

of the garrison put out pickets or not. He could have ascertained *what orders* were given the commander by his colonel, or Gen. Law, or by Gen. Hood, and fixed the responsibility where it belonged. Who put the garrison there, and what instructions were given the commander? embraces the question. He says he "particularly ordered Col. Connally's regiment there himself for the protection of this battery," which is an error.

Like the ghost of Banquo, Stribbling's battery rises up again at headquarters and will not out.

HEADQUARTERS NEAR SUFFOLK, April 20, 1863, 7 P.M.

Brig. Gen. H. L. Benning, Commanding Brigade.

Your communication of 3 A.M. to-day has been received. . . . The cannonade that you heard last night arose from a successful effort of the enemy to capture one of our batteries on the river. Under cover of darkness and the fire of his gunboats and land batteries he landed a force near Hill's Point, and took possession of Stribbling's battery by a surprise.

I am, General, very respectfully your obedient servant.

G. M. SORREL, *Assistant Adjutant General*.*

I now will continue my diary:

27th, 28th, and 29th. Passed most of the day examining the line between my right and Gen. Garnett. Reported to Gen. Longstreet. Spoke's Run is no barrier to infantry. To-day, the 29th, orders came for Gen. Longstreet to join Gen. Lee immediately. He sent for me and told me he was ordered to join Gen. Lee with his *two divisions*; but that he could not go, as his wagons sent for supplies had not returned. I made no reply, but thought it strange, considering all the company wagons, etc., he required to move were in the camp.

30th. "Waiting for the wagons" is still the song. Terrible thunderstorm. Lightning injured a number of men.

Friday, May 1. This afternoon about 4 P.M. the enemy was found in line of battle. One regiment, said to have been the Fifty-Ninth New York, advanced on my picket lines and were handsomely repulsed by Col. Connally's regiment. In supporting his men in the pits he lost ten men. The enemy shelled the plain furiously for an hour and a half in my front. Courier came and said they were advancing on the Fifty-Fifth and fighting like h—l. I rode over to Jenkins, and we galloped to the front. Ordered Connally to send support to his pickets, and it was done valiantly. The enemy lost over forty men. By sunset all was quiet. This was a demonstration in favor of Hooker, who was now at Chancellorsville.

May 2. All was quiet last night, more so than usual, and now up to 6 P.M. all is still save an occasional gun and a little picket-firing, and this continued during the night. Received to-day general instructions to withdraw to the Blackwater.

* From War Records, page 692, Serial No. 108.

May 3. This morning sent to the rear all spare articles, baggage, etc. At 11 A.M. Gen. Longstreet started for Franklin, and left me in command of the army to withdraw it. Heavy firing down the river, and the enemy is shelling the railroad crossing. Captured men report Gen. Dix in command in Suffolk. Some Yankees came over the river with sugar and coffee to trade.

The skirmishing on the left was very heavy, and I sent down one regiment to support Gen. Anderson, and moved Davis's Brigade to the left about a mile. I am now informed that Gen. Longstreet did not go at 11 A.M. as he expected to do. At sunset the firing on the left still continued, and the order to withdraw was countermanded. About 7 P.M. I received orders from Maj. Latrobe to withdraw in half an hour. I then ordered up the supports from the railroad, and directed the men in the advanced rifle pits to be withdrawn at 11:20. At 10 the column was in motion, and we marched steadily the distance of six miles. . . . Arriving at the junction of the South Quay and Summerton roads, I learned that all Maj. Mitchell's trains had crossed the Blackwater, and Pickett's wagons were now passing on to the river to cross. Being thus advised, the division was halted, and I rode on to look for a good position to form line of battle to defend the crossing in case the enemy should pursue. I found an admirable position, and disposed my forces accordingly. Pickett's Division came up, and I left Col. Bratten, with two regiments and a battery of artillery, *to remain with the cavalry to guard the South Quay road*. This was on the morning of the 4th.

4th. In the afternoon received orders to cross over the river, and that when all were over to ride up to see him (Longstreet). The orders of the General left me but two brigades for the defense of the line from the James river to the Chowan river.

