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A Hell of a Time Up at the Palace

Darkness had already enveloped Honolulu when a pair of well-dressed conspirators knocked on one of the most imposing doors in town. The man they came to visit held the key to their revolution. He was not a warrior or a warlord, not a financier, not a politician, not an arms dealer. John L. Stevens was the American minister to Hawaii, and that night he joined an audacious plot to overthrow Hawaii's queen and bring her country into the United States.

Stevens and the men who visited him on the evening of January 14, 1893, fully understood the seriousness of their mission, but they could not have known what a long shadow they would cast over history. They were the first Americans who ever met to plan and carry out the overthrow of a foreign government. That night they did much more than seal a country's fate. They also opened a tumultuous century of American-sponsored coups, revolutions, and invasions.

Hawaii was in the midst of an epic confrontation between tradition and modernity. Its tribal, land-based culture was collapsing under pressure from the relentlessly expanding sugar industry. A few dozen American and European families effectively controlled both the economy and the government, ruling through a succession of native monarchs who were little more than figureheads.

This system worked wonderfully for the elite, but it turned natives into underlings in their own land. Among those who wished to redress the balance was Queen Liliuokalani, and on that January day she convened her cabinet to make a shocking announcement. She would proclaim a new constitution under which only Hawaiian citizens had the right to vote. High property qualifications for voting would be eliminated, and the power of the nonnative elite would be sharply curtailed.

The queen's four cabinet ministers were aghast. They warned her that Americans in Hawaii would never accept such a constitution. She replied by insisting that she had the right to promulgate what she wished. As their debate turned angry, two ministers excused themselves and slipped out of the palace. One of them, John Colburn, the interior minister, rushed downtown to alert his lifelong friend Lorrin Thurston, a firebrand lawyer and antiroyalist plotter.

"Lorrin," he began, "we've been having a hell of a time up at the palace."

Thurston and other haole, as Hawaiians called their white neighbors, had been waiting for an excuse to strike against the monarchy. Now they had one. Stevens was on their side, and behind him lay the power of the United States. This was their moment.

The stage was now set for something new in history. Never before had an American diplomat helped organize the overthrow of a government to which he was officially accredited. The story of what led Stevens to do this, and the larger story of how the United States came to dominate Hawaii, are full of themes that would resurface time and again as Americans fell into the habit of deposing foreign leaders.

FOR NEARLY ALL OF THE FIVE MILLION YEARS SINCE IT VIOLENTLY EMERGED from the depths of the Pacific Ocean, Hawaii was defined by its isolation. Its first settlers, probably Polynesians from islands to the south, are thought to have arrived roughly around the time of Christ. Over the centuries, Hawaiians had little contact with anyone else because almost no one could cross the vast expanse of ocean that surrounded their islands. Thousands of unique plant and animal species evolved, more than almost anywhere else on earth.

Hawaii's human inhabitants developed a remarkably distinctive society that bound them together in elaborate webs of obligation, ritual, and reverence for nature. If not precisely a tropical Eden, this was a place where, over many generations, people maintained a well-balanced culture that sustained them both physically and spiritually. One historian has described it as "very successful" and "less brutish than were most of its contemporary societies throughout the world, even those of patronizing Europe, just as it was less brutal than are most of those that adorn our civilized world today."

That changed with astonishing suddenness, beginning on January 18, 1778. At daybreak that morning, off the coast of Kauai, a spectacle unfolded that stunned Hawaiians no less than the landing of a spaceship would stun them today. What seemed to be two floating islands appeared on the horizon. People became frenzied, some with excitement and others with terror. Many dropped their work and raced down Waimea Valley toward the shore.

"Chiefs and commoners saw the wonderful sight and marveled at it," according to one account. "One asked another, 'What are those branching things?' and the other answered, 'They are trees moving about on the sea.'"

These apparitions were actually British ships commanded by one of the century's most celebrated explorers, Captain James Cook. Awed natives at first took Cook for a god, but quite soon—perhaps inevitably, given the cultural differences between them—the two groups fell into violent conflict. Many islanders were happy when the foreigners sailed away, and pelted them with rocks when they returned a year later in desperate need of supplies. Hungry sailors began taking what they needed, and after they killed a Hawaiian chief, warriors took bloody revenge. They swarmed onto Cook and slashed his body to bits. Later they roasted his remains in an underground oven. It was one of the last times native Hawaiians were able to impose their will on whites.

Before long, Cook had his revenge. He and his men had left behind plagues more ferocious than even they could have imagined. Their few weeks of contact with natives, ranging from handshakes to sexual intercourse, produced the near-extinction of the Hawaiian race.

Cook's men, as he himself had predicted in his journal, set off an epidemic of venereal disease on the islands. That was just the beginning. Over the decades that followed, fevers, dysentery, influenza, lung and kidney ailments, rickets, diarrhea, meningitis, typhus, and leprosy killed hundreds of thousands of Hawaiians.

Once Hawaii was charted, it became a regular port of call for sailors of all sorts. They were not, however, the only ones who cast their eyes on this archipelago. So did a group of devout Presbyterians and Congregationalists from New England. From several sources—ship captains, a popular book about a Hawaiian orphan who made his way to Connecticut and embraced Christianity, and a series of articles published in a Maine newspaper called the *Kennebec Journal*—they heard that this remote

land was full of heathens waiting to be converted. Between 1820 and 1850, nearly two hundred of them felt so moved by these accounts that they volunteered to spend the rest of their lives doing God's work in the Sandwich Islands, as Cook had named them.

