

New York 11. December 1878.

Dear Sir:

I have received your favor of the 3rd inst^o asking me why Gen. Scott's instructions in the following telegraphic despatch were not carried out.

"Head Quarters June 19th 1861.

"Maj. Gen. John A. Dix,
New York,

Come to me at the first convenient moment. I shall charge you with the command of the Alexandria and Arlington Department, the next to the enemy containing five brigades. I shall do what I can to give you some peculiar staff officers, bringing horses with you.

Winfield Scott."

On receipt of the foregoing despatch I purchased horses and repaired without delay to Washington. About the time of my arrival it had become known that I was, in pursuance of Gen. Scott's order and by virtue of my rank as Major General, to assume the command of the forces referred to as the senior of Brig. Gen. Mc Dowell. I had reason to believe that several members of the cabinet were opposed to the change; and an active movement was set on foot through the correspondents of the New York Press to aid in defeating it. Proceeding from

all the indications that the opposition would succeed, I decided to let the matter take its course. The arguments of the newspaper correspondents were in substance that I had not for many years been in the military service, that Gen. McDowell had been while I was in civil life, and that it was unjust to him, to use the language of one of the letter writers, to deprive him "of the glory of a victory over the enemy, which was considered so much a matter of certainty as to have led to the Congressional cry of "On to Richmond". The result was that Gen. Scott was overruled, and he was soon afterwards superseded by Gen. McClellan. It is not impertinent to the subject in hand to mention that Gen. Scott had previously named me for another active command and that he was in like manner overruled. I remained in Washington awaiting orders until the morning of the day, when the forces I was to have commanded fled in disorder from Bull Run, and I was then sent to Baltimore to relieve Gen. Banks. The disaster was communicated to me at midnight by telegraph. Gen. McDowell is a gallant & accomplished soldier; and so far as I know there was nothing on his part, in regard to the proposed change of command, to impair the sincere respect, which I have always had for him. I might not have had any better success had Gen. Scott's purpose been carried out; and I had reason to be consoled for the chagrin I naturally felt at the time, when after three or four months of active and earnest work, military & political, in Maryland, which

was in a state of semi-mercenarism, when I took com-
mand at Baltimore, & succeeded in gaining for the
Union at the November election a majority of more than
thirty thousand. I had the gratification soon after-
wards of receiving from Mr. Lincoln a letter, now before
me, in which he said: "It affords me great pleasure to
say that no officer has performed the duties assigned ~~to~~
him to my more entire satisfaction than has Gen. Pitt".
In the same letter he referred to the failure to carry out
Gen. Scott's purpose and stated as the "sole reason" there-
mentioned "to him a representation, which was wholly
without foundation & of which I had never heard until
I received his letter. -

I have thought more than once of writing an
account of my services during the war of the rebellion for
publication. If I had done so, it would have con-
tained the statement of a similar change of pur-
pose on a subsequent occasion of equal importance.
But these are matters of personal rather than public
history and have no bearing on the great objects &
results of the war. Of the painful feelings of the Pres-
ident Secretary of War & even had a doubt.
The changes of purpose referred to were

due, as I always believed, to the activity and influence of the friends of Commodore more ambitious than myself - of military glory. Throughout the war I can sincerely say, I had but one feeling - to accept without hesitation any service the Government should see fit to assign to me, and to discharge it to the best of my ability. The only request I ever made of the President was early in 1862, after I had dispersed the Confederate troops on the Eastern shore of Virginia and brought it into the support of the Union. It was to be permitted to organize an expedition in the purpose of replacing the old flag on Fort Sumter. This request I received a very kind, but not a favorable, answer from Mr. Lincoln & Mr. Stanton.

I have never until now written a line on this subject or spoken of it except in confidence to intimate friends.

I am Dear Sir
Very truly Yours,

John A. Dix

Gms. G. & Garrison.