5th. Started this morning for Ivor; posted Davis at the Blackwater bridge. . . . Rode on to Zuni. I found Longstreet was in Petersburg, and, as there were two trains ready to leave, I determined to ride up and ascertain why he wished to see me, and try and get a third brigade. I sent Feribee's regiment down to the Isle of Wight to find out where the enemy was. I left Zuni at 2 P.M., and reached Petersburg at 3:50 P.M. I called on Longstreet as directed. I could not induce him to leave me the third brigade. . . . I then asked of him permission to remain in Petersburg until the morning, which he granted. Soon after a communication was handed me in which the general commanding "expressed surprise that I was in the city, and asked me to explain what induced me to abandon my command." I had a locomotive waiting to take me back to Zuni, or Franklin, as occasioned required; but considering the General told me I could remain, and by reason of this artful note, I determined not to leave anyhow under such an imputation. He may have lost his temper at Lee's victory at Chancellorsville without him.

6th. Wrote this morning to the President and asked for a court of inquiry.

Now, while on this subject, I will state that the request was

not granted. Gen. J. R. Davis informed me that the President said to him my course needed no vindication, and Gen. Davis knew all the facts, and I presume he stated them to the President. I wanted the court to investigate the cause of the surprise and capture of the garrison and Stribbling's two guns, and other matters named in my application for the court, if it were granted.

I will explain, although it is a trifling matter, why I went to Petersburg. First, Longstreet wrote me to call and *see* him as soon as my command crossed the Blackwater, but he left before I passed over. Next, when I got to Zuni I had posted my troops all in their old positions on the line of the Blackwater as they were before Longstreet moved them to Suffolk; no Longstreet was at Zuni.

Secondly, Petersburg was my headquarters, and from there I could communicate with Zuni and Franklin, on the Blackwater, by telegraph and railroad, and be in either place in a short time.

Thirdly, Longstreet left Franklin without turning the command of his two divisions over to me, and I presumed he was pressing forward with his command to the aid of Gen. Lee at Chancellorsville; who had called him to his assistance on the 27th of April, and so often afterwards. Continuing, my diary says:

Busy the balance of the day in my office with official business. I did not leave the city until 9 P.M., when I took the cars for Franklin. I arrived there after 11 P.M. Found all quiet. Whilst I was in Petersburg Gen. Hood was impressing horses for cavalry service. Carriages, wagons, carts, etc., from which the horses were unhitched, were left in the streets.

8th. Changed headquarters to-day to Ivor. . . .

9th. Arrived at Ivor at 10 A.M. Gen. J. R. Davis left to-day on leave.

13th. Went to Petersburg and remained there all day following.

15th. Started for Richmond. Saw Gens. Lee, Elzy, Cooper, Ransom, Ewell, and others. Dined with the Hon. Judge James Perkins. In the evening I went to the President's. I found him ill and suffering with a cough. I took tea with them. . . .

16th. Saw the Secretary of War this morning. Spoke to him about leave of absence. Said it could not be granted. . . .

23d. Went to the Blackwater bridge, where Jenkins's Brigade was. For exercise to the troops crossed over the river to feel the enemy, in force, on the other side. I took about three thousand men and four batteries of artillery. Col. Green, with two Mississippi regiments, advanced and drove in their pickets, and captured some property. Could not draw them out to attack us. After dark withdrew.

Wednesday, 27th. Went to Petersburg, intending to go to Fort Powhatan. Found there a dispatch informing me that I would be ordered on the day following to report to Gen. J. E. Johnston in Mississippi.

29th. No orders having been received, I went to Richmond to see about taking staff officers with me. Gen. Cooper could allow me only my aids. Finally the Secretary of War gave me permission to take my adjutant general, assistant adjutant general, quartermaster, and orderly. The Secretary of War told me that Gen. Joseph E. Johnston had applied for an officer of the rank of major general, and as they knew I was acquainted with the country, he had ordered me, etc.

As I had once been called on to submit a plan for the defense of the Mississippi river, and complied with the request, it might have had some influence on the action of the Secretary. Besides, I had once declined duty at Vicksburg. (See letters from the President to Gen. Lee, War Records, page 716, Vol. LI., No. 108 Serial, suggesting that I be sent to Mississippi.)

Before I take leave of the arduous duties I had been performing, of defending a line three hundred miles in length, of exchange of prisoners, examining correspondence, obtaining supplies, etc., I will refer to some matters again relating to the siege of Suffolk, about which I made no report. I have alluded to Gen. Longstreet taking my troops without consulting me, and his movements on to Suffolk, and his attempts to have Gen. Jenkins keep the command of them. I am quite sure it was Hood's chief of artillery who asked my artillery officer for guns to place in the works on the Nansemond river, and to which I gave my consent. It was not Gen. Law, because he protested when ordered to garrison the fort. But this matters not. The garrison and the guns formed a part of Hood's command, and yet (I am told) both Pollard and a clerk in the Rebel War Office state in their books that I lost "Stribbling's battery;" and yet, most erroneous of all, Longstreet in *his book* states "that a battery was put on a *neck of land* and captured by the enemy." He fails to state that the *fort and garrison therein* were captured, which of course includes the arms and the guns.