Much of what these missionaries found appalled them. Hawaiian society, with its casual, communal nature and animist spirituality, could hardly have been more different from the stern, cold way of life to which these New Englanders were accustomed. Principles that the missionaries took to be cornerstones of civilization, such as ambition, thrift, individuality, and private property, were all but unknown to Hawaiians. They believed in the divinity of hills, trees, animals, wind, thunder, and even dewdrops. Some practiced incest, polygamy, infanticide, and *hanai*, a custom under which mothers would give their newborn infants to friends, relatives, or chiefs as a way of broadening their web of family relationships. Most were comfortable with nakedness and sexuality. To the dour missionaries, they seemed the most accursed sinners on earth. One found them "exceedingly ignorant; stupid to all that is lovely, grand and awful in the works of God; low, naked, filthy, vile and sensual; covered with every abomination, stained with blood and black with crime."

Armed with a degree of certitude that can come only from deep faith, missionaries worked tirelessly to impose their values on the people around them—or, as they would have put it, to save savages from damnation. "The streets, formerly so full of animation, are now deserted," reported a traveler who visited Honolulu in 1825. "Games of all kinds, even the most innocent, are prohibited. Singing is a punishable offense, and the consummate profligacy of attempting to dance would certainly find no mercy."

As the years passed, some missionaries lost their passion for enforcing this harsh moral code. So did many of their sons and grandsons, who were sent back to the United States for education and returned imbued with the restless spirit of their explosively growing mother country, where opportunity seemed to lie at the end of every wagon trail. Back in Hawaii, they looked around them and saw land that seemed to be crying out for cultivation. Several of them guessed that sugar, which the natives had been growing for centuries but never refined, would thrive there.

No one better symbolized the evolution of the haole community in

Hawaii than Amos Starr Cooke. Born in Danbury, Connecticut, Cooke arrived as a missionary in 1837 and served for several years as the notoriously strict director of a school for high-born Hawaiian children. The temptation of wealth eventually led him away from the religious path, and in 1851 he decided to try his hand at planting sugar. With another former missionary who had an eye for the main chance, Samuel Castle, he founded Castle & Cooke, which would become one of the world's largest sugar producers.

To begin large-scale farming, men like these needed land. Buying it was complicated, since native Hawaiians had little notion of private property or cash exchange. They had great difficulty understanding how a transaction—or anything else, for that matter—could deprive them of land.

In the late 1840s, Amos Starr Cooke helped persuade King Kamehameha III, a former student of his, to proclaim a land reform that pulled away one of the pillars of Hawaiian society. Under its provisions, large tracts of communal land were cut into small individual parcels, and most of the rest became the king's "royal domain." By establishing the principle of land ownership, this reform gave ambitious planters, including many missionaries and sons of missionaries, the legal right to buy as much land as they wished. Dozens quickly did so. Before long, the missionary and planter elites had blended into a single class.

One obstacle still lay between these planters and great wealth. The market for their sugar was in the United States, but to protect American growers, the United States levied prohibitive tariffs on imported sugar. In the 1850s, Hawaiian planters tried to resolve this problem by the simple expedient of making Hawaii part of the United States. Officials in Washington, however, had not yet developed a taste for overseas colonies, and brushed them aside. Later the planters tried to persuade American leaders to sign a free-trade agreement, or "reciprocity treaty," that would allow them to sell their sugar without tariffs in the United States, but that offer also fell on deaf ears.

Over the years that followed, a new generation of businessmen, politicians, and military planners in the United States became more interested in overseas trade. Hawaiian planters came up with an idea designed to appeal to their ambition: in exchange for a reciprocity treaty, they would grant the United States exclusive rights to maintain commercial and military bases in Hawaii. They arranged for the compliant monarch,

private property

King Kalakaua, to endorse this plan and travel to Washington to present it. President Ulysses S. Grant found it too tempting to pass up. During the summer of 1876, the treaty was duly drawn up, signed, and ratified. This was its historic provision:

> It is agreed, on the part of His Hawaiian Majesty, that so long as this treaty shall remain in force, he will not lease or otherwise dispose of or create any lien upon any port, harbor, or other territory in his dominions, or grant any special privileges or rights of use therein, to any other power, state, or government, nor make any treaty by which any other nation shall obtain the same privileges, relative to the admission of articles free of duty, hereby secured to the United States.

This treaty preserved the facade of Hawaiian independence, but in effect turned Hawaii into an American protectorate. The preeminent historian of the period, William Adam Russ, wrote that it "made Hawaii virtually a sphere of influence of the United States, but the sugar planters in the islands were pleased. . . . The political consequences of this reciprocity agreement cannot be overestimated. When Hawaii was finally annexed in 1898, practically everyone agreed that the first real step had been reciprocity, that is to say, economic annexation."

News of this deal infuriated many native Hawaiians. When their protests turned violent, the alarmed king felt it prudent to ask for American protection. This the United States provided, in the form of 150 marines, who became his personal and political bodyguards.

The sugar industry quickly began to boom. In the first five years after the treaty was signed, the number of plantations in Hawaii more than tripled. Sugar exports to the United States, which totaled 21 million pounds in 1876, soared to 114 million pounds in 1883 and 225 million pounds in 1890. Money rained down on the white planters who controlled Hawaii's economy.

