Statement of Volney V. Ashford.

HONOLULU, HAWAIIAN ISLANDS, March 8, 1893.

Hon. JAMES H. BLOUNT,
United States Ambassador to Hawaii:

SIR: You ask me to put in writing the substance of my information to you in re Hawaiian affairs on the 3d instant. In order to fully understand the situation, it seems necessary to refer to political developments which led to the conditions existing on January 14 last past.

Since the time of King Kamehameha V, in 1864, the political status of the Hawaiian Islands was that of a constitutional monarchy with succession to legitimate heirs, failing which, the sovereign nominated his own successor, such nomination to be ratified by the majority of the nobles. Failing both these alternatives, it rested with the entire Legislature (nobles and representatives) to elect a new sovereign. This latter was the case upon the death of Lunalilo, known as the last of the Kamehamehas, in 1874. The candidates were Kalakaua and the Queen Dowager Emma, widow of Kamehameha IV. The latter was the favorite of the natives, while Kalakaua was selected by the foreign element—then chiefly American—who feared the islands would drift to England if under the rule of Queen Emma, who had spent much time in visiting that country, and was anti-American in all her sentiments.

Kalakaua was not selected for his virtues, but simply because he could be controlled. The Legislature, which was chiefly composed of natives, was bribed to vote for Kalakaua, whose election was thereby secured, but the native population created a riot which resulted in several fatal casualties and was only quelled by the intervention of British and American men-of-war's men in port. Thus the late King began his reign, under conditions accomplished by fraud and sustained by foreign force, with the bitter hostility of the great majority of his countrymen. His extravagances and corruptions, as subsequently developed, helped him but little with the natives, who looked on him as a usurper and outside the real chieftahood, while the foreign population became gradually more estranged, until the anti-revolutionary condition of 1887 stared the country in the face. But with all the King's recklessness he was careful to keep within the letter of the law, though continually violating its spirit. He was enabled to do this from the peculiar privileges and prerogatives allowed by the then constitution.

The legislative body consisted of two so-called "houses" (though they sat together in one). Half the Legislature consisted of the "nobles," appointed for life by the sovereign. This process, abused to favor royal lickspittles regardless of their merits, gradually changed the general character of the house of nobles, so that the great majority of them were absolutely the creatures of the King, whose powerful influence over the majority of the representatives also, through his manipulating and distributing offices, and all kinds of public favors among them, gave him the literal ownership of the entire Legislature in pushing all his corrupt measures through Parliament, so that revolution became the only possible remedy. All government patronage was in the King's hands, through his power of appointing and dismissing his ministers at will. Such a thing as independence of Parliament was utterly unknown; while laws were passed at the King's nod, appropriating vast sums for such revels and indecencies as his lewd and extravagant tastes suggested; while orgies, debauchery, hulas,