ins., two days before the acceptance of my resignation.

By your direction, he gave me specific instructions without either he, or yourself consulting me, to change the position of nearly every brigade in the State of North Carolina. This instructions speaks of the "division" of a General; who never had

but one brigade. After disposing of two of the
brigades of the "division", it is grandy stated, that
they will afterwards, perhaps to be followed, by another
brigade of the same "division". And you order
me, through the Secretary of War: to direct Genl. Thombs
to dispose of the residue of his force, as "he deems
most judicious for the defence of Malden, Goldsboro,
and the line of the Rail Road".

~~Although~~ I have felt compelled to
resign the commission conferred upon me by
you. & I will ^{here} say again what was stated
in my letter of resignation: "I shall endeavor
in another sphere, to aid in securing the inde-
pendence of the Confederate States"... "leaving
to others equally capable, of higher rank, and
better supported; the task of performing duties
heretofore imposed upon me".

Very Respectfully Chas. Bell. Anbr.
Gustavus W. Smith

William H. Smith

Richmond Feb. 29. 63

To William H. Smith
Virginia

Recd. Feb. 29. 63