THE HAWAIIAN JOURNAL OF HISTORY

Devoted to the history of Hawaii, Polynesia and the Pacific area

VOLUME IV 1970

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ON THE COVER: This cut of Honolulu House is the work of Paul Emmert, done in 1853 as part of his ambitious effort (six large lithographic plates) to portray the city and its principal buildings. Honolulu Hale, constructed of coral and completed in 1836, was the Hawaiian Kingdom’s first executive building at the formation of a constitutional government. Gorham D. Gilman’s journal describes it as it was in 1848. After a varied career of some 80 years, Honolulu Hale was sold to wreckers for $20 and demolished in 1917.
Jean Charlot

Père Patrick O'Reilly, a Frenchman despite the name, editor of the *Journal des Océanistes*, sent me the broadside in the Hawaiian language illustrated in this article. Composed originally by Admiral de Tromelin, on board his flagship, *La Poursuivante*, it was translated into English and Hawaiian, most probably by Bishop Louis Maigret, Apostolic Vicar for the Sandwich Islands. It was printed in its present form on the presses of his Mission. The Hawaiian broadside seems to be unique, but a few copies exist of the English version. It is this contemporary text that I quote in the following article.1

On a Sunday morning, August 26, 1849, this broadside was posted extensively—against the laws of the Kingdom—on the walls of Honolulu. The circumstances were tense. Offshore, French warships were poised menacingly. On the 25th, French marines had landed and occupied the Fort. They were now busy dismantling it and spiking its guns. Huddled inside the Palace, the king and cabinet expected worse to come.

Throughout the nineteenth century, relations between France and Hawaii hinged on two matters, indeed dissimilar, yet indissolubly linked. Jealous of its traditional title of “eldest daughter of the Church”, France upheld with filial care the spread and preservation of Catholic missions. As a wine-grower and a wine-merchant, France searched for expanding markets. Both aims were at odds with those of the Protestant missionaries, first to evangelize Hawaii, and who dreamt of an archipelago bone-dry.

On February 1, 1848, the newly appointed French Consul—William Patrick Dillon, alias Guillaume Patrice Dillon—landed from the corvette *La Sarcelle*. He had in his valise wise instructions from the Paris Ministry, “Avoid in your conduct any show of pugnaciousness [esprit de lutte]. It is befitting that moderation be the one to consolidate the fruits of firmness”.2

The preceding year, France had concluded with Hawaii a treaty that guaranteed the sovereignty of the small kingdom. As a personal gift to Kamehameha III, the French King, Louis-Philippe, entrusted to the new consul a portrait of himself. It was an official version, wherein curtains and carpet,

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medals and galloons, and a rich frame, vied victoriously with the monarch’s placid features for the attention of the spectator.

On February 15, out of the French Consulate came a parade: first the band, mostly brass, furnished by the French corvette; then the French flag; then the PORTRAIT, “veiled in flags, borne by twelve sailors and guarded by a body of marines”; followed by the ladies, the Catholic bishop, Mgr. Maigret, and his clergy, the pomp tapered off into a motley group of French residents.

The King’s Chamberlain awaited the paraders on the steps of the Palace, and ushered them in to the presence of the King. Speeches there were, and “Court News” feelingly tells how “His Majesty took Mr. Dillon’s hand with much emotion”.

Ten days later, in far-off France, Louis-Phillipe, violently deposed, slunk into an English exile. Dillon stuck to his post, switching allegiance to the new head of state, Prince-President Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte. Soon after that, he joined other consuls in an increasingly bitter feud with Kamehameha’s ministers.

Dillon’s style could rise to a singularly undiplomatic boil. What of the Hawaiian Kingdom? “Two-thirds of the time, my inclination is only to laugh at the fuss that is made about this Lilliputian Kingdom.” What of Kamehameha III? “A negro King whose life is mostly wasted in orgies with stable-grooms [palefreniers].” The King’s advisers were “vulgar plotters who lack in equal degree skill and morality.”