The great events of war often hinge on some small matter not obvious to an ordinary commander, but which, at a glance, would be visible to the eye of the great captain, and provided for in his plans for a victory. The commander of a remote supporting corps is presumed, when alone, to be able to consider carefully everything that might occur to prevent an immediate compliance

with any expected order, especially that of a prompt and rapid movement to the aid of his chief, the moment the call is made; and *Longstreet awaited that call.*

Now from Suffolk to Zuni messages were passed rapidly by the best of signal men. Thence by telegraph to Petersburg, Richmond, and on to Gen. Lee. On the 21st of April Gen. Lee reported the enemy was at Kelly's Ford; that Hooker was putting his army in motion; the 28th they crossed the Rappahannock; the 29th they crossed the Rapidan, and skirmishing commenced near Chancellorsville. On the 30th the armies were face to face.

From this it will be seen that Gen. Lee sounded the notes of warning to Longstreet as early as the *21st of April*, and Norris on the 21st (as chief signal officer) informed him Hooker was moving with one hundred and fifty thousand men, nine days before he crossed the Rappahannock near Chancellorsville and was confronted by Lee. As soon as the plans or intentions of the enemy were further divined, Lee took measures to concentrate his forces. To Gen. Longstreet, with his army corps at Suffolk, he sent urgent dispatches, ten of which I copy from the War Department Records (Vol. 25, Part 2) as follows:

No. 1. PAGE 763.

GEN. COOPER TO GEN. LEE.

RICHMOND, May 1, 1863.

Gen. R. E. Lee, Fredericksburg, Va.

Orders were sent on Wednesday (the 29th of April) to Gen. Longstreet to move forward his command to reënforce you. He replied he would do so immediately, but expected to be a little delayed in gathering up his transportation train to prevent its falling into the hands of the enemy, then in sight.

S. COOPER, *Adjutant and Inspector General.*

No. 2. PAGE 752.

R. E. LEE TO THE PRESIDENT.

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA, *April 27, 1863.*

His Excellency, Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States.

Mr. President: I have written to Gen. Longstreet to expedite, as much as possible, his operations in North Carolina, as I may be obliged to call him back at any moment.

R. E. LEE, *General.*

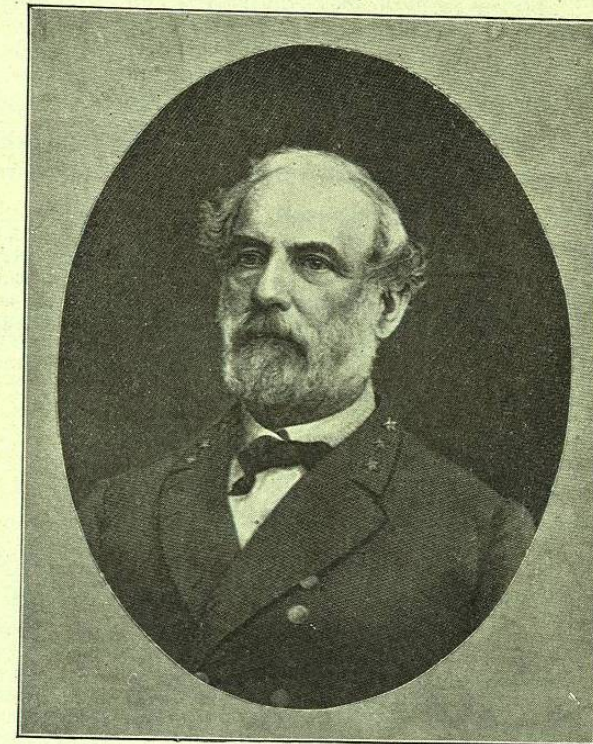
No. 3. PAGE 757.

GEN. S. COOPER TO GEN. D. H. HILL.

RICHMOND, VA., April 29, 1863.

Maj. Gen. D. H. Hill, Commanding, Goldsboro, N. C.

General: The following telegram has just been received from Gen. Lee:



ROBERT E. LEE.

The enemy is crossing below Deep Run, about the same place as before. . . . Where his main efforts will be made I cannot say. Troops not wanted south of James river had better be moved in this direction, and all other necessary preparations made.