Growing sugar is labor-intensive, but neither whites nor native Hawaiians were willing to work in the fields. After considering several alternatives, planters began importing Japanese and Chinese laborers, whom they called "coolies." They came by the thousands after the reciprocity treaty was signed. That strengthened the planters' opposition to democracy, since universal suffrage would most likely have produced a government dominated by nonwhites.

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THE RECIPROCITY TREATY WAS FOR A TERM OF EIGHT YEARS, AND WHEN IT expired, sugar growers from Louisiana tried to block its renewal. This greatly alarmed Hawaiian planters, whose fortunes depended on it. They arranged for King Kalakaua, who had fallen almost completely under their influence, to make a further concession. The renewed treaty included a clause giving the United States control over Pearl Harbor, on the island of Oahu, the finest natural port in the northern Pacific.

A few years later, King Kalakaua approved a constitution that secured the planters' power. It vested most authority in cabinet ministers, prohibited the monarch from dismissing any minister without the legislature's approval, and set wealth and property qualifications for election to the legislature. Called the "bayonet constitution" because it was imposed with the implied threat of armed force, it also gave all Americans and Europeans, even noncitizens, the right to vote but denied that right to Asian laborers. Its author was Lorrin Thurston, and after Kalakaua reluctantly accepted it, planters told him he also had to accept Thurston as his interior minister.

Kalakaua's inability to resist these impositions showed how fully the Hawaiian monarchy had come under white control. Whites reached this position not overnight, but through a steady series of steps. William Adam Russ wrote that they "slowly and imperceptibly wormed their way, year by year, into the King's favor until they were the power behind the throne. Controlling the business and wealth of the islands, they became the dominant minority amongst a people who only a few years before had welcomed them as visitors."

This system brought more than a decade of great prosperity to Hawaii's sugar planters, but two blows suddenly upset it. The first came in 1890, when Congress enacted the McKinley Tariff, which allowed sugar from all countries to enter the United States duty-free and compensated domestic producers with a "bounty" of two cents per pound. This wiped away the protected regime under which Hawaiian planters had thrived, and plunged them into what one of their leaders called "the depths of despair." Within two years, the value of their sugar exports plummeted from $13 million to $8 million.

As if that were not enough, the planters' puppet monarch, Kalakaua, died in 1891, leaving his independent-minded sister, Liliuokalani, to

succeed him. The new queen had attended a missionary school and embraced Christianity but never lost touch with her native heritage. When her brother turned Pearl Harbor over to the Americans in 1887, she wrote in her diary that it was "a day of infamy in Hawaiian history." Later that year, while she was in London at the jubilee celebrating Queen Victoria's fiftieth year on the throne, she received news of the "bayonet constitution" and wrote that it constituted "a revolutionary movement inaugurated by those of foreign blood, or American blood."

Liliuokalani was fifty-two years old when the chief justice of Hawaii's Supreme Court, Albert Judd, administered the oath that made her queen on January 29, 1891. After the ceremony, Judd took her aside and offered a piece of private advice. "Should any members of your cabinet propose anything to you," he counseled, "say yes." Had she heeded this warning, had she accepted the role of a figurehead and allowed the haole to continue running Hawaii, she might never have been overthrown.

Some of the new queen's enemies were contemptible quick-buck profiteers without the slightest interest in the land or the people around them. Others, however, had lived on the islands for years or had been born there. Some loved Hawaii and considered themselves true patriots. Lorrin Thurston was one of these.

All four of Thurston's grandparents had come to Hawaii as missionaries. He attended schools—one of which expelled him as an "incorrigible" rebel—that also had Hawaiian students. Unlike some of his haole friends, he became fluent in the Hawaiian language and even assumed a Hawaiian name, Kakina, that he used in signing letters and documents throughout his life. While still a teenager he immersed himself in politics, skipping school one day in 1874 to watch the bitterly contested election of King Kalakaua, which erupted into rioting. For the rest of his life, he was drawn to the center of great events.

Thurston never graduated from high school but found work as a law clerk and as a supervisor and bookkeeper at Wailuku Sugar Company. With the money he earned, he put himself through Columbia University Law School, in New York, and then returned to Honolulu to practice law in partnership with his friend William Smith. Soon he became a leader in the fight to undermine the Hawaiian monarchy. Imbued as he was with the idea that only whites could rule the islands efficiently, he was able to consider this a form of patriotism.

At the beginning of 1892, Thurston founded the Annexation Club,

with the declared goal of bringing Hawaii into the United States. At its first meeting, he was chosen as its leader. Soon afterward, he persuaded the club to send him to Washington to drum up support for its cause.

Thurston carried a letter of introduction from John L. Stevens, the American minister in Honolulu. He presented his case for annexation so convincingly to Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Tracy that Tracy took him to the White House to meet President Benjamin Harrison.

> Mr. Tracy told me to wait in an outer room while he spoke with the President. After about a half-hour, the secretary re-appeared and beckoned me to accompany him outdoors. Then he spoke: "I have explained fully to the President what you have said to me, and have this to say to you: the President does not think he should see you, but he authorizes me to say that, if conditions in Hawaii compel you people to act as you have indicated, and you come to Washington with an annexation proposition, you will find an extremely sympathetic administration here." That was all I wanted to know.

Thurston brought home the news his fellow conspirators most wished to hear: the United States was on their side. This was no surprise to Stevens. Before leaving Washington to assume his post, he had discussed the annexation question at length with Secretary of State James G. Blaine, and knew him to be an ardent supporter. The American naval commander at Honolulu, Felix McCurley, promised him that the navy would "fully cooperate and sustain him in any action he may take." These assurances left him with no doubt that both the State Department and the navy wished him to do whatever was necessary to overthrow Hawaii's monarchy.