Dillon’s blackest bête noire was Robert Crichton Wyllie, Hawaii’s brilliant Minister of Foreign Affairs. At first, Dillon admitted that he was, “although somewhat of a Buffoon, a good fellow at bottom.” This restrained praise soon gave way to a string of accusations that Wyllie listed with dry Scotch humor. He was accused by Dillon “of being an adventurer; . . . of having been the bore of the Reform Club, London; of culling from private letters; of clumsy vituperation; . . . of being a secret agent of England; of being, so long as he is in office, a permanent insult to France; . . . of private malevolence; of magnifying little things into Monsters; . . . of being the SCOURGE of the Sandwich Islands; . . . of Vanity; of personal Vindictiveness; . . . of a wish that the King should have an English butler; of a wish that the King should have an English groom; of a wish that the queen should have an English femme de chambre.”

Disagreements on official topics hardly justify the acrimony. More personal a factor, and less sound, was Dillon’s insistence that French be recognized as Hawaii’s langue diplomatique. Other non-English-speaking countries accepted English as Hawaii’s de facto medium of communication with the outside world. Dillon used French exclusively when dealing with Hawaiian officials, even in petty matters. Thus he commanded a sure means of irritating Wyllie, one of the two Cabinet members with a working knowledge of French. It ruined the Minister’s weekends—passed at his lovely estate, Rosebank, in Nuuanu Valley—endlessly and painfully to translate the sneering messages of his foe.
The opposition paper, *The Sandwich Islands News*, ran outspoken satires of King and Cabinet. They were anonymous, or signed with obvious nomonde-plume. To unmask the authors, the Minister of Finance, Dr. Judd, purloined by stealth the manuscripts, and took a guess at the various handwritings. All three consuls—of England, France, and the United States—came under suspicion. They parried by asking that Judd be arrested for theft. The Hawaiian Courts declined to act.

On December 13, 1848, the three Consuls, jointly and officially, urged the King to dismiss Judd from his post. Dillon added on his own that France would also gratefully endorse the demotion of Wyllie. As de Tromelin's broadside later phrased it:

"TA POE I HOOLEIA MAMUA NO TA LATOU HANA PAEVAEVA ANA ME TE TUMUOLE, E NA KANITELE O NA ANA NUI O FARANI, O AMERIKA HUI PUUA, A ME BERITANIA, I TA LA 13 O DEC. 1848, IMUA O TE 'LII NO." Translated:

"These people against whose arbitrary and unconstitutional conduct the Representatives of the great Powers, France, the United States and Great Britain, had already protested in a collective address, on the 13 Dec. 1848, thereby binding their respective Governments."

Seven times in fourteen months did Dillon beg for a French warship to come and silence those he called his calumniators. Examples:

November 5, 1848. Dillon to French Foreign Office:

"I am convinced that it will prove sufficient to display a good French corvette for three days at Honolulu to force concessions from this devious and hypocritical Government."

January 8, 1849: "I sent to Tahiti my chancellor, Mr. Hardy, his mission being to inform Governor Lavaud . . . of the gravity of the situation and ask that a ship be sent to Honolulu to restrain, by its presence, an ill-will that average official means are impotent to check."

The petitions bore fruit. In August, Admiral de Tromelin, on his flagship, *La Poursuivante*, in the course of a checkup of French Pacific interests, called at the island of Hawaii. "When in Waieha, I (de Tromelin) saw the King in person, and his Minister of Finance, Mr. Judd, who were touring the islands. Nothing in their reception . . . could lead me to suppose that anything more existed than a difference of opinion."

The Admiral's next stop was at Honolulu, August 12, where *La Poursuivante* anchored outside the reef. Conscious of the treaty that guaranteed Hawaii's independence, and as yet unconscious of Dillon's state of mind, de Tromelin's opening gesture was to salute with the customary salvos the Hawaiian flag. As loud and as fast as its antiquated artillery permitted, the Fort returned the courtesy. His Excellency the Governor of Oahu, Kekuana'oa, visited on board, and was in turn received with a thirteen-shot salute. Minister Wyllie opened his town house to the ship's officers, and bid the Admiral be his guest at Rosebank. De Tromelin, officially now, asked to see the King.