This renders it important that such forces as you deem judicious should be concentrated at Richmond, to be in supporting distance. Gen. Lee may telegraph you. . . . *A like dispatch has been sent to Lieut. Gen. Longstreet.*

I am, General, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
S. COOPER, *Adjutant and Inspector General.*

NO. 4. PAGE 757.

GEN. COOPER TO GEN. LONGSTREET.

Gen. Longstreet.

The following dispatch has just been received from Gen. Lee;

FREDERICKSBURG, VA., April 29, 1863.

The enemy is in large force on the north bank of the Rappahannock opposite the railroad at Hamilton's crossing. He is crossing troops below the point at which he crossed in December. . . . I hear of no other point at which he is crossing except below Kelly's Ford, where Gen. Howard has crossed with his division, said to be fourteen thousand, six pieces of artillery, and some cavalry. . . . All available troops had better be sent forward as rapidly as possible.

S. COOPER, *Adjutant and Inspector General.*

NO. 5. PAGE 758.

GEN. COOPER TO GEN. LONGSTREET.

ADJUTANT AND INSPECTOR GENERAL'S OFFICE, }
RICHMOND, VA., April 29, 1863. }

Lieut. Gen. Longstreet.

The following telegram just received since the one already communicated to you:

If any troops can be sent by rail to Gordonsville, under a good officer, I recommend it. Longstreet's Division, if available, *had better come to me;* and the troops for Gordonsville and the protection of the railroad, from Richmond and North Carolina if practicable. Gen. Howard, of the enemy's forces making toward Gordonsville.

The Secretary, in view of the above, *directs the return of your command,* or at least such portions of it as can be spared without serious risk; also any surplus force that can be spared from D. H. Hill. . . . These movements are required to be made with *the utmost dispatch.*

S. COOPER, *Adjutant and Inspector General.*

NO. 6. PAGE 758.

SECRETARY SEDDON TO GEN. COOPER.

WAR DEPARTMENT, C. S. A., April 29, 1863.

Gen. Cooper.

Dear General: Gen. Lee telegraphs that all available force at our com-

mand be sent at once by rail or otherwise toward Gordonsville. . . .
Telegraph French at Petersburg to send all available force at his com-
mand. . . .
J. A. SEDDON, *Secretary of War*.

NO. 7. PAGE 758.

SECRETARY OF WAR TO GEN. COOPER.

WAR OFFICE, RICHMOND, April 29, 1863.

Gen. Cooper.

Gen. Lee, by another telegram just sent the President, says: ". . .
Longstreet's Division, if available, had better come to me. . . ."
J. A. SEDDON, *Secretary*.

NO. 8. PAGE 760.

GEN. COOPER TO GEN. LONGSTREET.

RICHMOND, VA., April 30, 1863.

Lieut. Gen. James Longstreet, Suffolk, Va.

Move without delay your command to this place, to effect a junction
with Gen. Lee.
S. COOPER, *Adjutant and Inspector General*.

NO. 9. PAGE 761.

GEN. LEE TO PRESIDENT DAVIS.

FREDERICKSBURG, April 30, 1863.

His Excellency, President Davis.

. . . . Enemy was still crossing the Rappahannock at 5 P.M. yester-
day. . . . Object evidently to turn my left. . . . If I had Long-
street's Division, I would feel safe. . . .
R. E. LEE, *General*.

NO. 10. PAGE 765.

GEN. LONGSTREET TO GEN. COOPER.

SUFFOLK, VA., May 2, 1863.

Gen. Cooper.

I cannot move unless the entire force is moved; and it would then take
several days to reach Fredericksburg. I will endeavor to move as soon as
possible. . . .
JAMES LONGSTREET, *Lieutenant General Commanding*.

"Responsibility cannot exist without a name," or an object.

Perhaps Longstreet delayed to execute these orders for the
reason he states (page 329), that there was a "plan of battle
projected"—that is, "to stand behind our intrenched lines and
await the return of my troops from Suffolk." "And my im-
pression is that Gen. Lee, standing under his trenches, would
have been stronger against Hooker than he was in December
against Burnside, and he would have grown stronger every

hour of delay." "By the time the divisions of Pickett and
Hood could have joined Gen. Lee, Hooker would have found
that he must march to attack or make a retreat without battle.
It seems probable that under the original plan the battle would
have given fruits worthy of a general engagement."

