

Trouble in Tahiti: S. R. Blackler's Despatches on the French Seizure of The Society Islands

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Samuel R. Blackler, United States Consul at the Society Islands, arrived at his post in the middle of March, 1839. Five and a half years later he died in that far-away land, in the midst of hasty preparations to return to his own people, among whom he hoped to restore his shattered health. During those years it was Blackler's fate, first to oppose the government of Queen Pomare IV, to which he was accredited, and then to acquiesce in its destruction.

The life of a Pacific island consul in those whaling days was not an easy one. Blackler's despatches tell of wrecked ships, deserters, mutinies, tavern brawls, quarrels among masters and seamen, ill and destitute derelicts—a thousand cares thrust into the hands of this isolated representative of his government, which would learn of his tribulations months later. A man ready to face the issue the consul had to be; there was no quick communication, bringing detailed instructions to meet the emergency of the moment. And not only must he keep an official eye on needy or unruly nationals; the scheming of other foreign consuls, the exercise of gunboat diplomacy, and the intricacies of native politics demanded constant watchfulness.

It was sure to be rewarded. Tahiti's troubled past was a recipe for crisis. One element was the government's weakness in the grip of internal division and growing pressures from without. Pomare's shaky kingdom, which owed so much to the London Missionary Society, felt the need of an artificial backbone—hence Tahitian requests for a British protectorate in 1825, 1839, and 1841.¹ Another ingredient—for the British it turned out to be something closely resembling a lemon—was the religious issue. Two Catholic priests from the French Mangareva mission landed on Tahiti in November, 1836. The United States consul, a Belgian named J. A. Moerenhout, and several Tahiti chiefs welcomed them. But under the spur of the Rev. George Pritchard, said some, the London missionaries

used their influence to enforce against the priests a law forbidding the landing of strangers without chiefly consent. This tactic, abetted by steamy pulpit oratory, resulted in the priests' hurried exit on a small boat headed for Wallis Island.²

According to the usual prognosis, the irritation thus produced eventually raised a French man-of-war on the horizon. Moerenhout had complained to the French consul-general at Valparaiso; on June 10, 1837, the government of France ordered Abel Du Petit-Thouars to make Tahiti pay. He appeared at Papeete on August 29, 1838, sought out his acquaintance Moerenhout, and the next day demanded of Pomare a letter of apology, a salute to the French flag, and \$2,000.³ Du Petit-Thouars got the money in gold, and the salute. Pomare signed a convention guaranteeing Frenchmen the right to come and go at will on Tahiti, and to trade and settle there on a most-favored-nation basis. She was obliged also to accept Moerenhout, the intelligent troublemaker, as French consul.⁴

On April 19, 1839, the French commander C. P. T. Laplace arrived at Tahiti, where he spent some two months. Late in June he concluded a treaty with Pomare giving Catholics equal standing with Protestants. Afterward he maintained that during his visit certain chiefs, acting through Moerenhout, offered to put Tahiti under French protection.⁵

George Pritchard had been appointed British consul in 1837 at the chiefs' request, on condition that he cut connections with the London Missionary Society. But Consul Pritchard was unable to interfere in the affairs of Du Petit-Thouars and Laplace. He did report them, requesting a British protectorate in November, 1839. Britain refused to act, looking unfavorably on a Tahitian law, consented to by the missionaries, which forbade teaching of any but the established Protestant religion. As for French demands, they were offset by the expulsion of the priests.⁶

Politically, Tahiti presented a complicated picture, and one likely to be misinterpreted, as when Lt. Charles Wilkes of the U.S. Exploring Expedition reported that the nation was divided into two parties: Queen Pomare IV and the missionaries faced Hitoti, Paofai, and Tauga, chiefly descendants of old "kings" degraded by Pomare I, engineer of the ruling monarchy.⁷

The effects of all this were yet to be felt by Blackler when he dated his first despatch on March 17, 1839.⁸ But he was introduced soon to the direct methods adopted by French commanders. A month to the day after his arrival in Tahiti, he was writing of the strange lesson taught by *Venus*, who showed a surprising resemblance to Mars:⁹

It has induced a cautious policy on the part of the native government, which will prevent them from running into excesses—to which they were heretofore prone, and has led them in some degree to understand & recognize the reciprocal rights

existing among civilized nations. While on the subject permit me to remark from my own observation that the peculiar policy pursued by the French Government, in identifying the welfare of the citizen with the honour of the nation, the directions given to their commanders—positive for the protection of its citizens abroad, discretionary as to the exercise of the power, has given security not only to their own commerce but in repeated instances to ours.¹⁰

Tahitian authorities, consuls, and residents in general gave Blackler a friendly reception.¹¹ But by the end of October, 1840, he was bitterly at odds with Pomare's regime. From time to time American sailors, guilty of indecorous conduct on the high seas, were put ashore at Tahiti under arrest. Referring to them, the consul wrote:

The total inefficiency and duplicity of the Tahitian Government, added to their evident incapacity to govern white men, renders it impossible to answer for the security of prisoners landed here. . . . Abuses and outrages against our seamen are becoming so frequent, that remonstrances are not only unavailing, but are received with contempt.¹²

This, he said, was partly owing to the policy of U.S. ship commanders, who were too likely to be appeased by kind assurances and repeated promises.

On this occasion Blackler complained specifically of the actions of Lt. Charles Wilkes of the United States Exploring Expedition. On the arrival of the squadron in September, 1839, the consul lodged charges against the native government.¹³ Blackler had warned the Tahitians that the President of the United States would not tolerate maltreatment of American seamen or citizens. The natives had been justly alarmed, but after a liberal distribution of presents by Wilkes, the Tahitians showed no further disquiet. Blackler contended that old scores should have been settled before a kindly disposition was shown. Furthermore, Wilkes had cautioned Blackler that at a meeting with the chiefs he, Wilkes, should do all the talking. But Pritchard was allowed to introduce the commander's remarks.¹⁴

Wilkes was really in a most difficult position. Not only had he been met with Blackler's pent-up grievances, but the Tahitians had themselves presented a letter highly critical of the consul.¹⁵ The situation thus created was one often repeated throughout the Pacific in those years: a foaming consul storing up "incidents" until "his" ship came, meanwhile casting dark threats of impending retribution; the natives preparing *their* rebuttal of complaint and cajolery to offset the consular blast; and, sailing around in their floating juggernauts, naval officers whose unkind fate it was to be the arbiter of one murky dispute after another.

But to return to Blackler: Continuing his despatch, he maintained that U.S. citizens were on an inferior footing, partly because of the undermining effect of British influence arising from the union of consular and

clerical capacities in the person of Pritchard.¹⁶ Blackler predicted that this might lead to a crisis which would compromise Tahitian independence. He asserted that Pritchard in his missionary role was in constant contact with Wata (Uata), a councillor of Pomare and her representative during her absence.¹⁷ This produced a bilious condition:

The undue influence which a long residence, thorough acquaintance with the language, and a combination of offices would naturally create, together with the strongest desire to retain & exert an acquired power over the native mind, is, in the present case highly prejudicial (*sic*) to the interest of all white residents, particularly Americans, &, to the peace of society in general. It induces the native authorities to throw off responsibility, unfits them for the duties of governing, & its continual tendency is to lead them to excess.

