

Arlington, Alexandria, Va.,

16 June, 1859

Col. L. Thomas

Asst Adjt Genl Hd Qrs: of the Army

City of New York, N.Y.

Colonel

Your letter of the 9th advising me that my application for an extension of my leave of absence had been approved and forward to the Adjt. Genl. would have sooner been acknowledged but for my absence from home.

I cannot express to the Genl in Chief my thanks and gratitude for the renewal of his former invitation to enter his Staff as Military Secretary & the pride & gratification I should feel at being admitted into his Confidence & becoming a member of his Mil: family. But the same reasons which forbade my accepting his former invitation exist in all their force, & are even strengthened by the present attitude of my Regt. I feel that as soon as I can possibly arrange the business devolved upon me by the will of Mr. Custis that I ought to join my Regt: & ought not to accept other duty, however pleasant and convenient, that might retard my doing so. Mr. Custis directed that his slaves should be emancipated as soon as his debts & certain legacies could be paid. The funds of this are to be derived from the sale of certain land & the proceeds of his estate on the Pamunkey. Justice to the negroes requires that this should be accomplished as soon as possible.

It is this consideration that requires me to devote myself to the accomplishment of his will, & not any pecuniary advantage to myself or family.

I am very resp.y you Obt Servt

R. E. Lee Bt Col.

Lt. Col. 2 Cav.y