A few months after Thurston returned to Honolulu, he received an extraordinary letter from the representative he had left behind in Washington, a well-connected court clerk named Archibald Hopkins. It said the Harrison administration wished to offer the queen a bribe. "I am authorized to inform you," the letter said, "that the United States Government will pay to Queen Liliuokalani and those connected with her, the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, for the assignment to the United States of the Sovereignty of Hawaii." Thurston replied that there was unfortunately "no probability" of the queen's accepting the offer, since she was "in an independent frame of mind . . . of a stubborn headstrong disposition, jealous of royal prerogatives and desirous

of extending rather than giving up any of the power and privileges which she now possesses."

Thurston and his comrades wished above all for good government, which to them meant rule by the white minority. The census of 1890 found that there were 40,612 native Hawaiians on the archipelago; 27,391 Chinese and Japanese laborers; and a grand total of just 6,220 Americans, Britons, Germans, French, Norwegians, and Hawaiian-born whites. Given these numbers, it was natural that the haole would want nothing to do with democracy. For decades they had effectively controlled the islands, and by imposing the "bayonet constitution," they had formalized their power. They had no desire to surrender it by adopting a system under which each resident of the islands would have an equal vote.

QUEEN LILIUOKALANI SPENT THE MORNING OF JANUARY 14, 1893, PRESIDING over an elaborate ceremony that marked the end of the annual legislative session. She entered the assembly hall wearing a lavender silk gown and a diamond coronet, attended by ministers, chamberlains, court ladies, and a retinue of guards carrying traditional feather-topped poles called *kahili*. With what one witness called "great dignity," she read her speech thanking the legislators for their work and bidding them farewell.

By the time the queen returned to Iolani Palace, the seat of Hawaiian royalty, something unusual was happening there. Several dozen formally dressed Hawaiians, members of a group called the Hawaiian Patriotic Association, had assembled in a show of support the queen had evidently orchestrated. She received them in her Throne Room. One held a copy of the new constitution curbing haole power and begged her to promulgate it. With a flourish she agreed, and then withdrew to an adjoining room to which she had summoned her cabinet.

The moment Lorrin Thurston learned that the queen was trying to proclaim a new constitution, he swung into action. By early afternoon he and a group of comrades had corralled her four cabinet ministers, who he found "in a blue funk as to their course." His advice to them was as radical as it was subversive: they should declare the queen in rebellion, proclaim her throne vacant, and turn power over to what he liked to call "the intelligent part of the community."

It was a daring plan, but how could the rebels prevent native Hawaiians, including the queen's own Household Guards, from rising up to

defend their monarch? The answer lay offshore. Resting at anchor near Pearl Harbor was the *Boston*, a 3,000-ton cruiser that was one of the most modern warships in United States Navy. She cut an imposing figure, with two towering masts, two smokestacks, a battery of cannon on each side, and the American flag flying from her bow. Nearly two hundred sailors and marines were aboard. If the American minister called them to shore, they would make an ideal protection force for the new regime.

Late that afternoon, Thurston summoned several dozen comrades to the Fort Street law office of William Smith, his closest friend and collaborator. There he proposed that his new protégé Henry Cooper, a recent arrival from Indiana, be empowered to name a "Committee of Safety" that would "devise ways and means of dealing with the situation." All agreed. Cooper picked thirteen men from the crowd, including himself and Thurston. All were active members of the Annexation Club. Nine were American by birth or ancestry. No native Hawaiian was among them.

Thurston's book of memoirs contains a foldout page with individual photos of each member of the Committee of Safety. They look to have been an impressive group. Each one is formally dressed. Most appear young (Thurston himself was thirty-five). All have whiskers, each set designed differently, from Smith's elegant handlebar mustache to Thurston's neatly cropped black beard and Cooper's longer, fuller one. None is smiling. They might have been the chamber of commerce in a small American city, or a delegation from the mainland visiting Hawaii on an inspection tour.

After Cooper finished naming the Committee of Safety, he asked the rest of the crowd to leave so that the group could hold its first meeting. As soon as the door was closed, Thurston spoke. "I move that it is the sense of this meeting that the solution of the present situation is annexation to the United States," he said simply. His motion was adopted without dissent.

The revolutionaries were eager for confrontation, but the queen, their target, proved less so. While Thurston was marshaling his forces, she was at the palace, listening to arguments that her proposed constitution was too radical. Finally she yielded. At mid-afternoon she emerged from the cabinet room and faced her expectant supporters.

"I was ready, and expected to proclaim a new constitution today," she told them from a balcony. "But behold, I have met with obstacles

that prevented it. Return to your homes peaceably and quietly. . . . I am obliged to postpone the granting of a new constitution for a few days."

Rather than placating the revolutionaries, this statement further inflamed them. By suggesting that she would resume her campaign for a new constitution in "a few days," or even "sometime," as the Hawaiian phrase she used could also have been translated, the queen made clear that she had not given up her effort to restore native Hawaiian political power. As long as she was on her throne, the haole would be insecure.

That evening Thurston invited the men he trusted most to his wood-frame home for what he called "a sub-meeting." In all there were six, including William Castle, son of the missionary-turned-planter Samuel Castle and the country's largest landowner. All knew that troops aboard the *Boston* held the key to their victory. They also knew that Stevens, who had the power to bring those troops ashore at any moment, strongly supported their cause. Now, they decided, was the time to call upon him. This would be the call that sealed Hawaii's fate.