.....
Under the present lax & ill regulated Government, if Government it can be called, which is influenced by a clandestine foreign dictation, which is swayed by the grossest cupidity in its intercourse with foreigners, & too indolent to enact salutary laws, for their regulation, abuses must necessarily exist. . . .¹⁸

Blackler believed that his representations in favor of Americans had placed him in an antagonistic position with the Tahitian authorities, and he hinted at secret machinations directed against him by Pritchard.

In January, 1841, Blackler was able to offer what he considered substantial evidence of the British consul's baleful influence. This was a letter, "translated by G. Pritchard, missionary," from a Tahitian official, Buareia, to the President of America. The letter charged Blackler with flagrant disregard of Tahitian law, avowing that he tore to bits the act referring to foreigners' being turned ashore from ships; it alleged that the consul illegally bought liquor at his pleasure, and openly indulged in the colorful practices of adultery and fornication. Blackler, it was said, defied Tahitian courts and would not allow Americans to be tried in them. Despite these many provocations, wrote Buareia, Blackler had been treated well. Not surprisingly, the letter begged the U.S. government to recall its errant consul.¹⁹

But all these amenities fell into total eclipse when, on June 1, 1841, an "... aggravated and unprecedented outrage . . ." was visited on the person and premises of the American representative.²⁰ In reporting it, Blackler cited the almost total want of consideration for the U.S. as a nation evidenced by the Tahitians. Such a remiss attitude was greatly fostered, wrote the consul, by the forbearing and too temperate policy of the United States, which had encouraged the Tahitians to go from one excess to another.

With his report Blackler enclosed a mass of documents intended to illuminate the troubled situation at Papeete. First was a copy of the

consul's letter to French Forrest, commanding the U.S. Covette *St. Louis*. Dated March 1, 1841, the communication detailed abuses of American seamen by the Tahitian authorities, pointing out that Americans were reluctant to make claims because they believed they stood no chance of redress. After reciting a number of outrages, Blackler complained of the soft policy of the United States, maintaining that such a policy was incomprehensible to the Tahitians ". . . since they view possession of power as inseparable from prompt and decisive enforcement of right."²¹ He wrote that commanders of different ships of war visiting Tahiti had showed great discrepancies of opinion in their treatment of affairs, and blamed Wilkes for the most recent excesses, holding that Wilkes had prematurely extended the hand of friendship and had let the Tahitian government escape the just consequences of its acts by simply denying them, through the representations of Pritchard. Blackler asked Forrest to call the Tahitians together and lay down the law, without permitting any lengthy discussions. Then, employing the classic consular gambit, he requested a separate U.S. naval force for the Society Islands.²²

Following this letter came Blackler's declaration regarding the trouble of June 1. In brief it told this story:

About ten in the morning Blackler was standing in front of his consulate with some residents and shipmasters. A group of Tahitian officers called *ha'ava*, directed by Governor Paita, who stood at a distance, collected and began to arrest two seamen in the consul's company. One, offering no resistance, was taken. Blackler told the Tahitians to desist; he then ordered the second sailor to go into the consulate. As this man crossed the stile into the consulate enclosure, with Blackler following, one of the Tahitians rushed by the consul to make the arrest. Blackler grabbed the *ha'ava* by the shoulder, but received a blow that drove him over the stile. By the time Blackler recovered, the sailor had been secured.²³ The consul again intervened, only to receive a severe roughing-up. The *ha'ava* now had their prizes; followed by Paita, they took their way to the calaboose—to use Blackler's term.²⁴

A series of seven depositions, differing in some details but substantially confirming the story of the attack, buttressed the consular account. Blackler detected a ". . . deep and settled design . . ." to carry out the affair, and laid this to ". . . clandestine foreign influence . . ."; he again expressed disapproval of the United States' mild policy, contrasting it with the ". . . determined character of the policy and measures pursued by France."²⁵

Blackler's analysis was that Paita, a close confidant of Pritchard, was the author of the attack of June 1. But the outrage would not have been committed without Moerenhout's countenance. Although the latter had

been a vocal critic of the Tahitian government, he and Paita had recently acted together because of mutual commercial interest in a cargo of horses, Moerenhout throwing into the scale “. . . the immense influence . . . attached to the Consulate of France.”²⁶ Therefore, concluded Blackler, the attack on him could be traced ultimately to the course pursued by the French consul.

Meanwhile Pomare, troubled by French and American disregard of her laws, had acted. In January, 1841, she appealed for a British protectorate. Pritchard traveled to England to present her case, but his trip was a blunder; during his absence French interests burgeoned. Pomare went off to Ra'iatea. Moerenhout then persuaded Paraita, Tati, Hitoti, and Paete to sign a petition asking for a French protectorate.²⁷

In August the U. S. S. *Yorktown*, Captain J. H. Aulick, was in Papeete. Paraita, Pomare's regent, sent Aulick a letter in which he preferred charges against Gifford and other Americans. The regent disavowed any Tahitian guilt in the affair of the alleged assault on Blackler, whom he charged with abetting the recent introduction of smallpox into Tahiti.²⁸ Paraita also gave into Aulick's care a letter to the President of the United States; in this, the Tahitian recapitulated old and new complaints against the consul.²⁹

Aulick received a highly unfavorable impression of Blackler—an impression which he communicated to the Navy Department in a letter written in Honolulu in October, 1841. Aulick charged that

the actions and general conduct of our Consul toward these people, have been both injudicious and undignified—that he is in the habit of paying very little respect to either the laws or the authorities of the Island—is dictatorial and overbearing in his Official intercourse, and consequently extremely unpopular with them.³⁰

Meanwhile Blackler occupied his uncongenial post. He had hauled down his consular flag immediately after the attack of June 1, 1841, and flagless he remained, though he continued to carry on his official duties. Nearly a year passed, during which the beleaguered consul pursued his usual path, encumbered as it was with the ever-recurring vagrancies, insubordinations, shipwrecks, and other breaches of law or decorum characteristic of the environment.

In June, 1842, Captain Dubouzet visited Tahiti in the French Corvette *l'Aube*. Not one to shatter precedent, he too made demands: The Tahitian police should be disbanded, and the Catholic mission's right to own land recognized. Pomare's gun-shy government yielded.³¹

Late in the same month Blackler had exciting news to relay. On the thirteenth Capt. Lane of the whaling ship *Java* arrived in Papeete from the Marquesas Islands. He reported that while there various foreigners

told him about the visit of a large French frigate under Rear Admiral Abel Du Petit-Thouars, commander of the French naval station in the Pacific, and that the frigate had gone to Nukuhiva to take possession of that island. Other French war vessels carrying troops were expected in the Marquesas shortly. One of Lane's informers had piloted the frigate: he deposed that the French had taken Ohitahoo, built two forts there, and garrisoned them with eighty soldiers. Blackler, having heard previously of French moves in the Marquesas, credited Lane's tale. On June 22, Comdr. Sullivan of H. B. M. Sloop *Favourite* left Papeete to investigate.³²

But there was little time to ponder the fall of the Marquesas, which had indeed passed under French control. On August 30 the fateful Du Petit-Thouars, ". . . jealously convinced that the hoisting of the French flag in the Marquesas would be followed by the hoisting of the British in Tahiti . . .", was in Papeete once more.³³ Moerenhout hurried aboard, while ". . . the French residents produced a new crop of complaints . . ."³⁴

