No. 46.] United States Legation, Honolulu, February 8, 1892.

Sir: The semiannual election of members of the Hawaiian legislature took place February 3, after several weeks of exciting canvass. The principal issue on the part of the business men and more conservative and responsible citizens was in respect of treaty relations with the United States. These supporters of the proposed new treaty which they believe has been negotiated at Washington had the approval of the principal Government officials, though the cabinet is far from being vigorous and influential. The opposition, or Liberals, as they term themselves, composed mostly of the irresponsible white voters, half-castes, and of a large majority of the native Hawaiians, pushed their canvass on three lines—a new constitution, opposition to the present cabinet, and hostility to the proposed treaty, though it finally hedged and disclaimed more or less in regard to the last.

These so-called Liberals were led by Wilcox, the half-caste who was at the head of the revolutionary outbreak in July, 1887, and by C. W. Ashford, the Canadian member of the cabinet, who betrayed and deserted his associates when Minister Carter was trying to negotiate a new treaty in 1889. This Ashford has some ability, any amount of audacity, and is utterly without scruples, and has done his utmost to influence the prejudices and passions of the native Hawaiians. Both he and Wilcox secured their election as representatives from this island. The legislature is composed of 48 members, one-half being nobles elected by property holding or income voters. The Conservatives and friends of the treaty have secured most all of the nobles and enough of the representatives to give them a decisive majority, sufficient, it is thought, to secure the approval of the treaty, even with the Pearl Harbor grant in perpetuity. Not improbably there may be a change of cabinet when the legislature assembles in May.

There are increasing indications that the annexation sentiment is growing among the business men as well as with the less responsible of the foreign and native population of the islands. The present political situation is feverish, and I see no prospect of its being permanently otherwise until these islands become a part of the American Union or a possession of Great Britain. The intelligent and responsible men here, unaided by outside support, are too few in numbers to control in political affairs and to secure good government. There are indications that even the “Liberals,” just beaten at the election, though composed of a majority of the popular vote, are about to declare for annexation, at least their leaders, their chief newspaper having already published editorials to this effect. At a future time, after the proposed treaty shall have been ratified, I shall deem it my official duty to give a more elaborate statement of facts and reasons why a “new departure” by the United States as to Hawaii is rapidly becoming a necessity, that a “protectorate” is impracticable, and that annexation must be the future remedy, or else Great Britain will be furnished with circumstances and opportunity to get a hold on these islands which will cause future serious embarrassment to the United States.

At this time there seems to be no immediate prospect of its being safe to have the harbor of Honolulu left without an American vessel of war. Last week a British gunboat arrived here, and it is said will remain here for an indefinite period.

I am, sir, etc., John L. Stevens.