When the "sub-meeting" broke up, five of the six guests took their leave and walked back to their homes. Thurston's friend and coconspirator William Smith stayed behind. After a short private discussion, the two of them decided that despite the late hour, they should visit Stevens immediately, tell him of their plans, and appeal for his decisive help.

Stevens had just returned from a ten-day cruise aboard the *Boston* and must have been surprised to hear a knock on his door that night. He knew the two men and their business, though, and welcomed them. According to the later report of a presidential commission, "They disclosed to him all their plans."

> They feared arrest and punishment. He promised them protection. They needed the troops on shore to overawe the queen's supporters and the Government. This he agreed to, and did furnish. They had few arms and no trained soldiers. They did not mean to fight. It was arranged between them and the American Minister that the proclamation dethroning the queen and organizing a provisional government should be read from the Government building, and he would follow it with speedy recognition. All this was to be done with American troops, provided with small arms and artillery, across a narrow street within a stone's throw.

On the next morning, Sunday, January 15, Thurston rose at dawn. He still hoped to bring the queen's cabinet ministers into his plot, and

at six-thirty he met with the two he considered most favorable, Interior Minister John Colburn and Attorney General Arthur Peterson. He told them that he and his comrades had decided they could not "sit over a volcano" indefinitely and were now determined to overthrow the queen. Would these two eminent gentlemen join the rebellion?

Both were taken aback and said they would need time to consider such a bold offer. Thurston left unhappily, warning the men not to tell the other two ministers what he had revealed about his plans. They did so anyway.

From that unpleasant meeting, Thurston proceeded to William Castle's two-story clapboard manse, where the Committee of Safety was waiting. He reported his failure to bring cabinet ministers into the plot but said he was still certain of success. The revolution, he told his comrades, must be proclaimed at a public meeting the next day. They agreed, and then decided to take care of one formality. Once the queen was overthrown, Hawaii would need a temporary leader to steer it into the United States. Thurston, the tireless incendiary who had orchestrated this revolution, was the obvious choice.

At that moment, Thurston made a characteristically shrewd decision. His long and virulent campaign against the monarchy had made him perhaps the most hated man in Hawaii. He was sharply opinionated, hot-tempered, and highly undiplomatic, and he knew it. So he thanked his friends for their nomination but said he should not accept it because he was "too radical" and had "too many business arrangements." He would look for someone better.

Excitement crackled through Hawaii's haole community on Monday morning. The Committee of Safety gathered at Castle's home to complete plans for that afternoon's mass meeting. It was in the midst of its work when, to everyone's surprise, Charles Wilson, the queen's police chief and supposed paramour, suddenly appeared at the door. He called Thurston outside.

"I know what you fellows are up to, and I want you to quit and go home," he said. Thurston shook his head.

"We are not going home, Charlie," he replied. "Things have advanced too far."

Wilson said he could personally guarantee that the queen would never again proclaim a new constitution, "even if I have to lock her up in a room to keep her from doing it." Thurston remained unmoved.

"It's no use, Charlie," he said. "We will not take any further chances."

Wilson curtly told Thurston that he and the rest should consider themselves warned. Then he withdrew, walked briskly to the palace, and burst into the cabinet room. He bluntly told the ministers that they had only one hope of saving their government and the monarchy. They must order the immediate arrest of every conspirator.

That was too drastic a step for the four ministers, whose loyalty was divided, to say the least. They feared the wrath of Stevens and the United States. Wilson cursed them as "damned cowards," but they were already sensing how this drama would end.

Thurston and the other conspirators had taken Wilson's warning seriously. Moments after he left, they decided it was time to call in American troops. They wrote an appeal to Stevens that was less than eloquent but compelling nonetheless.

> We the undersigned, citizens and residents of Honolulu, respectfully represent that, in view of the recent public events in this Kingdom, culminating in the revolutionary acts of Queen Liliuokalani on Saturday last, the public safety is menaced and lives and property are in peril, and we appeal to you and the United States forces at your command for assistance.
>
> The Queen, with the aid of armed forces, and accompanied by threats of violence and bloodshed from those with whom she was acting, attempted to proclaim a new constitution; and while prevented for the time being from accomplishing her object, declared publicly that she would only defer her action.
>
> This conduct and action was upon an occasion and under circumstances which have created general alarm and terror. We are unable to protect ourselves without aid, and therefore pray for the protection of the United States forces.

Thirteen men, the ones who composed the Committee of Safety, signed this appeal. All were white, and all but two owned stock in sugar plantations or other enterprises in the country. Among them were some of Hawaii's richest men, including William Castle and the shipping magnate William Wilder.

After dispatching their appeal to Stevens, the insurgents went their separate ways, agreeing to meet after lunch at the Honolulu armory, where their mass meeting was to be held. On the streets they saw copies of an official proclamation that had been posted around town. It was a

pledge from the queen that, in the future, she would seek to change the constitution "only by methods provided in the constitution itself."

This concession came too late to placate the more than one thousand people who converged on the armory at two o'clock that afternoon. Nearly all were from what one historian called the "male white foreign element," and none were in the mood for compromise. Wilder ran the meeting, and Henry Baldwin, one of Hawaii's most powerful sugar barons, was among the speakers.

