Head-Quarters of the Army.

Washington Jan'y 7, 63.

Major Genl. Burnside
C. O., Falmouth.

Dear

Your communication of the 6th was delivered to me by your Aide de Camp at 13 M. to-day.

In all my communications and interviews with you since you took command of the Army of the Potomac, I have advised a forward movement across the Rappahannock. At our interview at Warrenton I urged that you should cross by the fords above Fredericksburg, rather than to fall down to that place; and when I left you at Warrenton it was understood that at least a considerable part of your army would cross by the fords, and I so represented to the President. It was this modification of the
plan proposed by you that I telegraphed you had received his approval. When the attempt at Fredericksburg was abandoned, I advised you to renew the attempt at some other point, either in whole or in part, to turn the enemy's works or to threaten their wings or communica.

In other words, to keep the enemy occupied till a favorable opportunity offered to strike a decisive blow. I particularly advised you to use your Cavalry to light artillery upon his communica.

I attempt to cut off his supplies I engage him at an ad- vantage. In all our interviews I have urged that our first object was, not "Richmond", but the defeat or scattering of Lee's Army, which threatened Washington or the line of the Upper Potomac.

I now come to these things simply to remind you of the general views which I have.
expressed, and which I still hold. The circumstances of the case, however, have somewhat changed since the early part of November. The chances of an extended line of operations are now on account of the advanced season, much less than then. But the chances are still in our favor to meet and defeat the enemy on the Rappahannock, if we can effect a crossing in a position where we can meet the enemy on favorable or even equal terms. I therefore still advise a movement against him.

The character of that movement, however, must depend upon circumstances which may change any day and almost any hour. If the enemy should concentrate his forces at the place you have selected for a crossing, make it a point, try another place. Again, the circumstances at the
time may be such as to render an attempt to cross the entire army not advisable. In that case, they suggests that while the enemy concentrates at that point, advantage can be gained by crossing smaller forces at other points, to cut off his lines, destroy his communications, capture his rear guards, outposts, etc. The great object is to occupy the enemy, to prevent his making large detachments or distant raids, and to injure him all you can, with the least injury to yourself. If this can be best accomplished by points of a general crossing, and detached rear crossings, take that course; if by an actual general crossing, with points on other points, adopt that course. There seems to me to be many reasons why a crossing at some point should be attempted. It will not do to keep your large army inactive. As you yourself
time may be such as to render an attempt to cross the entire army not advisable. In that case, they suggest that while the enemy concentrates at that point, advantage can be gained by crossing smaller forces at other points, to cut off his lines, destroy his communication & capture his rear guards, outposts, &c. The great object is to occupy the enemy, to prevent his making large detachments or distant raids, and to injure him all you can, with the least injury to yourself. If this can be best accomplished by points of a general crossing, and detached real crossings, take that course; if by an actual general crossing, with points on other points, adopt that course. There seems to me to be many reasons why a crossing at some point should be attempted. It will not do to keep your large army inactive; as you yourself
Head-Quarters of the Army.

admit, it devolves on you to decide upon the time, place, and character of the crossing which you may attempt. I can only advise that an attempt be made, as early as possible.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

(T. H. W. Allen).
Jan. 8, 1863.

I understand Gen. Halleck has sent you a letter of which this is a copy. I approve the letter. I deplore the necessity of communicating with you, or of doing by your general officers, but I do not see the remedy.

Be cautious, and do not misunderstand the necessity that this government or country, in provoking you, does not yet feel how I could feel if by changing the command of this A. P. by if I were thus

Lincoln

Gen. Blumenau.