

Thomas Jefferson to Henry Lee, April 26, 1790, from the Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO COLONEL HENRY LEE J. MSS.

New York April 26. 1790.

Dear Sir, —I am honored with your favor of the 3d. instant, and would have been happy to be useful to Mr. Lee had there been any opening, as I should be hereafter were any to occur. There are no offices in my gift but of meer [sic] scribes in the office room at 800. & 500. Dollars a year. These I found all filled & of long possession in the hands of those who held them, and I thought it would not be just to remove persons in possession, who had behaved well, to make place for others. There was a single vacancy, only, & that required to be filled up with a regard to the elegance of hand-writing only, because it was to continue the record of the Acts of Congress which had been begun in a hand remarkably fine. I am sensible of the necessity as well as justice of dispersing employments over the whole of the U. S. But this is difficult as to the smaller offices, which require to be filled immediately as they become vacant & are not worth coming for from the distant states. Hence they will unavoidably get into the sole occupation of the vicinities of the seat of government. A reason the more for removing that seat to the true center.

The question of Assumption still occupies Congress. The partisans of both sides of it are nearly equally divided, & both extremely eager to carry their point. It

will probably be sometime before it is ultimately decided. In the mean while the voice of the nation will perhaps, be heard. Unluckily it is one of those cases wherein the voice will

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be all on one side, & therefore likely to induce a false opinion of the real wish of the public. What would be the fate of this question in the Senate is yet unknown.