Blackler, referring to the 1841 petition for a French protectorate, declared that the admiral's way had been prepared long since.³⁵ He noted Pomare's opposition, and enclosed a circular issued by the queen at Moorea on September 9, 1841, which disclaimed Her Majesty's knowledge of the application because of her absence on a distant island.³⁶

But Du Petit-Thouars did not intend to waste time quibbling. On September 6, 1842, he informed Blackler that manifest violations of French-Tahitian treaties by the latter government had brought on a situation serious enough to lead promptly to hostilities if just reparations were not at once forthcoming. The admiral therefore warned Blackler and his fellow Americans to secure themselves against such an eventuality. Blackler and his family were offered asylum on the admiral's ship, the *Reine Blanche*.³⁷

Blackler acknowledged the warning and the offer, then told Du Petit-Thouars about the ". . . gross and unprecedented outrage . . ." he had suffered some fifteen months before. Since amends had not been made, he wrote, he could not hoist his flag to designate the location of the consulate.³⁸

On September 8 the French admiral formally declared against Pomare's government: Perhaps not a single Frenchman could be found in Tahiti who had not complained of the Tahitians' treatment. Homes of many French residents had been violated during their absence and remained open to pillage. Numerous French had been struck by the police, or thrown into jail without preliminary hearings; properties had been confiscated, and treaties outrageously broken.³⁹

Du Petit-Thouars expressed loss of confidence in the Tahitians' word; only material guarantees would assure French rights. Therefore, he

stipulated: (1) As an indemnity and a guarantee for the future, the Tahitian government should deposit 10,000 piasters, to be turned over to the executive officer of the *Reine Blanche* within the forty-eight hours following two o'clock in the afternoon of September 8. The money would be put in French government coffers and returned to Pomare on French government order, on the queen's faithful execution of treaties with France and the payment of indemnities as determined by the French government; (2) that if the money had not been delivered within the prescribed time, French troops would provisionally occupy the queen's fort and other places as security for the execution of treaties, until account had been rendered to the French government for the injuries complained of and the indemnity ordered; (3) that if either of the above provisions was not fulfilled, the admiral would be compelled to take yet more vigorous measures. Pomare and her chiefs were, however, authorized to submit within twenty-four hours proposals for such accommodations as they might think capable of appeasing French resentment.⁴⁰

Blackler, commenting on the declaration, noted that its object was to get possession of Tahiti and its dependencies. He added that this goal had been assiduously pursued by secret means both prior and subsequent to the admiral's arrival.⁴¹

The day after Du Petit-Thouars' declaration, Pomare and her chiefs made their submission. Pronouncing themselves unable to govern under existing circumstances so as to maintain harmony with foreign states, they asked for a French protectorate, on five conditions: (1) the title of the queen, and the government of the queen and high chiefs should remain; (2) all laws were to be made in the name of the queen and over her signature; (3) the queen and her people should keep possession of their lands, and foreigners were not to interfere in Tahitian land disputes; (4) religious freedom should prevail; (5) churches of British missionaries should not be molested, and British missionaries should continue to discharge their functions. All affairs concerning foreign governments and foreigners resident at Tahiti were to be under the authority of the French government, and the person put in charge by that government would, with the advice of the Tahitians, dispose port regulations, etc., and carry out all measures necessary to establish harmony and peace.⁴²

On the same day, September 9, the admiral sent his reply to Pomare, accepting her capitulation on the terms stipulated, and remarking that all causes of French discontent had been removed.⁴³

At this point Blackler and Du Petit-Thouars began a lengthy exchange of notes. In them the U.S. consul interposed a demand on the part of his government against the Tahitian regime for full satisfaction for the outrage of June 1, 1841. But Du Petit-Thouars' position was that such claims

would now have to be presented to the French ruler.⁴⁴ Despite their differences, Blackler complimented the admiral on the peaceful adjustment of difficulties, promising to “. . . cooperate most cheerfully . . .” in the maintenance of harmony insofar as he could, considering his office.

The admiral, on his part, had invited foreign consuls to cooperate with him in forming an administration capable of preserving peace among the whites while awaiting the framing and proclamation of a code of laws appropriate to the needs of the country; he asked their attention to the council of government which would direct affairs provisionally at Papeete—and which could only act on the basis of unanimous agreement of its members.

About September 12, Blackler and Du Petit-Thouars held an interview aboard the *Reine Blanche*. On this occasion Blackler acquainted the admiral with his accusations against Moerenhout, to wit: clandestine intriguing by drawing up a document interfering with U.S.—Tahitian relations and by making false statements against the U.S. consul. Blackler made no official demand here, leaving the matter to the American government. He explained his object in bringing the affair up, but emphatically denied any disrespect toward France, expressing hope that nothing would mar friendly relations in the future.

Subsequently Blackler agreed that the question of reparations would have to be left to the home governments. But it followed, therefore, that any official recognition of the flag of the protectorate adopted by Pomare, by unconditionally hoisting the American consular colors, would be an assumption by Blackler of the powers of the home government. This act would dismiss the right of the U.S. to reclaim from the Tahitian government, and the government of France in such a case could not be held responsible for transactions taking place prior to the protectorate—especially after a rehoisting of the American flag under salute from the *Reine Blanche*. Since, however, he wanted to cooperate because of the value of peace to American commerce, Blackler suggested: (1) that rehoisting the U.S. flag to a twenty-one gun salute from the *Reine Blanche* should be considered merely an exchange of courtesies between America and France, and (2) that this act should not set aside or prejudice any demands of the U.S. against Pomare.

This flag debate continued in a flurry of notes. But on September 19 Blackler acknowledged several previous communications, including one enclosing a proclamation setting forth the principles and agencies of the protectorate. The consul termed the proclamation just and liberal in its provisions, said it had been received with general approval, recognized the security it afforded the property and persons of foreign residents, and predicted that it would aid greatly in establishing order. Blackler also

acknowledged a note of September 19 appointing Lt. Rene Dominique Edouard as military governor of Tahiti and Ens. Gabrielle Carpegna as captain of the port. Blackler had previously received Pomare's announcement that Tahiti's exterior sovereignty had been placed under the charge of France. Therefore, he recognized (saving ratification by the President of the United States) the new authority by hoisting provisionally the consular flag, leaving questions of affairs of an earlier date to the uncompromised action of the U.S. government.⁴⁵

The proclamation Blackler praised set up a provisional government to direct affairs concerning foreigners, foreign relations, security of persons and of property, and public order. Its articles, agreed to by Pomare and the admiral, provided for the establishment and functioning of a council of government, the erection of courts and the administration of justice, the rights of foreign consuls and citizens, and the institution of regulations considered necessary at the time.⁴⁶

Blackler despatched this mass of documents and correspondence on the *Reine Blanche*. He added his own comments in his despatch No. 47 of September 26, 1842. He reported that the chief object of Du Petit-Thouars' correspondence was to draw the consul into rehoisting the American flag unconditionally, and to receive thereon a salute from the Tahitian fort of *Mouton Outa* under the flag adopted by the protectorate. At a subsequent interview, however, the admiral expressed his willingness to salute from the *Reine Blanche*. But Blackler reinstated his flag only provisionally, and without a salute, leaving all transactions to the uncompromised action of the United States. Such a provisional recognition of the protectorate did not prejudice future demands on the Tahitian authorities.⁴⁷

Blackler reported that the rehoisting of his flag helped to maintain the order recently established and formerly lacking. The consul believed his action was called for by the extensive U.S. whaling commerce and was an act of courtesy to the French government, then enjoying friendly relations with the United States.⁴⁸

The reasons for Blackler's support of the protectorate arose from ". . . strong motives of policy . . .", which he detailed:

The immense and increasing colonial power of Great Britain, its exclusive system, her recent colonization in the Southern Pacific, and above all, the advantage that in the event of a war, our commerce would derive from the occupation of the Marquesas and Society Islands by the French, are as I conceive arguments conclusive as to the policy which should govern me in such a course.