Longstreet's first dispatch disclosed his intentions to Lee,
and Lee wisely decided not to wait ten or twelve days for
Longstreet to join him. Moreover, it is not probable that Lee
thought Hooker would be so knightly as to await the arrival of
the Suffolk troops before giving battle. Longstreet does not
deal even in the conjectural, for it is not based on any evidence;
he merely guesses.

But it is better to deal with the possible.

Two brigades could have been withdrawn from before Suf-
folk on the night of the 27th of April and sent to join Gen.
Lee, then the main force on the night of the 28th. There is
no doubt about this. In this event the enemy could have passed
the 29th in discovering our intentions. Rather than crossing
the Nansemond river and giving us battle, they would have
awaited orders, and probably been sent to Fredericksburg to
aid Hooker; but this is not important.

On the 28th he could have ordered Gen. D. H. Hill, then at
Goldsboro, to have protected the train, called on Whiting at
Wilmington for aid, while I had a division at Franklin on the
Blackwater, and forces elsewhere which would no doubt have
saved the train from the enemy. His first dispatch is very mis-
leading, and does not convey the idea that he would sit down and
wait six days for the wagons before he withdrew. While this
was going on at Suffolk, the heroic "Stonewall" Jackson was
marching to the right and rear of Hooker's army, and when it
was announced to him that the enemy was capturing his wagon
train, without checking the walk of his horse he said: "Do not
let them capture any ammunition wagons." What value were
his baggage wagons compared to the loss of even a few minutes
in accomplishing the great object of his movement, on which
victory depended. To his master mind before him was the en-
emy, the impending battle, the victory, and the reward due to
genius of battle, with all the spoils of war strewn in the con-
queror's path. And it was so. And thus it was that Long-
street, by not effecting a junction with Lee, "put the cause

upon the hazard of a *die*, crippling it in resources and future progress." (See Longstreet, p. 330.)

Mark Antony, in his speech over the dead Cæsar, said: "Power in most men has brought their faults to light. Power in Cæsar brought into prominence his excellencies."

So power given Lee made known to the world the nobility of his character and greatness as a commander; while in others it disclosed a spirit of envy and a desire for detraction; and in all some peculiarities. Lee was not conscious of his strength, because his greatness of soul was derived from his goodness of heart, and it rested upon him with the ease and grace of a garment. His generosity induced him to overlook the frailty incident to humanity, and to forgive even disobedience in his lieutenants. He remembered what Job said about a book, and wrote none. He envied no one. He left no writings extant naming an enemy, and his harshest remark in reference to an officer of high rank was, in effect, that he was "slow to move."

The official reports show that Hooker had 161,491 men and 400 guns. Lee's forces numbered 58,100 men, with 170 guns. This was known to Lee's lieutenants.

The publication of the Official Record by Congress discloses the fact that Mr. Seddon induced Gen. Lee to send Gen. Longstreet with Hood's and Pickett's Divisions to cover Richmond, which he thought menaced from Fortress Monroe and Suffolk. Lee thought Pickett's Division sufficient. (Official Record, Vol. 22, p. 623.)

I had the name and reported strength of every regiment in both Suffolk and Norfolk, obtained from blockade runners and verified by prisoners. Suffolk had no strategic value to the enemy of any import, and none to us. In 1862 I designed the taking of Suffolk, and on an appointed day assembled some eight or nine thousand troops at Franklin, on the Blackwater. The only officers who had any knowledge of this were Gens. G. W. Smith, in Richmond, and J. J. Pettigrew. It was stopped, the morning the troops assembled, by Gen. G. W. Smith on strategic grounds and it not being a depot of supplies; and he was right. And when Secretary Seddon, against Lee's advice, joined with Longstreet in moving on Suffolk so late in the spring, he or Longstreet committed an error, the consequence of which was Lee had to fight Hooker with the force just stated, without the

aid of his lieutenant general. Who was it, then, that put the "Confederacy on the hazard of a die?"

Hooker would never have embarked his great army on the Potomac at Aquia, and carried them back where they had once been under Gen. McClellan, and Richmond was not in danger, and Longstreet's expedition to Suffolk not in accordance with grand strategy; and but for Lee's audacity, and Stonewall Jackson's swift movements and vigorous blows at Chancellorsville, the Confederacy would have been there shattered into fragments, and all by one false movement to Suffolk.

"Fortune loves a daring suitor."

Lee threw down the iron glove, and the daring suitor won! It was the most remarkable victory of the war, but by the absence of those divisions, and the death of Stonewall Jackson, the large fruits of the victory were lost.