To no one's surprise, Thurston was the dominant figure at this rally. As a boisterous audience listened, he read a resolution declaring that the queen had acted "illegally and unconstitutionally" by pursuing policies that were "revolutionary and treasonable in character." It concluded by authorizing the Committee of Safety to "devise such ways and means as may be necessary to secure the permanent maintenance of law and order and the protection of life, liberty and property in Hawaii."

"I say, gentlemen, that now and here is the time to act!" Thurston thundered, and the crowd erupted in cheers. "The man who has not the spirit to rise after the menace to our liberties has no right to keep them. Has the tropical sun cooled and thinned our blood, or have we flowing in our veins the warm, rich blood which makes men love liberty and die for it? I move the adoption of the resolution!"

All of that afternoon's speakers denounced the queen for her attempt to impose a new constitution. None, however, called for her overthrow. Thurston later explained that he did not consider that necessary, since "there was a unanimous understanding that dethronement and abrogation were intended." He also had to worry that if he and his friends openly called for insurrection, even the pusillanimous cabinet might be moved to order their arrest. Insurrection was what he was planning, though, and the crowd's unanimous adoption of his resolution steeled his resolve.

That mass meeting was not the only one held in Honolulu on the afternoon of January 16. As it was under way, several hundred supporters of the queen gathered at nearby Palace Square for a rally of their own. Few had any idea of how advanced the antiroyalist plot was. Their speeches were cautious and for the most part polite, although one speaker did declare, "Any man that would speak against a woman, especially a queen, is an animal and a fit companion for a hog."

The queen's supporters dispersed after their Palace Square rally, but

the rebels who had met at the armory did not rest. At four o'clock, the thirteen members of the Committee of Safety gathered at Smith's home to plot their next move. After some discussion, they decided they needed at least one more day to organize themselves. This meant Stevens would have to delay landing troops. Thurston and Smith went immediately to the American legation to ask him to do so. To their surprise, he refused.

"Gentlemen," he told them, "the troops of the *Boston* land this afternoon at five o'clock, whether you are ready or not."

Stevens had much in common with Thurston and the other revolutionaries whose victory he was about to secure. He was born in Maine in 1820, the same year the first group of missionaries arrived in Hawaii, and as a young man had been a preacher. Later he struck up a friendship with Blaine, then an ambitious local politician and editor of the *Kennebec Journal*. Blaine was an ardent supporter of Hawaiian annexation, and wrote an editorial urging it in the first issue of the *Journal* that he edited. Stevens embraced the cause with equal fervor.

In the years after the Civil War, Blaine began making his mark in politics. He was elected to Congress, became Speaker of the House, and in 1884 was the Republican candidate for president, losing to Grover Cleveland. Five years later, President Benjamin Harrison named him secretary of state. One of Blaine's first acts was to appoint Stevens as minister to Hawaii.

The chain of command for the Hawaiian revolution was thus fixed. Secretary of State Blaine gave the go-ahead. He sent Stevens to Honolulu to make the necessary arrangements. Once there, Stevens found Thurston ready to act. Together they planned and carried out the rebellion.

On the afternoon of January 16, 1893, Stevens sat down at his desk and wrote a brief, fateful note to Captain Gilbert Wiltse, the extravagantly mustachioed commander of the *Boston*. Its single sentence is a dry classic of diplomatic mendacity, full of motifs that Americans would hear often in the century to come.

> In view of the existing critical circumstances in Honolulu, indicating an inadequate legal force, I request you to land marines and sailors from the ship under your command for the protection of the United States legation and the United States consulate, and to secure the safety of American life and property.

At five o'clock that evening, 162 American marines and sailors landed at a pier at the foot of Nuuana Avenue in Honolulu. They comprised an artillery company, a company of marines, and two companies of infantrymen. Each soldier had a rifle slung around his neck and wore an ammunition belt with sixty extra cartridges. The artillerymen hauled Gatling guns and small cannon.

Thurston watched from the pier as the soldiers disembarked and followed them for several blocks. On his way back to his office, he ran into a plantation manager named W. H. Rickard, who held a seat in the legislature and strongly supported the queen. Rickard was in a rage.

"Damn you, Thurston!" he shouted, shaking his fist. "You did this!"

"Did what?"

"Had these troops landed!"

"You credit me with considerable influence, to be able to direct the United States troops," Thurston replied. "I had no more to do with their coming ashore than you did, and I have no more idea of what they are going to do than you have."

Thurston was too modest. He and Stevens were working closely together. They were not in constant touch during those January days and did not tell each other of their hour-by-hour plans, but that was not necessary. Each understood what the other was doing and gave the other crucial support. Neither could have carried out the revolution alone. Their partnership made it possible.

Hawaiians who peered from behind doors or stopped in their tracks to stare as American soldiers marched through the sandy streets that day must have been baffled. Few had ever seen a Western-style military formation, and even fewer had any idea why the soldiers had landed. Only when they saw members of the Committee of Safety cheering the advancing force did most of them realize that it was hostile to the monarchy. The cabinet gathered for an emergency meeting, and soon afterward Foreign Minister Samuel Parker sent a plaintive appeal to Stevens.

> As the situation is one that does not call for interference on the part of the U.S. Government, my colleagues and myself would most respectfully request of Your Excellency the authority upon which this action was taken. I would also add that any protection that might have been considered necessary for the American Legation or for American interests in this city would have been cheerfully furnished by Her Majesty's Government.