.....
The fact . . . that the crisis which I had predicted was near at hand, and the firm conviction that the British Government, (stimulated perhaps by the recent movements of the French at the Marquesas) would speedily assume so far an

actual protection over these Islands, as to ensure the future occupation of their exterior sovereignty, in the event of a war, are among the motives which induced me to aid, so far as was consistent with my official function the establishment of the Protectorate of France at this place.⁴⁹

According to Blackler, the smallness of the guarantee demanded by Du Petit-Thouars and the “. . . latent prejudices . . .” of the Tahitians against the French made it possible for the American consul to oppose successfully the French occupation, had he been so instructed, or had not the constitution and policy of the United States been opposed to the possession of foreign territory.⁵⁰

Blackler reminded the State Department that in his despatch of October 31, 1840, he had predicted that inability of the Tahitian government to sustain foreign relations would lead to a crisis that would compromise Tahiti's independence.⁵¹

Pritchard was still absent from Tahiti during Du Petit-Thouars' visit; Blackler wrote that had this not been so, the admiral's intentions (barring a previous understanding reached by the home governments) would have been scotched by satisfying the demands made on the Tahitian government as a guarantee for the future performance of treaties.⁵²

Turning to more personal matters, Blackler formally charged Moerenhout with clandestinely intriguing to set up the protectorate, and with interfering in affairs between the government of the United States and that of Pomare by drawing up a document for the queen's regent's signature that contained a mass of falsehoods prejudicial to the American consul. This was the document given to Aulick for transmission to the President.⁵³

Blackler had not advised the State Department in detail regarding the charges presented to Aulick because: (1) He did not deem Moerenhout's attack on his personal character important, and (2) having forwarded documents respecting the outrage of June 1, 1841, Blackler had been awaiting the necessary investigation confidently. He had submitted papers relating to the outrage to Aulick, but declined any action on the latter's part. Since Aulick's departure the Tahitian authorities had shown the utmost unconcern, well knowing from experience the mild policy of the United States. But the probability that all questions concerning transactions of a previous date between Tahiti and the U.S. would be referred to the French government led Blackler to forward documents heretofore kept at the consulate.⁵⁴

In the absence of actual proof, Blackler held a “. . . firm and unalterable conviction . . .” that it was to the agency of Moerenhout and to his “. . . improper exercise of the great influence he possessed over the natives . . .” as consul of France that the Tahitians' attack on Blackler should be laid.⁵⁵

The American consul reported that he could hardly believe the U.S. would passively submit to such a clandestine foreign interference in its affairs, and expressed hope that having found “. . . a responsible endorser . . .” of the acts of the Tahitian government in that of King Louis Philippe, the U.S. would feel justified in demanding ample satisfaction for accumulated grievances.⁵⁶

After this very busy interlude, Blackler permitted himself to remain silent concerning political affairs at Tahiti for some months. But in February, 1843, events stimulated further use of the consular pen. On or about January 10, Blackler reported, H.B.M. Ship *Talbot*, of 26 guns, Capt. Sir Thomas Thompson, Bart., arrived from Valparaiso, charged with instructions to communicate with Pomare and bearing a letter from the British admiral. The letter, read at a public meeting, acknowledged receipt of the queen's circular of September, 1841, given to Capt. Jones of H. B. M. Ship *Curacoa*. When Thompson arrived, Pomare was at Eimeo, but on receiving word from the Briton, she at once started for Tahiti.⁵⁷

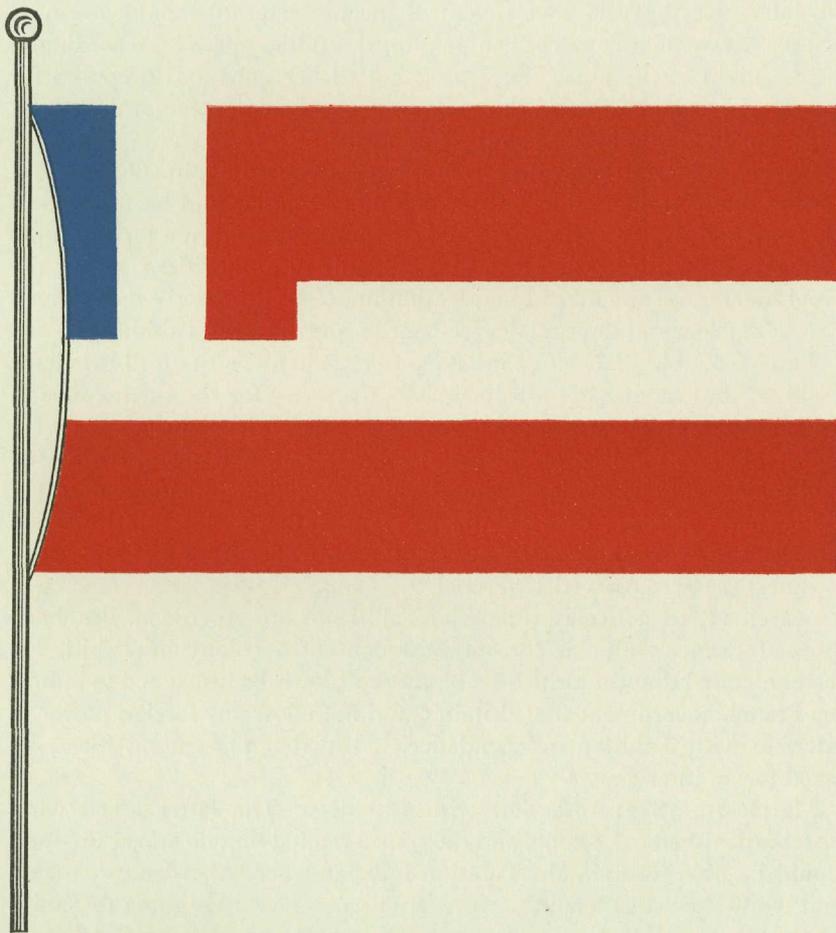
On entering Papeete harbor the queen's boat flew the old Tahitian flag; Thompson saluted it with yards manned and twenty-one guns. Pomare landed at her fort of *Mouton Outa*, located on a small island near the harbor entrance. Shortly afterward she visited the *Talbot*, receiving two other salutes of the same character. The fort's garrison were in the act of returning the salute under the protectorate's flag, but were stopped after getting off one gun.⁵⁸

The council of government held this conduct to be interference in the relations between Pomare and Louis Philippe; it protested Thompson's actions. Pomare soon took up residence in a private house near the British consulate. She was still living there in the middle of February and was in constant communication with Thompson.⁵⁹

On January 21 the U.S. Corvette *Boston*, Comdr. Long, arrived at Papeete. Blackler and the commander called on Pomare, tendering an invitation to visit the ship. The queen demurred and promised an answer the next day, but she never did reply.⁶⁰