The broadside again:

"NO TA MEA, UA HOOPAA PAAI MAMUA I'HONEI TO FARANI ME TO HAVAI'I NO TA MALAMA OLE I TE KUITAHI, UA HELE MAI MAANEI TA MEA I TATAUIA TA INOA
Auhea outou e ka poe HAWAII

No ta mea, ua hoopaaapaa mamua ihonei to Farani me to Havaii no ta malama ole i te Kuitahi, ua hele mai manei ta mea i tataua ta inoa malalo, ta Ademirala de Tromelin, me ta mamoilana no e hooponopono ia mea, me ta ololnu a me te aloha; nolaila ua no atu oia e halavai pu me te Lii nei a me tono poe tutututamalu, i mea e hoatataiai malaila me ta ololnu na tumuolebo na aaoelua. Ua hoole mai na Kuhina o te Lii, ta poe i hooleia mamua no ta latou hana paevae ana a me te tumuido, e na Kanitele o na aina nui o Farani, o Amerika Huipua, a me Beritania, i ta ia 13 o Dec. 1848, iaua o te Lii no. Nolaila, o ta mea noa ta inoa i tataua malalo, hai atu no oia ia latou i tona manao hope; hoole hou mai no na pae Kuhina nei. No ia mea, ua lavaia na mea kaua o teia ava e na mea itaita o Farani. E naau no nae ta Hao Havaai i teia manava a mahope atu no. Aole manao ta mea nona ka inoa i tataua malalo e lava ia aina, aole hoi e noho totua; e hoaleletote atu note acia mai na pono a pau ana i no atu a. Paa nae tona manao e malama i na pono o na Haole a pau o teia pule o teia pule, o teia aina o teia aina, Ma na mea e pili ana i to Farani, o te Kuitahi i aeia i ta manahiti o ta Haku 1839, e Cap. Laplace, oia te tumuilo me teia Aupuni, a e lote me te ano o ua Kuitahi ia, elima hapa hanari no ta utu Dute no na vaivai kalepa a pau mai Farani mai, e hooleia ma uta nei.

Legaarant de Tromelin rear Admiral.

Broadside posted by the French invaders on the walls of Honolulu.
From the Collection of the Rev. Patrick O'Reilly, Paris.
Armory—Mauna Kilika—where the sick men from the "Preble" were bedded by courtesy of Governor Kekuanaoa.
MALAO, TA ADEMIRALA DE TROMELIN, ME TA MANAOLANA NO E HOOPONOPONO IA MEA, ME TA OLUOLU A ME TE ALOHA.

"NOLAILA UA NOI ATU OIA E HALAVAI PU ME TE 'LII NUI A ME TONA POE TUTATUTAMALU, I MEA E HOATATAIA'I MALAILA ME TA OLUOLU NA TUMUOLELO O NA AOAO ELUA." Rendered as:

"A misunderstanding connected with the non-execution of a Treaty having existed for some time between France and the Hawaiian Islands, rear Admiral de Tromelin came to Honolulu in the hope of settling it amicably and pacifically.

"With this in view, he sought an interview with the King in Council, offering to hear their reasons and discuss the question with them in a conciliatory spirit."

An angry man, made angrier by the overture of pacific moves that seemed to dash his hopes of immediate revenge, the French Consul now boarded the flagship, and hurriedly coached de Tromelin on the plight, more subjective than objective, in which France, in the person of Dillon, found itself in the "Lilliputian kingdom". The admiral wrote:

"The Consul complained that I [de Tromelin] saluted the Hawaiian territory on arrival, before conferring with him."12

Weeks before that, from Tahiti, Governor Lavaud, on his own, had dispatched to Dillon the steamer-of-war, Gassendi. On August 14, she came to a surprised rendezvous with La Poursuivante, and anchored close to shore, facing Nuuanu Street. The harbor, as usual, was alive with traffic: Hawaiian and Chilean barks, an English schooner and brig, an American schooner, and, heralding many more to come, the first whaleship of the season, the Washington, twenty-one months at sea out of Nantucket. Between ships, inter-island "barges" moved their loads of vegetables and domestic animals.13

On August 19, the royal yacht, the Kamehameha, brought the King back from Waiea.

On August 21, an American warship, Preble, arrived. A sloop-of-war, seventy-two days from Hong Kong, she had lost twenty-one men from dysentery, and scurvy also had made its inroads. The Governor of Oahu helped bed forty of her sick on shore, at the Armory (Mauna Kilika), close to the Fort. Of the crew, only enough men were left on board to man one boat and one battery.14

August 21, Wyllie to de Tromelin: "The King and Government of the Hawaiian Islands are not aware that there are matters pending between them and the Republic of France . . . If, however, Admiral Tromelin and M. Dillon are of the opinion there are any matters . . . now pending, it would please His Majesty if they would specify them. . . ."

