

## Abraham Lincoln papers

From Robert H. Milroy to Abraham Lincoln, July 4, 1863

Baltimore, July 4th 1863

Dr. Sir:

Yours of June 29th<sup>1</sup> was only rec'd to day & I must beg your indulgence for the statement of a few brief facts as arguments by way of answer to the prima facie case which the few imperfect facts that have come to your knowledge have made out against me. You say "I have just lost a Division". I had less than 7000 effective men and over 5000 got through, and are now in arms ready to do battle in our good Cause. You say "you have scarcely seen anything from me at any time that did not contain imputations against my superiors & chafing against acting the part they assign me." I plead in part guilty to this allegation. I have always promptly obeyed orders, but my Scotch Irish blood and Hoosier raising have sometimes betrayed me into hasty and perhaps improper expressions of impatience when I saw a good chance to strike the Rebels but felt myself restrained by orders of superiors perhaps a 100 miles away. An instance in point. Last winter the rebs Gen. Jones left the Valley for a raid in W. Va. of which I was fully informed in 24 hours. He left all his wagons, tents, supplies Artillery and other stores mostly at Harrisburg under a small guard of about 500 men. About this time Hooker engaged Lee, on the Rappahannock, and I thought it a good chance to strike at the Rebs. supplies at Harrisburg & Staunton, and started a Regiment Brigade for that purpose but when within 15 miles of Harrisburg was forced to recall them by a preremptory order the very opposite of complimentary in its terms. You say: "You have constantly urged the idea that you were persecuted because you did not come from West Point." Pardon me my dear Mr President, but I do not recollect before the present instance of ever complaining of persecution from any one of my superiors. But I have on several occasions had good reasons to believe that I was treated with contempt, and snubbed by some of my superiors, which in spite of military discipline would occasionally disturb my meekness—

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<sup>1</sup> A copy of Lincoln's letter is in this collection.

You say that: "I (you) know by Genl. Hallecks order Book that he on the 11th of June advised Genl. Schenck<sup>2</sup> to call you in from Winchester to Harpers Ferr." In answer to this I enclose a copy of the last order rec'd from Genl. Schenck by me at Winchester. This you will perceive was dated on the 12th and directed me to "await further orders" which I did & none came & the telegraph was cut next day.—

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## 2 Robert C. Schenck

Further you say — “& I have been told but do not know, that Genl. Schenck gave you the order accordingly — (the order to evacuate fall back) on the same day, & I have been told but do not know, that instead of obeying it you sent a written protest against obeying it which did not reach him until you were actually beleaguered at Winchester.”— I never protested either verbally or in writing against obedience to any order, but on the reception of the enclosed telegram from Genl. Schenck, seeing in the Copy of Genl. Hallecks telegram a statement “Winchester is of no importance other than a look out” & thinking that the Genl. in Chief was laboring under a misapprehension about the importance of Winchester as being the key to the B. & O. R. R. & the pass way to Md Brig. Genl. Elliott<sup>3</sup> & myself each sent to Maj. Genl. Schenck a written statement that in substance that if Hooker kept Lee employed our forces were able to hold Winchester against the forces of Jenkins & Imboden<sup>4</sup> then threatening it, & in view of the fact that Winchester was the pass way to Md it was important that it should be held by our forces, & that any less than what was then holding it, could not hold it against the force that had been threatening it for months & that if any considerable portion of our force was withdrawn, the balance left as a “look out” would be gobbled up in less than 24 hours. But we did not intend these written statements as protests, or any thing of the kind.

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3 General Washington L. Elliott was a division commander in the Army of the Potomac.

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## 4 Albert G. Jenkins and John D. Imboden

If General Halleck knew of the approach of Lee's Army to Winchester & had made that fact known to Genl. Schenck instead of merely advising the withdrawal of the troops from Winchester.

All would have been well. My official report which has been unavoidably delayed will be completed tomorrow

Your most obt. servt.

R. H. Milroy

Maj. Genl.—

P. S. I ask nothing more than to be restored to the command of my “lost Division”, & to be permitted to advance on the enemy. R. H. M.—