

WASHINGTON, February 17th, 1844.

To the Hon. T. W. LIGON,

*House of Delegates, Maryland.*

SIR:—In compliance with the suggestion made when I had the pleasure of seeing you in Washington, permit me to make the following remarks, not directly applicable to the inquiries made by the Hon. Wm. W. McKaig, in his communication on the subject of coal.

The richness of the Cumberland coal, its friable nature will not bear transportation in Rail Road cars—by repeated handling it is readily reduced to fine coal, and its value very much reduced. The stokers and firemen on board of our War Steamers, find it difficult to manage as it requires the constant application of the slice bars of the firemen, and the intense heat of the Engine room ranging from 120° to 140° of Fah. thermometer, disinclines the firemen to use it and the fine coal is accordingly thrown away—the official report from the War Steamer Missouri gives a large percentage of waste.

I have proposed to the Hon. Secretary of the Navy, the propriety of sending an Engineer to inspect the coal at the mines, and I have no doubt this will be done, and when this inspection is commenced the French line of Steamers will immediately adopt the use of the Cumberland coal.

The French nation is extremely jealous of the English on this subject, as the export duty on coals is very considerable, France yielding but little coal they will take every means to supply themselves from this country.

It is also worthy of remark, that it is now under serious consideration in Pennsylvania, to impose a tax of fifty cents a ton on all coals sent out of the State, and I cannot perceive any injustice in this, as the cost of the article to the consumer would have been full one hundred per cent above its present price, had the Rail Roads and Canals not been constructed. It may not be politic to place this tax on as a tax “eo nomine”—it may be judicious only to advance the tolls on the canal.

I regret very much that the returns from the several Navy Yards have not been made. I shall however, do myself the pleasure of transmitting them if their contents are interesting.

I sincerely hope, that the Legislature of Maryland will take some decided steps in this important matter, I should regret extremely to see her hesitating in so important an undertaking, when so nearly completed. That it is her true interest to complete the work, and that she will be indemnified, I have no doubt.

Your obedient servant,

G. L. THOMPSON.