Mr. Marcy to Mr. Gregg.

Department of State,
Washington, January 31, 1855.

Sir: The policy of the United States in relation to the future of the Sandwich Islands is presented in the instructions heretofore given to you. That policy is not to accelerate or urge on any important change in the government of that country, but if it has or should become so far enfeebled that it can not be continued, and the sovereignty of the islands must be transferred to another power, then a state of things will exist in which it will be proper for the United States to have a regard to the future condition of that country.

If the Hawaiian Government and people become convinced of the necessity of such a change, it is probable that they will, if left to their free choice, look to the United States as the country to which they would wish to be united. To a proper arrangement of this kind this Government certainly has no objection.

My dispatch of the 4th of April last has reference to such a contingency which it was then supposed was about to happen. In case a transfer of the islands was proffered to the United States, you were directed to enter into negotiations as to the terms of it and conclude a treaty on that subject. The outlines of such a treaty were contained in that dispatch.

You have apprised the Department that as soon as negotiations were opened you perceived that stipulations different from those indicated in your instructions were insisted on, and you very properly notified the Hawaiian authorities that you could only entertain them as matters to be referred to your Government for its approval or rejection.

The draft of a treaty you have forwarded to the Department has been considered by the President, and he directs me to say that he can not approve of some of the articles. If ratified in its present shape at Honolulu and sent hither, he would not probably submit it to the Senate. There are in his mind strong objections to the immediate incorporation of the islands in their present condition into the Union as an independent State. It was expected that the Hawaiian Government would be willing to offer the islands to the United States as a territory, and to leave the question in relation to their becoming a State to the determination of this Government, unembarrassed by stipulations on that point. The interests of both parties would seem to indicate this as the wisest course. A treaty which would embarrass the United States in their action on this question would therefore be objectionable.

There are other objections to the draft which you have sent to the Department, though less formidable than that which the second article presents. The amount to be paid as annuities, etc., according to the draft, is much larger than was contemplated.

I think it would be proper that you should inform the Hawaiian Government that the United States would not be likely to approve of a treaty differing in important particulars from the terms contained in the dispatch of the 4th of April.

This Government will receive the transfer of the sovereignty of the Sandwich Islands with all proper provisions relative to the existing rights and interests of the people thereof, such as are usual and appropriate to territorial sovereignty. It will be the object of the United States, if clothed with the sovereignty of that country, to promote its growth and prosperity. This consideration alone ought to be a suffi-