Mr. Marcy to Mr. Mason.

No. 3.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, December 16, 1853.

JOHN MASON, Esq., etc.:

Sir: Recent accounts from the Sandwich Islands represent that the political affairs of the Hawaiian Government were in an unsettled state and some changes of high official men had been made. The political agitations were in a great measure composed at the date of the last dispatches from our commissioner, but while they existed the question of transferring the sovereignty of these islands to the United States was much discussed. As it was to be expected, the representatives of Great Britain and France at Honolulu were disturbed by the agitation of this question and used all their influence to repress the rising sentiment of annexation to this country.

I have good reason for believing that both Great Britain and France feel much solicitude in relation to the future destiny of the Sandwich Islands and are very unwilling to see them become a territory of the United States. Their respective ministers near this Government have had several conferences with me on that subject in which they appeared to be desirous of getting assurances that this Government would take no measures to acquire the sovereignty of these islands or accept it if voluntarily offered to the United States. Their language to me leaves it doubtful in my mind how far Great Britain and France intend to go in preventing such a transference of them to this country. I am satisfied that these powers will do what they can short of a resort to actual force to defeat that object. Their ministers, particularly the minister of France, labored to impress me with the belief that such a transfer would be forcibly resisted; but I do not believe that these Governments would go to that extreme length unless there should be something in the manner of acquiring the islands which would afford a plausible pretense for such an interference.

The object in addressing you at present is to request you to look into this matter and ascertain, if possible, without making it a matter of direct discussion, what would probably be the course of France in case of an attempt on the part of the United States to add these islands to our territorial possessions by negotiation or other peaceable means.

I do not think the present Hawaiian Government can long remain in the hands of the present rulers or under the control of the native inhabitants of these islands, and both England and France are apprised of our determination not to allow them to be owned by or to fall under the protection of either of these powers or of any other European nation.

It seems to be inevitable that they must come under the control of this Government, and it would be but reasonable and fair that these powers should acquiesce in such a disposition of them, provided the transference was effected by fair means.

It has been intimated that Russia takes an interest in the destiny of the Sandwich Islands, and even has an eye on them for herself. I do not doubt that she would prefer that they should remain as they are rather than see them under the control or in the possession of either Great Britain, France, or the United States, but it is scarcely probable that she would actively interfere in the matter. As to England and France, a different conclusion may be adopted. The views of the French Government, and the part it would take in case the United