De Tromelin chose to consider himself affronted:

"UA HO'OLE MAI NA KUHINA O TE 'LII." Or,

"The advisers of the King . . . refused to grant the conference demanded." August 22, de Tromelin and Dillon to Wyllie:

"The time for deliberation is past. . . . The undersigned, therefore, consider themselves as bound today . . . to put the Government of His Majesty King
Kamehameha III in the case [demeure] of giving a categorical answer to the following demands. . . . In case justice be not done, they [the undersigned] will employ the means at their disposal to obtain complete reparation.”

August 24. Sensing disaster, sagely the King issued orders:
“Make no resistance if the French fire on the town, land under arms, or take possession of the Fort; but keep the flag flying ’till the French take it down.”

As to Government buildings, “the orders to those entrusted with the keys were to allow the French, if they chose, to take them out of their pockets, but on no account, to give them voluntarily, or to open a single door.”

“. . . Strict orders to all native inhabitants to offer no insult to any French officer, soldier or sailor, or afford them any pretext whatever for acts of violence.”

August 25, Wyllie to de Tromelin:
“The King and Government disclaim any intention . . . of refusing an audience. . . . It appears however, from the demand, under hostile menaces, of categorical answers to certain peremptory requirements, without discussion or exposition of facts, on the ground that such discussion or exposition would be wholly useless, that such audience could have been of little or no avail, if granted.” The broadside described this phase of the affair so:
“NOLAILA, O TA MEA I TATAUA MALALO, HAI ATU NO OIA I TONA MANAO HOPE; HOOLE HOU MAI NO UA POE KUHINA NEL.”

“It became therefore a part of the duty of the undersigned to forward them an ultimatum which they have also rejected.”

Now that his dare had been called, de Tromelin had to go through with it. Closing his house and striking the French flag from his Consulate, Dillon hurried on board with his family. Gassendi aimed her guns at the Fort.

The American sloop-of-war, Preble, suddenly swung into surprising action. Mauna Kilika, where her sick were bedded, lay southeast of the Fort, in the line of potential fire. Commander James Glynn maneuvered the stricken sloop between Gassendi and the town, guns pointing broadside at the French man-of-war. Spunkily, Commander Glynn let it be known that, if the French fired at the Fort and disturbed his men in the improvised hospital, he would “blow them out of the water.”

Deprived of their bombardment, the French nevertheless prepared for a landing. Outside the reef, La Poursuivante lowered her boats filled with marines. As they headed shoreward, they joined the waiting forces of the Gassendi. The men landed in battle array at the foot of Nuuanu Street.

“The streets were filled with foreign residents, seamen and natives, who had congregated from motives of curiosity to witness the proceedings.”

“There was great confusion, the people on shore mixing in with the troops as they landed and all the way to the Fort. Neither the French nor the crowd seemed to have the right of way.”

To Honolulans, marines in a warlike mood were no new experience. In 1839, Captain Laplace, with “three hundred men organized in landing companies, most eager to pounce [toute prêtes à s’élaner] on town and harbor,”
extorted from the King a low duty of 5% ad valorem on wines and brandies, plus a booty of 100,000 francs. In 1848, a more balanced treaty superseded that of Laplace, and Admiral Hamelin, on the frigate La Virginie, apologetically called to return the cash loot.

The sixth anniversary of the disconsolitude of another bully had been celebrated less than a month before the present landing. In 1843, Lord Paulet struck the Hawaiian colors, hoisting in their place British ones. Within five months his decision was solemnly reversed by Admiral Thomas, and the Hawaiian flag restored. Restoration Day, July 31, was now a national holiday.

As did the people, de Tromelin remembered these precedents, of ill omen for any invader. Steering clear of flags, he landed as gingerly as if on flypaper:

"E MAU NO NAE TA HAE HAWAI I TEI A MANAVA A MAHOPE ATU NO. AOLE MANAO TA MEA NONA TA INOA I TATAUI MALALO E LAVE I TA AINA, AOLE HOI E NOHO TOTUA; E HAALELE TOTE ATU NO TE AEIA MAI NA PONO A PAU ANA I NOI ATU AL."