Six days later the French ship *Boussole*, of 30 guns, Capt. A. Varignaud, arrived from the Marquesas. On February 8 a convention of the several districts of Tahiti met before the queen's proper residence. She attended. A long communication expressing her preference for British protection was read by Pomare's speaker to the assembly. The gathering concurred with the queen's views and expressed a willingness to take down the protectorate's flag if she desired. At the meeting, according to Blackler, the speaker suppressed all dissenting discussion. Varignaud had previously notified Thompson that he should be ready to act on any emergency that might result from an insult to the French flag. The convention retired,

THE FLAG OF THE FRENCH PROTECTORATE



As sketched in the margin of Despatch No. 7, November 2, 1842, John Walpole to Rear Admiral Richard Thomas. BPRO FO 58/22. Microfilm, University of Hawaii.

and Pomare signified that the protectorate's flag (under which the council of government functioned) should remain until intelligence was received from the British and French governments.⁶¹

But on the morning of February 9 the flag of the protectorate was not raised as usual. French authorities communicated with Pomare and got official notice that the government of the protectorate should go on as before. Meanwhile rumors of impending hostilities spread. Accordingly, on the night of the ninth the *Talbot* shotted her guns and prepared for action. Varignaud followed the same course at four in the morning. Both ships remained in that state on the eleventh.⁶²

On February 10 the protectorate's flag was raised again. Blackler, reporting the next day, said that since no official notice had been issued to the contrary, the protectorate would undoubtedly continue for the time, unless prevented from doing so by the Tahitian authorities. During the provisional government's administration up to the time the *Talbot* arrived (wrote Blackler) an unusual degree of order prevailed at Tahiti.⁶³

Thompson told Blackler he intended to remain at Tahiti until Pritchard returned, but having got all documents necessary for the furtherance of British interests, he was expected to make an early departure.⁶⁴

Pritchard was indeed on his way back, after an absence of two years. A chronicle of his activities during this time should include these dates:

February 7, 1841: Left Tahiti, after appointing as his substitute one Charles Wilson, a shipmaster and South Sea trader from Sydney.

June 14, 1841: Arrived Liverpool.⁶⁵

March 11, 1842: Relayed news of Tahiti to Lord Aberdeen. Pritchard assessed France's aim as the establishment of a colony at Tahiti. He recommended that the British ambassador at Paris be instructed to inform the French government that Britain could not allow any foreign power to interfere with Tahitian independence. To further present his ideas, he asked for an interview.⁶⁶

March 19, 1842: Interview with Aberdeen. The latter asked what Pritchard wished to be done, and the consul replied that he hoped England would be able to maintain Tahitian independence. Aberdeen then said that while the British could not prevent Frenchmen from going to Tahiti, it might be possible to prevent their securing any greater privileges than those accorded Englishmen. At this time there were some 60 or 70 British subjects in Tahiti, including missionaries. Aberdeen ended the meeting on a note of "We'll see what can be done."⁶⁷

July 30, 1842: Pritchard learned that his salary had been raised from 200 to 300 pounds per year, as he would be expected to visit the Navigator (Samoan) Islands in a consular capacity.⁶⁸

August 11, 1842: Left Gravesend, England, en route to Tahiti via Sydney.⁶⁹

December 7, 1842: Arrived Sydney. Here Pritchard learned of the French seizure. The next day he despatched the news to Aberdeen, and urged prompt measures to squelch the takeover.⁷⁰

January 4, 1843: Left Sydney for Tahiti. In a letter written the day before, Pritchard again called for British intervention, declaring the whole Pacific at stake.⁷¹

At Sydney Pritchard found the best that he could have hoped for: a compliant naval officer, Commodore John Toup Nicolas. The consul briefed Nicolas on the Tahitian situation, as Pritchard saw it: The French had taken Tahiti on the strength of a document which the French consul had persuaded four or five disgruntled Tahitian chiefs to sign during Pomare's absence. The British official belief was that, since this transaction was illegal, no action would be taken on it. Aberdeen would therefore suspend communication with the French until it was seen that such action was under way. Pritchard was to assure Pomare of British sympathy, and that England would give the beleaguered monarch at all times such aid as it could. Pritchard begged Toup Nicolas to run down to Tahiti, if only for a few days, as the consul expected to face much difficulty.⁷²

Toup Nicolas responded beautifully; he offered to escort Pritchard back to his post, and away they went, taking along British government gifts—suggested by the returning consul—destined for Pomare. The vessel on which they sailed was named, appropriately, *Vindictive*—a word aptly describing the mood of the commodore and his passenger.⁷³ Toup Nicolas had orders from Rear Admiral Thomas, commanding the Pacific station, to accord no recognition to the French protectorate, and to issue a proclamation releasing British subjects from any obligation to obey French officials.⁷⁴

The *Vindictive* reached Tahiti on February 25, 1843. Pomare sent at once for Toup Nicolas and reiterated her claim that force and threat had compelled her to sign the capitulation of September 9, 1842. Nicolas at once mediated between the French and Tahitians while awaiting Admiral Thomas' arrival and the confidently expected British intervention. He wrote approvingly of Sir Thomas Thompson's having "... entered warmly into the cause of the unfortunate queen." Thompson had sailed a few days before Nicolas' appearance.⁷⁵

Pritchard and his naval ally found Pomare living some eight miles from Papeete, frightened away by French threats. Under the protection of the *Vindictive's* guns, she returned. The consul and the commodore then tried to act in accordance with what they regarded as British promises of aid and protection—"promises" which Pritchard quoted from letters of Canning and Palmerston.⁷⁶ March 2 saw another great conclave at

Pomare's house; here the queen's viewpoint was again presented and ratified.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, Toup Nicolas was conducting a "hold the fort" operation. He informed Admiral Thomas that he would stay in Tahiti as long as his provisions lasted—at Pomare's "earnest entreaty". And the commodore sent an urgent call for help, in the form of a notice to the captains of any British naval vessels that might visit New South Wales before June 1. These he asked to hurry to Tahiti, if possible, keeping their ships constantly prepared for action.⁷⁸ These letters went out in March; four months later—in July—Pritchard wrote Aberdeen that Nicolas had "restored tranquility" through tireless efforts to aid Pomare and oppose France's "unjust measures" based on "falsehood and oppression." The consul anxiously awaited instructions.⁷⁹ Just what those instructions were we shall soon see.

