Mr. Pierce to Mr. Fish.

No. 101.] Legation of United States at Hawaiian Islands, Honolulu, February 25, 1871.

Mr. Henry A. Pierce to Secretary of State.

Subject: Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands to the territory of the United States.

Abstract: United States Government recommended to again consider the subject—Prevaling opinion thereon—The choice and will of Hawaiian people will be manifested on the death of their king, if approved of by the United States Government—Puritan and democratic tendencies of the Hawaiians—Fifteenth amendment, Constitution of the United States—Native population rapidly disappearing—Leaving their country to foreigners—Reasons given for the acquisition of these islands by United States—Lord Palmerston’s opinions on the question—Sound and prophetic historical incidents in Hawaiian history.

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SIR: Impressed with the importance of the subject now presented for consideration, I beg leave to suggest the inquiry whether the period has not arrived making it proper, wise, and sagacious for the United States Government to again consider the project of annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the territory of the United States. That such is to be the political destiny of this archipelago seems a foregone conclusion in the opinion of all who have given attention to the subject in this country; the United States, England, France, and Germany.

A majority of the aborigines, creoles, and naturalized foreigners of this country, as I am credibly informed, are favorable, even anxious for the consummation of the measure named.

The event of the decease of the present sovereign of Hawaii, leaving no heirs or successor to the throne, and the consequent election to be made by the legislative assembly of a king, and new stipends for a royal family, will produce a crisis in political affairs, which, it is thought will be availed of as a propitious occasion to inaugurate measures for annexation of the islands to the United States, the same to be effected as the manifest will and choice of the majority of the Hawaiian people; and through means proper, peaceful, and honorable.

It is evident, however, no steps will be taken to accomplish the object named without the proper sanction or approbation of the United States Government in approval thereof.

The Hawaiian people for fifty years have been under educational instruction of American missionaries, and the civilizing influences of New England people, commercial and maritime. Hence they are Puritan and democratic in their ideas and tendencies, modified by a tropical climate. Their favorite songs and airs are American. Sherman’s “Marching Through Georgia” and “John Brown’s Soul is Marching On,” are daily heard in the streets and in their schoolrooms. The Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States has made the project of annexation to our Union more popular than ever, both here and in the United States.

The native population is fast disappearing; the number existing is now estimated at 45,000, having decreased about 16,000 since the census of 1860. The number of foreigners in addition is between 5,000 and 6,000, two-thirds of whom are from the United States, and they own more than that proportion of foreign capital, as represented in the agriculture, commerce, navigation, and whale fisheries of the kingdom.

This country and sovereignty will soon be left to the possession of foreigners, “to unineal hands, no sons of theirs succeeding.” To what foreign nation shall these islands belong if not to the greatest Republic? At present those of foreign nativities hold all the important offices of Government and control legislation, the judiciary, etc. Well disposed as the Government now is toward the United States and its resident citizens here, in course of time it may be otherwise, as was the case during our civil war.

I now proceed to state some points of a more general character, which should influence the United States Government in their decision of acquiring possession of this archipelago, their geographical position occupying, as it does, an important central, strategical point, in the North Pacific Ocean, valuable, perhaps necessary, to the United States for a naval depot and coaling station, and to shelter and protect our commerce and navigation, which in this hemisphere is destined to increase enormously from our intercourse with the 500,000,000 population of China, Japan, and Australia. Humboldt predicted that the commerce on the Pacific would, in time, rival that on the Atlantic. A future generation, no doubt, will see the prophecy fulfilled.

The immense injury inflicted on American navigation and commerce by Great Britain in the war of 1812-1814, through her possessions of Bermuda and other West