"The Hawaiian flag still waves and will continue to wave over it [the Fort]. The undersigned, who neither aims at an occupation nor at a Protectorate, for France, will hasten to withdraw with the forces under his command, the moment his just reclamations are attended to."

The Governor of Oahu, who lived in the Fort, having sent his family to the country, donned his best uniform, hoisted a clean flag, and peacefully awaited the French on the terreplein of the Fort. The Marshal of the Kingdom, Warren Goodale, whose functions included that of jailer, also remained, because the jail was inside the Fort.

Once arrived, the troops deployed around the plaza, not knowing what to do. Their commanding officer, Lieutenant Lebleau de Montour, approached the Governor, saluted, and tried on him his English and his French. The Governor understood neither. When the Marshal volunteered as interpreter, the Governor softly dissuaded him with a shake of the head. French officers took over the Governor’s house. Prisoners were let out and the troopers let in, the cells becoming their quarters.

For the next few days, the one-sided war went on. The Fort had been defended—or rather decorated—by sixty guns of every caliber, including stone-throwing mortars. These pieces were “worthless, incapable of any use”, as de Tromelin freely admitted. The iron cannons mounted on the walls were now wrenched from their carriages by breaking their trunnions. The bronze gun La Regina resisted all efforts, even after the men procured cold chisels and scarred it with deep cuts. So they rammed it full of grass, gravel, and stones, for spite.

Passive resistance is bad on the nerves of aggressors. Says de Tromelin, “The gun carriages were . . . piled up at the four corners of the fort, to raise a barricade against assailants that, it was rumored, were on their way to try and throw us out of the fort." There the French waited, and waited, for a foe who never did materialize. In his official report, Dillon depicted in heroic hues this bad scare, “The marines . . . took the fort of King Kamehameha
III, that it seemed at first would be defended, but was ceded without resistance when confronted by the resolute attitude of our marines."

War also waxed at sea. The royal yacht was confiscated, together with barges and their load of pigs and taro.

"TA LAVEIA NA MEA KAU A TEIA AVA E NA MEA ITAITA O FARANI."

"In consequence, the fort of Honolulu has been disarmed by the French forces now in the harbor."

Passive resistance proceeded smoothly. On August 24, at noon, C. R. Bishop, Collector of Customs, locked the Custom-house, and went uptown. Executive Ministers who had offices in Honolulu Hale took such documents as they might need at once, closed their offices, locked the chain of the iron gate, and went to the Palace.

To watch over the deserted buildings, marines in arms were posted. A message Wyllie sent that evening to de Tromelin ends on an ironical note, "The Admiral will be pleased to excuse the seal and paper, Mr. Wyllie being shut out, by French forces, from access to his office and papers."

Willy-nilly, de Tromelin had on his hands a Kingdom at a standstill. Ministries were deserted. Merchandise waited to be cleared, letters to be mailed. Ships of many nationalities, coming and going, needed sailing papers put in order. Consuls sent outraged messages to the Admiral. Protestant ministers felt uneasy under the wing of "the eldest daughter of the Church".

Excuses being unthinkable, reassurances were in order:

"PAA NAE TONA MANAO E MALAMA I NA PONO A NA HAOLE A PUA TELA PULE O TEIA PULE, O TELA AINA O TEIA AINA."

"In the meantime, it is his fixed resolve to respect alike the interests of all foreigners, no matter what their creed or country."

The next morning, August 26 and a Sabbath, the French posted all over town the broadside illustrated, and that is where we came in.

Later on, when the French were leaving, Wyllie managed to have the last word.

September 4, Eigueo, secretary to de Tromelin, to Wyllie:

"... La Poursuivante will sail tomorrow. ... The Admiral charged me to say to Mr. Wyllie that La Poursuivante will receive his despatches, packets and other things destined for the American continent and for Europe."

The same day, Wyllie to Eigueo:

"Having been suffering for the last thirteen days from Lumbago, and having so many French documents to translate, Mr. Wyllie fears that he will not be prepared to profit by the Admiral's offer."