But now we must rejoin Blackler. For some nine months after writing his February, 1843, despatch, he reported nothing more about political conditions at Tahiti. On November 23, however, he began a communication recapitulating events which, during the three weeks preceding, had rocked the island.⁸⁰

Pomare's nemesis, Du Petit-Thouars, had returned November 1. On the second he officially announced Louis Philippe's ratification of the protectorate. On the sixth Pomare was formally deposed, a marine and military force landed, and the Society Islands possessed in the name of the French king. At this time the French flag was hoisted in the square of the ex-queen's premises under a salute from the artillery on shore and the French warships in the harbor. These were the *Reine Blanche* and the *Danae* of 50 guns each, the *Uranie* of 64, and the *Embuscade* of 32.⁸¹

The direct cause of the admiral's action, reported Blackler, was the position taken by Pomare, in open conjunction with Pritchard, not only in opposition to but in direct violation of the treaty of September 9, 1842. During the *Vindictive's* stay Nicolas (spelled Nicholas by Blackler) presented Pomare a flag intended for her personal use. This flag, given unofficially so far as Blackler knew, was the old Tahitian flag with a crown—inserted by the British—in the centre. These colors had been saluted repeatedly by Britain's ships of war, apparently in opposition to the flag of the protectorate, which was the old Tahitian flag with that of France quartered in it. Pomare and the public, both foreigners and natives, had considered the Nicolas flag an avowal of Great Britain's protection. For this reason it had been displayed at Du Petit-Thouars' arrival.⁸²

But the French admiral found Nicolas' gift flag "... insufficient to command the respect due to the protectorate . . ."; on November 4, therefore, the French flag was raised over the fort of *Mouton Outa*.⁸³

On November 5, after repeated and fruitless endeavors on the admiral's part to get Pomare to renounce the flag provided by Nicolas, Du Petit-Thouars announced his intention of taking possession of the Society Islands. According to Blackler, the repeated and fruitless endeavors included offering Pomare, in place of the Nicolas flag, any other she might choose to adopt—even the flag of her father, in which, if she so desired, Du Petit-Thouars himself would cause a crown to be inserted.⁸⁴

On the evening of the fifth Du Petit-Thouars called in his barge at the landing of the British consulate, Pomare being at Pritchard's house, whither she had been induced to go, Blackler wrote, by improper representations regarding her personal safety. Through an officer the French admiral asked for an interview; Pritchard designated his house as the place where it should be held. To this, Du Petit-Thouars replied by message that he could not transact business with Pomare under the British flag.⁸⁵

The next morning an interview did take place at which, after professing the most liberal intentions on the part of the French government, the admiral formally announced that if on the morrow, before noon, the flag given Pomare by Nicolas (and obviously kept flying as an insult) was not hauled down, he would be obliged no longer to recognize Pomare as queen, would land troops, and in name of Louis Philippe take possession of the islands.⁸⁶

The threat was carried out. Pritchard at once hauled down the Union Jack and renounced his office. The arrangement under which Du Petit-Thouars' squadron sailed from France having been thus frustrated—as Blackler put it—Mons. Bruat, who came out originally as *Commissaire du Roi*, was installed as Governor of the French Possessions in the Pacific. This, as Blackler understood it, was Bruat's original title respecting the Marquesas Islands.⁸⁷

Du Petit-Thouars landed some 300 troops and about 100 artisans and operatives. These, together with the naval force before mentioned (excepting the *Reine Blanche*), were employed partly as a police guard, and partly in constructing buildings and fortifications. Proclamations were issued declaring the port free and guaranteeing protection to all law-abiding persons. The laws by which such persons were to abide were, with a few modifications, the old ones.⁸⁸

At the height of the excitement Blackler had asked Du Petit-Thouars for a clarification of his intentions. The admiral replied that he had come to demand the entire execution of the treaty of September 9, 1842, and to present to the ex-queen the *Commissaire du Roi* named by Louis Philippe to administer the affairs of the protectorate.⁸⁹

Declaring Pomare satisfied with the operation of the provisional government, and citing the queen's letter of December 16, 1842, to the council

of government to prove it, Du Petit-Thouars said he had been disposed to forget all troubles experienced by the council. But Pomare persisted in keeping a flag that she instituted under foreign influence and contrary to right, since by her signature of the 1842 treaty she gave up irrevocably the exterior sovereignty of the Society Islands to Louis Philippe. This flag, being in some sort a personified offense to French national dignity, had to go. The admiral expressed himself thus:

After having tried uselessly to lead the ex-queen to sentiments more appropriate to her obligations and honor, I tried a last personal step in order to obtain that, in her true interest, she should execute in good faith the treaty which she herself had provoked and by which she was irrevocably bound respecting France. This last effort would have been a moment crowned with success, but her fatal destiny has been stronger, and my choice has been only between an impossible retreat or the definitive taking of possession of the Society Islands, which I have done.⁹⁰

Du Petit-Thouars characterized this as a restrained rather than exaggerated account, for, he said, he knew that Blackler had been given information discrediting the admiral's patience.⁹¹

Du Petit-Thouars sent along a copy of the short proclamation announcing his intention to take possession in the name of the French king of the Society Islands and their dependencies.⁹²

Subsequently the chiefs met with the new governor. This meeting was to be followed, according to official information, by the issuing of a new proclamation establishing the future basis of the government.⁹³

Blackler concluded his remarks on the French occupation with this judgment:

In reviewing the course pursued by the Tahitian Government (if the term Government can be properly applied to it) from the date of my arrival at Tahiti, it cannot be denied by the most partial observer, that to an improper interference in civil affairs of individuals attached to the missionary establishment, & to the undue influence arising from a combination of the British Consular and clerical capacities in one person, the treaty of the 9th of September 1824, establishing the Protectorate, is mainly attributable.

.....
It is but justice however to individuals comprising that body to say, that many of them, have repeatedly admitted the impropriety of the course above alluded to, and some of them have had the candour to concur with me in the opinion that the undue confidence which the Tahitian authorities had from long habit reposed in their councils, (*sic*) had been productive of serious evil, inasmuch as its tendency had been to bring into discredit the opinions of those whose official character and position rendered them fitter advisers. [Blackler, perhaps?]

The political course pursued by officers of the British Marine in conjunction with the British Consul, from the arrival of Sir Thomas Thompson, to the date of the occupation of the Islands, exhibits an interference in the affairs pending be-

tween France and the Government of Queen Pomare, not only unwarrantable, but almost unparalleled [*sic*] However opposed to equity the measures of the French Admiral may in their opinion have been, the continued annoyance & unnecessary opposition to which the Provisional Government was thereby subjected, together with the course pursued subsequently to the arrival of the admiral, appear to me the dictate of a policy as imbecile as it was unjustifiable.⁹⁴

The result had been to cause a political excitement favorable to the French interest, wrote Blackler: The vacation of the British consular office and the hoisting of the French flag had put the future disposition of affairs at Tahiti in the cabinets of the home governments.⁹⁵

Pritchard, of course, had his own story to tell: On Thouars' arrival, Pomare sent him a letter of welcome in which she assumed that France had generously restored Tahitian independence, as England had done in Hawaii. But the admiral replied that he had come to establish the protectorate, Louis Philippe having ratified the act of September 9, 1842. The protectorate mushroomed into a full-scale possession on November 5. Thouars' fleet carried not only troops and a governor, but many things needed to set up a colony, thus implying a premeditated seizure. Taking the crown off Pomare's flag clearly violated treaty guarantees of her sovereignty.