Stevens did not reply to this message. He was out surveying possible campsites for the American soldiers, finally settling on a building called Arion Hall. This would not have been a good place from which to guard Americans, since few lived or worked nearby. It had, however, the convenient asset of being next to Government House and within easy cannon range of Iolani Palace.

As the soldiers set up camp, the Committee of Safety was celebrating at the home of one of its members, the Tasmanian-born Henry Waterhouse. This was the committee's moment of triumph, and every member realized it. The landing of American troops guaranteed their victory. All that was needed to complete the revolutionary charade was for them to proclaim a new government and for Stevens to recognize it. American soldiers would discourage any resistance from the queen or her partisans.

This meeting at Waterhouse's home was remarkable for two reasons. First, by odd coincidence, three of the most important conspirators—the impassioned lawyer Thurston, the sugar baron Castle, and the shipping magnate Wilder—had taken ill and were unable to attend. Second, and perhaps not unrelated, this meeting marked the emergence of the man who would dominate Hawaii for the next period of its history. He was Sanford Dole, a grandson of missionaries, Williams College graduate, and respected Supreme Court judge. Several years later, Dole would help his cousin's son, James, to begin building the fruit company that bears their family name.

Dole

Although Dole was not at Waterhouse's home that evening and was not a member of the Annexation Club, he had attended Thurston's "submeeting" two nights earlier, so he knew what was afoot. When Committee of Safety members began musing about whom they should choose to run Hawaii after their revolution, someone mentioned his name. This "met with the immediate approval of the entire group," one participant later said. An emissary went to fetch the white-bearded jurist.

> Mrs. Dole and I were sitting in our parlor when a man who lives in Kaneohe came over from Mr. Waterhouse's and said they wanted me to head this affair. I said "No." I said "Why will not Thurston take it?" I was told he was sick abed from having worked day and night on this matter since it was initiated. I agreed to go over. . . .
>
> A messenger was sent over to Minister Stevens's house to inquire if it was correct that he was in sympathy with us—and he was, I gathered.

> I came home to sleep over the offer, but my sleep was fitful and greatly disturbed. I would sleep and then wake up with this matter on my mind, and passed a very unpleasant night.

Early the next morning, Tuesday, January 17, Dole called on the bedridden Thurston. They talked for a few minutes about Hawaii's future. Dole said he had not yet decided whether to accept leadership of the new government. He did, however, agree to deliver a letter that Thurston had written to Stevens. It informed Stevens that the new government would be proclaimed that afternoon, and asked that he recognize it promptly.

After returning home, Dole sat alone for a long time, gazing from his veranda over the palm trees and the warm ocean beyond. Finally he decided to accept the provisional presidency of a new Republic of Hawaii. He regarded it, he later wrote, as "a position I would fill possibly for a few months" while arrangements were made for Hawaii's annexation to the United States.

Dole's first act as part of the rebellion was to visit its patron. He handed Stevens the letter Thurston had given him. Stevens read it, then looked up and said to Dole, "I think you have a great opportunity."

From the American legation, Dole proceeded to Smith's law office, where the conspirators were gathered. He told them he was ready to lead their incoming government, and they cheered him for it. With his ingrained sense of propriety, he then went to Government House and wrote out his resignation from the Supreme Court. Only after finishing did he realize that there was no longer any authority to whom he could submit it.

The queen's police chief, Charles Wilson, had not yet reconciled himself to the death of the monarchy. He ordered the Household Guards to prepare for action, and for a short while it seemed possible that combat might break out. Cabinet ministers had at their disposal about 550 soldiers and police officers, most of them armed with rifles, and fourteen artillery pieces. Whether to send them into hostile action was a decision none of them had ever imagined making. They were desperate for someone to tell them what to do. With no one else to consult, they summoned the handful of foreign ambassadors resident in Honolulu. All turned up except Stevens, who pleaded illness. All counseled against resistance.

That morning, the revolution's only drops of blood were shed. One of the conspirators, John Good, had spent several hours collecting

weapons and ammunition. As he drove his heavily laden wagon past the corner of Fort and King Streets, a police officer tried to stop him. He pulled out his pistol and fired, wounding the officer in his shoulder, and then proceeded on his way.

In a last-minute effort to fend off the inevitable, the queen ordered her entire cabinet to ride immediately to see Stevens. He agreed to receive only one of the four ministers, Attorney General Peterson, who told him that the cabinet was still the official government of Hawaii. Stevens was not impressed. He sent Peterson off with a warning that if the "insurgents were attacked or arrested by the queen's forces, the United States troops would intervene."

That made unmistakably clear that American soldiers had landed not to preserve peace but to assure a rebel victory. It sealed the monarchy's doom. All that remained was to make the act official, and shortly after two o'clock that afternoon, the rebels did so. They assembled in front of Government House, the official seat of political power in Hawaii, and one of them, Henry Cooper, who had arrived on the islands barely two years before, stepped forward. In his hand he held a proclamation that Thurston had dictated from his sickbed that morning. As about sixty American soldiers stood nearby, he read it to a small crowd.

Its essence came first: "The Hawaiian monarchical system of government is hereby abrogated." Other clauses established a provisional government "to exist until terms of union with the United States of America have been negotiated and agreed upon"; named Sanford Dole to head it; and decreed that all functionaries of the old government could keep their jobs except six: Wilson, the four cabinet ministers, and Queen Liliuokalani.

