

of the preceding year about 50,000 tons, the increase being chiefly in coal. The amount of coal and coke shipped on the Canal during the year 1855, will be about 200,000 tons, being 55,000 tons more than the preceding year, and a greater than has been transported on it any previous year.

The late period at which the letter of the President reached me does not admit of my giving any more extended notice of the affairs of this work. I refer you for information more in detail both as it respects the condition and prospects of the Canal, to the Report aforesaid, from which you will find that although represented to be in a better condition than at any period since the destructive freshet of 1852, are by no means flattering or encouraging.

Foremost among all the questions of State policy which in my judgment demands your earnest and most careful consideration, and which cannot be longer postponed, without disregarding the highest interests of the State, should be placed the subject of common school or public education. Whatever causes may have existed heretofore, for the long neglect of this all important subject, growing out of our embarrassed financial condition, and the heavy taxation incident thereto, it gives me much pleasure to say, that they are now all removed as will appear by the official reports from the Treasury Department, which will in a few days be submitted for your consideration. It will be a reproach upon the character of the State, if with the means now under its control, and with the knowledge of the progress and results, which has marked the educational efforts of so many of our sister States, we should continue to lag so far behind them, or hesitate longer, to put forth an effort, commensurate with the importance of the subject, and the growing necessities of the people.

Certainly there can be no matter of public concern, so essential to the well being of society, or so promotive of the public interests in all its aspects, present and prospective. No subject can appeal so strongly to our State pride, or can so justly claim the public approbation and support, as the effort to establish for the people at large, an efficient system of common school instruction.

In a Government such as ours, emanating from the people, based upon their intelligence and virtue, supposed in all its operations to reflect their will, where public men and measures, must sooner or later conform to public sentiment, how indispensable to the very existence of all that is valuable in our civil institutions, must be the general diffusion of intelligence and virtue. Now whilst all will acknowledge this necessity and admit that our Government must rely entirely for its permanency, upon the intelligent appreciation of its privileges by the masses of the people, few permit themselves to go beyond this mere feeling and acknowledgment, into the field of action, or who will put forth any well directed effort for the advancement of a cause, upon the success of which, are involved such heavy responsibilities.

The system of public instruction in Maryland (if we except the