The aftermath followed the pattern of previous invasions, suggesting, for Hawaii, a charmed political life. Addressed to Dillon, a letter from his superiors in Paris had been on its slow way since July 13, a month before the landing. Had it reached him in time, neither Consul nor Admiral would have acted as he did:

"It is regrettable that you have lost sight of the spirit as well as of the letter of your instructions, to the point where you are publicly engaged in a fight with the members of the Hawaiian Cabinet."
The Admiral hardly fared better. Cautious as he had been to avoid errors, he had crossed the highest authority at home. His broadside stated:

"MA NA MEA A PILI ANA I TO FARANI, O TE KUITAHU I AEIA I TA MATAHITU O TA HAKU 1839, E CAP. LAPLACE, OIA TE TUMUH[a]NA NA ME TEIA AUPUNI A E LITE ME TE ANO O UA KUITAHU LA, ELIMA HAPA HANERI NO TA UTU DUTE NO NA VAIVAI KALEPA A PAU MAI FARANI MAI, E HOOLEIA MA UTU NEL."

"As far as France is concerned, the convention signed in 1839 by Captain Laplace will form the basis for her relation with these Islands. According to this treaty French merchandise of all kinds will be admitted at the uniform duty of five per cent."

But Laplace’s shotgun type of treaty, never legally valid, had been superseded in solemn fashion by that of 1846 (and finally ratified for the third time in 1848), in which England also was a partner. Since then, France had become a Republic. The Prince-President, however, eyeing for himself the status of Emperor, was not ready to make light of kings. Three kings had been instrumental in the treaty, those of England and of Hawaii, besides the pitiful French King now in exile. Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte disavowed de Tromelin’s rash assumption of power.

If France was in the wrong, then Hawaii could make a valid claim for reparations. In 1850, the Hawaiian government instructed commissioners J. J. Jarves and G. P. Judd to demand an indemnity of $100,060 on account of the seizure of the Kamehameha and damage wrought by de Tromelin’s forces.

But for the consideration of a loss of face, the indemnity would have been paid. Instead, a compromise was decided upon. To Consul Perrin, successor of Dillon, the Minister of Foreign Affairs wrote:

"There is no need to tell you that indemnities are out of question. The word itself should be avoided; however, the Prince-President . . . wishes that . . . in his name, you put in the hands of King Kamehameha a very costly present."

The present turned out to be an elaborate silverware table service. Today, it is the formal tableware of the Governor of Hawaii.
NOTES

1 When Père O’Reilly acquired the poster, he wrote to Miss Margaret Titcomb, Librarian of the Bishop Museum, asking if someone would translate the text into French, and fill in the historical background. Doctor Samuel Elbert checked for me the Hawaiian text. A short notice was published, “Proclamation addressée au peuple hawaiien le 26 Aout 1849, par l’Amiral Légarant de Tromelin,” Journal de la Société des Océanistes, X, 10, pp. 175–178. December, 1954. The present study is a greatly expanded version.

Available documents pertinent to this incident were published immediately after, as a supplement to The Polynesian, the Government weekly. The issue of September 8, 1849, announces that the pamphlet will be ready “during the coming week”. When not otherwise identified, the quotations are from this contemporary source.

2 “Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique, Îles Sandwich,” V, fo. 171, June 10, 1847. Transcript in the Library of the University of Hawaii. Most of the passages quoted from this source are up to now unpublished. My own translation.


4 Dillon to Judd, Aug. 11, 1848. Published by Dillon himself in a pamphlet reprinted in P, No. 23, Oct. 20, 1849.


6 id., VI, fo. 278, Dec. 26, 1848.

7 v. 4.


9 Archives . . . VI, fo. 225, Nov. 5, 1848.

10 id., VII, fo. 1, Jan. 8, 1848.

11 id., VII, fo. 140, Sept. 5, 1849. It is the official report written by the Admiral to the Secretary of Marine and Colonies.

12 v. 11.

13 “Marine Journal”, a regular feature of The Polynesian, listed arrivals and departures of ships. The barges are mentioned in the Admiral’s report. v. 11.

14 Warren Goodale, “Honolulu in 1853”, Papers of the Hawaiian Historical Society, No. 10, 1897, p. 5. Goodale was Marshal of the Kingdom in 1849.

15 v. 14.


17 v. 14.


19 v. 14.

20 v. 11.

21 v. 5. It is Dillon’s official report, written on board La Poursuivante, en rade d’Honolulu.


23 id., X, fo. 22, Aug. 11, 1852.