Despite all this, Pomare had issued a proclamation ordering the Tahitians to remain quiet, and she was now desirous of visiting England and France to plead her cause, having already sent two petitions to Louis Philippe, and one to Queen Victoria. Without house or home, stripped of all, the pitiable ex-monarch was living with the Pritchards.⁹⁶

The British consul railed against arbitrary French actions, and in desperation suggested an alternative to complete Tahitian sovereignty: Since the Tahitians needed help in governing foreigners, the United States, England and France should each send a commissioner to join with Pomare in managing all matters relating to such residents, who would have equal privileges regardless of nationality.⁹⁷

As November waned Pritchard fired his main battery of arguments again: Pomare had been forced to sign in September, 1842; France had exceeded the treaty in taking all of the Society Islands (an action which the consul wrongly believed Louis Philippe would disavow); Pomare had been unjustly despoiled of all her property; in her opposition to the French she had the full support of the native population.⁹⁸

Pritchard reported his house as surrounded by spies of the French, who, he heard on good authority, were planning to deport him if possible. He still, however, hoped for British intervention.⁹⁹

But he was urging a lost cause. The instructions for which the consul had so eagerly looked in July, 1843, dealt him—when they arrived—a crushing blow:

June 14, 1843: Aberdeen enclosed correspondence with the British ambassador at Paris, and instructions to British naval commanders in the Pacific. Pritchard was ordered to follow this policy exactly, in both conduct and language. The policy counseled a moderation highly distasteful to the warshipful pair in Papeete.¹⁰⁰

July 12, 1843: Pritchard was to content himself with watching closely French proceedings regarding British protestant missionaries and freedom of worship. He should report any deviations from the line of behavior to which France had pledged herself in these respects.¹⁰¹

September 25, 1843: Pritchard's despatch of March 13 had been received. The consul should have made a full and circumstantial report, instead of referring to Toup Nicolas' accounts. "Serious inconveniences" could result from a British officer's prejudging the course which his government might see fit to adopt, by acting in a way that might endanger the harmony of relations with a foreign power. Pritchard had entirely misinterpreted Canning and Palmerston; their letters proved that Britain was not prepared to interfere actively to support Pomare. Victoria's government did not approve of French proceedings in Tahiti; on the contrary, it considered these unjust and oppressive. But Pomare by her own will and act had signed the letter soliciting French protection, and likewise the agreement that followed was her own voluntary and formal act. Therefore, Britain did not intend to raise any question regarding French exercise of authority, but would firmly maintain the right of British protestant missionaries to full religious freedom. Although Britain would intercede with France to secure just and mild treatment for Pomare, she would do well to submit prudently to the circumstances which her own fears and the intrigues of some of her corrupt chiefs had brought on her.

Then came the unpalatable orders:

1. Be always cautious and courteous with the French, avoiding every act or word that might be construed as intended to give offence;
2. Above all, never in any way encourage Pomare or the chiefs to expect active English aid against the French;
3. Henceforth consider yourself under the orders of H. M. Consul General for the Islands of the Pacific, who would live in the Sandwich Islands;
4. Instruct British naval commanders to act with greater forbearance towards the French.¹⁰²

Thus we see that Blackler's assessment of the situation proved essentially practical: Political realities supported France. If, however, the American consul considered Tahiti on the threshold of an idyllic era, he was soon

disabused. Blackler's last despatches touching on the French seizure complained of the occupation fever gripping the islands. Impressed with the idea that they were to be dispossessed of their lands, the Tahitians neglected cultivation. This, and the great influx of troops and other foreigners attending the new regime, forced prices up to such an extent that Blackler had to contract for the board of consular seamen at \$3.00 a week. It looked, too, as though costs might keep going up.¹⁰⁸

But for the much-troubled consul time was about to end. Reduced to a state of extremity, he was preparing to return to the United States when he died at Papeete early in September, 1844.¹⁰⁴

NOTES

- ¹ William Parker Morrell, *Britain in the Pacific Islands* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), pp. 64, 66, 72, 77.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 61. Blackler succeeded Moerenhout as U.S. Consul.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 58, 72.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.
- ⁷ Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition* (Philadelphia: 1849), Vol. II, p. 18.
- ⁸ Blackler to John Forsyth, Secretary of State, No. 1, Despatches from United States Consuls in Tahiti, 1836-1906, Roll 1, Vol. 1, January 11, 1836-June 5, 1841, National Archives, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration (Washington, D. C.: 1954), microfilm. Cited hereafter by names of correspondents, with appropriate roll and volume number.
- ⁹ The *Venus* was Du Petit-Thouars' vessel.
- ¹⁰ Blackler to Forsyth, No. 7, April 14, 1839, Roll 1, Vol. 1.
- ¹¹ Blackler to Forsyth, No. 7.
- ¹² Blackler to Forsyth, No. 17, October 31, 1840, Roll 1, Vol. 1 (received March 18, 1841).
- ¹³ Wilkes, *op. cit.*, p. 10. The charges included: (1) the seizure of an American whale-boat and ill treatment of the crew; (2) unjust imposition of fines on American seamen; (3) refusal to apprehend deserters from American ships, or to provide a place for their safekeeping; (4) evasion of a promise to provide a place for the transaction of the consular business. Wilkes reported that the chiefs agreed to all that was asked of them; he was convinced the Tahitians would do all in their power to redress just grievances (*Ibid.*, p. 41).
- ¹⁴ Blackler to Forsyth, No. 17.
- ¹⁵ Letter, Wata to the Commander, September 30, 1839, enclosed in Blackler's No. 17.

- ¹⁶ Wilkes, *op. cit.*, p. 9, remarks that Pritchard, although consul, had not abandoned all his missionary duties. Wilkes was highly impressed by Pritchard and the missionary enterprise in general (*Ibid.*, p. 12).
- ¹⁷ Pomare was accustomed to making frequent, extended, and sometimes politically expedient sojourns through her island kingdom. Uata was her godfather and, in effect, her prime minister (Wilkes, *op. cit.*, p. 18).
- ¹⁸ Blackler to Forsyth, No. 17.
- ¹⁹ Blackler to Forsyth, No. 24, January 13, 1841, enclosing Buareia to the President of America, January 20, 1841, Roll 1, Vol. 1 (received May 19, 1841). Blackler was a merchant as well as a consul (Oliver Potter to Daniel Webster, May 20, 1841, Roll 1, Vol. 1). When Wilkes left Tahiti, the *Peacock*, commanded by W. L. Hudson, stayed behind for some time. During this interval gin suddenly rose to prominence in the crew's diet in a most disturbing way. The sailors told Hudson they were buying the stuff for \$3.00 a bottle. He called the chiefs together, and a search was ordered. Some culprits were discovered and fined; at the examination, however, the chiefs implicated Blackler, saying that he had landed seventy cases of gin, which he kept inviolate on his premises, under the U. S. flag. This, the chiefs claimed, was the mother lode from which the nuggets retailed to Hudson's sailors had been extracted. Wilkes did not pretend to know the tale's veracity. (Wilkes, *op. cit.*, p. 55.)
- ²⁰ Blackler No. 32 (no inside address; forwarded to Daniel Webster), June 5, 1841, Roll 1, Vol. 1 (received October 15, 1841).
- ²¹ Enclosed in Blackler's No. 32.
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ Declaration of the Consul, enclosed in Blackler's No. 32.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ Blackler to Webster, No. 32.
- ²⁶ Blackler to Webster, No. 32.
- ²⁷ Morrell, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
- ²⁸ Blackler to Forsyth, No. 34, July 3, 1841, Roll 2, Vol. 2 (July 2, 1841-December 31, 1850), enclosure.
- ²⁹ Enclosure, dated August 18, 1841, in Blackler's No. 34.
- ³⁰ Extract of letter, Aulick to Navy Department, October 13, 1841, Roll 2, Vol. 2.
- ³¹ Morrell, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
- ³² Letter, Blackler to Daniel Webster, June 23, 1842, Roll 2, Vol. 2.
- ³³ Morrell, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- ³⁵ Blackler to Webster, No. 46, September 10, 1842, Roll 2, Vol. 2.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, A copy of the circular is enclosed in Blackler to Webster, No. 53, February 11, 1843, Roll 2, Vol. 2.
- ³⁷ Letter enclosed in Blackler to Webster, No. 47, September 26, 1842, Roll 2, Vol. 2. All of Du Petit-Thouars' letters and a number of documents are in French. Translations are by the writer of this paper.
- ³⁸ Letter, September 6, 1842, enclosed in Blackler's No. 47.