The few dozen spectators raised a cheer. When it subsided, Dole and the three men who constituted his new "executive council" walked into Government House. At the suite where cabinet ministers usually worked, they found only a few clerks. The ministers had adjourned to the nearby police station and were busily preparing yet another appeal to Stevens. At this late moment, they still hoped their executioner might suddenly come to their rescue. Short of ordering armed resistance, there was nothing else they could do.

"Certain treasonable persons at present occupy the Government building in Honolulu," the ministers wrote to Stevens in what turned out to be their last piece of official correspondence. "Her Majesty's cabinet asks respectfully, has your country recognized said Provisional

Government, and if not, Her Majesty's Government under the above existing circumstances respectfully requests the assistance of your Government in preserving the peace of the country."

As cabinet ministers were composing this letter, Dole and his comrades were already working at Government House, busily dispatching commissions, letters, and proclamations. American troops stood on guard outside. Then, at around four-thirty, a messenger arrived with the document that certified the conspirators' triumph. It was a one-sentence proclamation from Stevens:

> A Provisional Government having been duly constituted in the place of the recent Government of Queen Liliuokalani, and said Provisional Government being in possession of the Government Building, the Archives and the Treasury and is in control of the capital of the Hawaiian Islands, I hereby recognize said Provisional Government as the *de facto* Government of the Hawaiian Islands.

Neither the queen nor her cabinet had yet yielded or even been asked to do so. One of the conspirators, Samuel Damon, a former adviser to the queen who was still on good terms with her, decided he should be the one to make the demand. He walked the short distance to the police station, where he found cabinet ministers arguing about what to do next. For several minutes they besieged him with protests. He replied by telling them very simply what had happened and what it meant. The United States had recognized the new regime; the old one must surrender.

Cabinet ministers may have felt at least fleeting pangs of anguish, but with an American gunboat lying in the harbor and 162 American soldiers ashore, they knew the day was lost. They agreed to accompany Damon to break the news to the queen. "It was pressed upon her by the ministers and other persons at that conference that it was useless for her to make any contest, because it was one with the United States," one chronicler later wrote. She dismissed the delegation, took up her pen, and wrote an astute, carefully worded statement. It was a surrender but not an abdication, and made clear that she was stepping down only under American pressure.

> I, Liliuokalani, by the Grace of God under the Constitution of the Kingdom, Queen, do hereby solemnly protest against any and all acts done against myself and the constitutional Government of the Hawaiian Kingdom by

> certain persons claiming to have established a provisional government of and for this Kingdom.
>
> That I yield to the superior force of the United States of America, whose minister plenipotentiary, John L. Stevens, has caused the United States troops to land at Honolulu and declared that he would support the said provisional government.
>
> Now, to avoid any collision of armed forces and perhaps the loss of life, I do under this protest, and impelled by said force, yield my authority until such time as the Government of the United States shall, upon the facts being presented to it, undo the action of its representatives and reinstate me in the authority which I claim as the constitutional sovereign of the Hawaiian Islands.

After signing this document, the queen ordered her cabinet ministers to give up the police station and the military barracks. The Committee of Safety took possession of them without incident. Dole sent a letter to Stevens expressing his "deep appreciation" for the quick recognition of his government.

Thurston overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy with a core group of fewer than thirty men. They may have thought they made the Hawaiian revolution, and in a sense they did. Without the presence of Stevens or another like-minded American minister, however, they might never have even attempted it. A different kind of minister would have reprimanded the rebels in Hawaii rather than offer them military support. That would have rendered their enterprise all but hopeless.

Although Stevens was an unabashed partisan, he was no rogue agent. He had been sent to Hawaii to promote annexation, and the men who sent him, President Harrison and Secretary of State Blaine, knew precisely what that must entail. It was true, as his critics would later claim, that Stevens acted without explicit orders from Washington. He certainly overstepped his authority when he brought troops ashore, especially since he knew that the "general alarm and terror" of which the Committee of Safety had complained was a fiction. Still, he was doing what the president and the secretary of state wanted. He used his power and theirs to depose the Hawaiian monarchy. That made him the first American to direct the overthrow of a foreign government.

2

Bound for Goo-Goo Land

The euphoria that gripped Cubans in the last days of 1898 was almost beyond imagination. Their country had been racked by rebellion for thirty years, the last few filled with terrible suffering. That summer, as their uprising reached a crescendo, American troops had arrived to help them deliver the death blow that ended three centuries of Spanish rule. Now, with the victory finally won, Cuban patriots and their American comrades were preparing for the biggest party in the island's history.

Leaders of "revolutionary patriotic committees" in Havana planned a full week of festivities, to begin on New Year's Day. There would be grand balls, boat races, fireworks, public speeches, and a gala dinner in honor of the victorious rebel commanders. Thousands of Cuban soldiers would march through the streets to receive the cheers of a grateful nation.

Just as the celebration was to begin, however, the newly named American military governor of Cuba, General John Brooke, made a stunning announcement. He forbade the entire program. Not only would there be no parade of Cuban soldiers, but any who tried to enter Havana would be turned back. Furthermore, the general declared, the United States did not recognize the rebel army and wished it to disband.

This abrupt turnaround outraged Cuban patriots, especially the thousands who had fought so long and tenaciously for independence. The United States snatched their great prize, independence, away from them at the last moment. As years passed, they and their descendants would watch in mounting frustration as their new overlord used various means, including the imposition of tyrants, to keep control of Cuba.

Cubans were among the first people to feel the effect of the profound changes that reshaped the American psyche at the end of the nineteenth