Mr. Stevens to Mr. Blaine.

Legation of the United States, Honolulu, October 22, 1890.

Sir: Though it may be somewhat outside of the conventional rules of my office, a due regard for the interests of the United States Government seems to require that I should make a brief statement in respect to a coal depot in Honolulu. Admiral Brown has called my attention to the subject and asked me to express my views thereon to the Department of State. Previously to the admiral's arrival here circumstances had led me to the conclusion which I shall here indicate. I need not repeat the well-known truths as to the necessity of good stopping places and coaling stations for vessels of commerce and vessels of war. Napoleon's adage that armies march on their bellies has an equally strong application to the agents and servants that win commercial and naval victories on the seas. It goes without saying that the Hawaiian Islands have a commanding position in the North Pacific. The Government of the United States has long recognized this fact. If it is well to have a coaling station at the Samoan group, how much more important it is to have one at Honolulu. To one familiar with the facts it is plain that the supply of its naval vessels here should not depend on private parties and local dealers. The price of coal greatly varies at these islands, owing to the distance from the sources of supply and the irregularities and varying contingencies of the demand. At one time the wholesale price is nearly double what it is at another. If our Government can have proper and convenient landing and building for its coal, filled from our mines at home or by cargoes purchased here at the lowest market rates, I am confident that a large saving can be made in the cost of coal supplies to our naval vessels, which thus would not be subjected to undue exactions of the local dealers and to uncertain contingencies. I am clearly of the opinion that the views of Admiral Brown on the subject are based on substantial facts, and are those which business men would carry out in their private affairs. The owners of the land of whom he speaks are personally known to me as reliable and responsible men, and I think their terms for the first twenty-five years of lease are reasonable, and that it would be well to secure the option of a subsequent lease unless our Government should decide to make an absolute purchase at the present time, which I would regard preferable.

I have, etc.,

John L. Stevens.

Mr. Blaine to Mr. Stevens.

Department of State, Washington, November 12, 1890.

Sir: I have received your No. 7 of the 22d October last, favoring the establishment of a coal depot at Honolulu, for the use of our naval force.

A copy has been sent to the Secretary of the Navy.

I am, sir, etc.,

James G. Blaine.