- ³⁹ Declaration of Admiral A. Du Petit-Thouars, Commander in Chief of the Naval Station of France in the Pacific to the Queen and Principal Chiefs of Tahiti, enclosed in Blackler's No. 47. Necessary translations of documents by R.A.G.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹ Blackler to Webster, No. 46. Morrell writes that during the night of the eighth Paraita, Hitoti, Tati, and Utami conferred with the French, and that Tati and Utami "... afterwards admitted that they had been promised \$1,000 each to quieten their fears." (Morrell, *op. cit.*, p. 78).
- ⁴² Pomare and Chiefs to the Admiral, September 9, 1842, enclosed in Blackler's No. 47.
- ⁴³ Enclosed in Blackler's No. 47.
- ⁴⁴ Blackler enclosed the whole of his correspondence with Du Petit-Thouars in his No. 47.
- ⁴⁵ Enclosed in Blackler's No. 47.
- ⁴⁶ Proclamation enclosed in Blackler's No. 47. It was signed for Pomare by the regent, Paraita.
- ⁴⁷ Blackler to Webster, No. 47, September 26, 1842, Roll 2, Vol. 2.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.* This statement would appear to demand proof; it is open to question.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵² *Ibid.*
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁷ Blackler to Webster, No. 53, February 11, 1843, Roll 2, Vol. 2.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶² *Ibid.*
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁵ Pritchard to Palmerston, June 25, 1841. BPRO FO 58/16.
- ⁶⁶ Pritchard to Aberdeen, March 11, 1842. BPRO FO 58/16.
- ⁶⁷ Pritchard to John Bedwell, March 30, 1842. BPRO FO 58/16.
- ⁶⁸ Bedwell to Pritchard, July 30, 1842. BPRO FO 58/16.
- ⁶⁹ Pritchard to Aberdeen, September 30, 1842. BPRO FO 58/16.
- ⁷⁰ Pritchard to Aberdeen, December 8, 1842. BPRO FO 58/16.
- ⁷¹ Pritchard to Bidwell, January 3, 1843. BPRO FO 58/20.
- ⁷² Pritchard to Toup Nicolas, December 2, 1842. BPRO FO 58/23.

- ⁷³ *Ibid.*; Pritchard to Aberdeen, June 29, 1842. BPRO FO 58/16. The presents were some household furniture and a carriage, the first such conveyance seen in Tahiti. But Pomare, hitherto a side-saddle equestrienne, was not fated to travel on these wheels for long. Pritchard found her virtually destitute, and the carriage was shipped to Honolulu to be sold on her behalf. Kamehameha III bought it to facilitate his royal peregrinations, but he seldom used it. At last report it was rotting away, abandoned, in a Honolulu yard.
- ⁷⁴ Morrell, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
- ⁷⁵ J. Toup Nicolas to Secretary of the Admiralty, February 26, 1843. BPRO FO 58/23.
- ⁷⁶ Pritchard to Aberdeen, March 13, 1843. BPRO FO 58/20.
- ⁷⁷ Report of proceedings translated by Pritchard. BPRO FO 58/23.
- ⁷⁸ Toup Nicolas to Secretary of the Admiralty, March 14, 1843. BPRO FO 58/23.
- ⁷⁹ Pritchard to Aberdeen, July 10, 1843. BPRO FO 58/20.
- ⁸⁰ Blackler to Webster, No. 58, November 23, 1843, Roll 2, Vol. 2 (received April 20, 1844).
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.* Du Petit-Thouars had exceeded his instructions in declaring the protectorate, but the French government decided to back him up. London Missionary Society directors had asked the British government to urge France to postpone recognition until the real facts of the affair could be discovered, i.e., whether extortion and force had been involved (Morrell, *op. cit.*, p. 80).
- ⁸² Blackler to Webster, No. 58. Blackler had his own tiff with Nicolas. The commander had expressed his intention to board an American whaler to look for British subjects—a threat which he soon abandoned, however (Thomas ap Catesby Jones to A. P. Upshur, Secretary of the Navy, No. 51, November 21, 1843, Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Commanding Officers of Squadrons, 1841–1886, Pacific Squadron, 1841–1886, Roll 31, December 30, 1841–January 18, 1845, microfilm). He then wrote Blackler that on the night of March 21, 1843, he had received a letter signed by over twenty Americans, in which they asked Nicolas to interfere on behalf of eight seamen belonging to an American ship. These seamen, the Americans charged, Blackler had put under French protection on a French man-of-war. Nicolas desired to mediate in their behalf; failing that, he threatened to submit his correspondence to the U. S. government (Nicolas to Blackler, March 23, 1843, enclosed in Jones' No. 51).
Blackler boarded the *Vindictive* and tried to get Nicolas to withdraw his letter, but made no headway; the consul then noted discrepancies in the address, and officially refused to receive or respond to the letter. This settled the matter. Blackler charitably excused Nicolas on the grounds of age, rank, and insanity (Memo, Blackler to Jones, enclosed in Jones' No. 51).
- ⁸³ Blackler to Webster, No. 58.
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁹ Du Petit-Thouars to Blackler, November 8, 1843, enclosed in Blackler's No. 58.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁹² Proclamation dated November 9, 1843, enclosed in Blackler's No. 58.
- ⁹³ Blackler to Webster, No. 58.
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁶ Pritchard to Aberdeen, November 10, 1843. BPRO FO 58/20.
- ⁹⁷ Pritchard to Aberdeen, November 11, 1843. BPRO FO 58/20. Subsequent experience in Samoa and the New Hebrides indicates that Pritchard's "solution" would have been highly unworkable.
- ⁹⁸ Pritchard to Aberdeen, November 23, 1843. BPRO FO 58/20.
- ⁹⁹ *Ibid.* Pritchard's informants were indeed reliable; in due course France elevated them to the status of prophets by shipping out the intractable missionary turned consul.
- ¹⁰⁰ BPRO FO 58/20.
- ¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰³ Blackler to Webster, No. 59, January 1, 1844, Roll 2, Vol. 2 (received July 17, 1844); Blackler to Webster, No. 60, July 1, 1844, Roll 2, Vol. 2 (received November 5, 1844).
- ¹⁰⁴ George R. Chapman, Acting U. S. Consul, to the Secretary of the United States, No. 1, September 15, 1844, Roll 2, Vol. 2. Apparently Blackler died without getting any satisfaction for the affair of June 1, 1841. Thomas ap Catesby Jones was in Tahiti in October, 1843. Blackler sent the commander a letter in which he detailed his attempts to secure redress. The State Department had met his pleas with utter silence. Jones himself declined to take any action. The distressed consul asked Jones to make copies of documents dealing with the outrage, to forward them, and to make representations in Blackler's behalf to the U. S. government (Jones to Upshur, No. 51, and enclosure, Blackler to Jones, October 18, 1843, Roll 31).