JACOB ADLER
AND ROBERT M. KAMINS

THE FANTASTIC LIFE OF WALTER MURRAY GIBSON
HAWAII’S MINISTER OF EVERYTHING
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JACOB ADLER and ROBERT M. KAMINS
For Thelma C. Adler
and Shirley R. Kamins
PHAETHON, mortal child of the Sun God, was not believed by his companions when he boasted of his supernal origin. He entreated Helios to acknowledge him by allowing him to drive the fiery chariot of the Sun across the sky. Against his better judgment, the father was persuaded.

The boy proudly mounted the solar car, grasped the reins, and set the mighty horses leaping up into the eastern heavens. For a few ecstatic moments Phaethon was the Lord of the Sky.

Soon, however, the flaming steeds overcame his mortal strength and took the bits in their teeth. They bolted off the path of the Sun and drew the wildly careening chariot down toward the earth. When the mountain slopes began to burn and the rivers to shrink from the heat of the celestial horses, Zeus intervened. His thunderbolts forced the horses down to the sea and struck the rash driver dead.
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Preface

There is still a curious disinclination to speak the name of Walter Murray Gibson in official or quasi-official discourse in Hawaii. Even during a revival of Hawaiian nationalism and interest in the times of the old monarchy, this chief minister of King Kalakaua who brought to their highest pitch the political aspirations of the monarch is seldom mentioned. Visitors to Iolani Palace, newly restored to its nineteenth-century brilliance, hear from the docent all about its history—all, that is, except that Representative Gibson arranged for its financing and Premier Gibson oversaw its construction. Nor are viewers of the heroic statue of King Kamehameha I, founder of the Hawaiian kingdom, informed that the statue was also the product of Gibson’s political energies, an embodiment of the monarchy, a defiance of those who would dictate to the king.

Across Oahu at Laie, center of the Church of the Latter-Day Saints in Hawaii, the Mormon community remembers Gibson as a rascally conniver who used his position of leadership in the church, a High Priest of Melchizedek and chosen emissary of Brigham Young, to take unto himself lands that belonged to the church. On the island of Lanai, those lands no longer bear any trace of their industrious cultivation by Gibson, his children, and a generation of native farmers and ranchers who worked for him there. The people of Maui have forgotten that Gibson represented them in the legislature of the kingdom, the most skillful politician of his day. Local Mormons, however, are reminded by church history that it was on Maui that Gibson was judged by the church to deserve excommunication.

That is how Gibson survives, hazily, in the collective memory
of Hawaii, as an apostate, an engaging rogue appropriately included by Michener and Day in their assortment of *Rascals in Paradise*, along with buccaneer Bully Hayes and Captain Bligh of the *Bounty*. However, a glimpse of another Gibson, a romantic and compassionate man who rashly challenged the ascendant planter-missionary party at a decisive period in Hawaii’s political history, emerges in *A Dream of Islands*, where Gavan Daws groups him with Herman Melville, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Paul Gauguin.

What follows is an attempt to show the many sides of Walter Murray Gibson, both visionary and conniver, and indeed the outer man of many talents as well—adventurer, New York businessman, Washington lobbyist, author, newspaper editor, orator, rancher, consummate legislative leader, “Minister of Everything” for King Kalakaua, and, always, a dreamer who dared to reach for the sun.
Acknowledgments

The authors have debts of gratitude to those who have provided information—especially the knowledgable librarians of the Hawaii and Pacific Collection of the University of Hawaii, of the University of Utah at Provo, Yale University, the British Library in London, and the Library of Congress; archivists of the Hawaii State Archives, the National Archives in Washington, the Netherlands Royal Archives in The Hague, and in the [Mormon] Church Historian’s Office, Salt Lake City, as well as at Brigham Young University-Hawaii Campus.

Charles P. Neat of Sunderland, County Durham, England, helped trace Gibson’s true birthplace and Robert Alain of Montreal obtained the records of Gibson’s schooling. Beatrice and Fred Oettinger of New York City obtained for us photographs and records of the blocks in Manhattan where the Gibson family lived and conducted their business. Frank Damon of Honolulu kindly provided material relating to the Reverend Samuel Chenery Damon.

Family photographs of Gibson and his family in Hawaii were generously lent for reproduction by his great granddaughter, Mrs. Hazel Montgomery of Kaneohe. Another descendant, Walter H. Kaaihili of Honolulu, kindly made available to us an oil painting of Gibson, dated 1885.

Within the University of Hawaii at Manoa, many others were also helpful, too many to list them all, but we must acknowledge the office space provided through the courtesy of David A. Heenan and David Bess, the former and current deans of the College of Business Administration, and the valued assistance given by Masayo Matsukawa and Joan Karimoto, secretaries of the college. Special thanks are due to Cecile Freitas.
In preparation, the manuscript benefited from reading by O. A. Bushnell, Gavan Daws, Edward Joesting, Pauline King, Shirley Kamins, Bob Dye, Steve Dawson, and Joseph V. Miccio. Bob Krauss made a thorough critique of the chapter dealing with Gibson’s work as a newspaper editor, while Sister Mary Nabb kindly checked the chapter in which Mother Marianne figures prominently. At the University of Hawaii Press, editing of the first quality by Elizabeth K. Bushnell and Damaris A. Kirchhofer is gratefully acknowledged.

The substance of Chapter 6 appeared in the *Hawaiian Journal of History* for 1984 under the title “The Political Debut of Walter Murray Gibson.” Helen G. Chapin, co-editor of the journal, was most helpful in that initial publication of our reconstruction of the life of Gibson.

**Jacob Adler**  
**Robert M. Kamins**  
*Honolulu*
The Fantastic Life of Walter Murray Gibson
Walter Murray Gibson shunned the commonplace as other men shun poverty and sickness. From youth to death, romanticism shaped his thoughts and acts—indeed his very origin. After a long voyage home from prison in Java had given him the time, and the need, to design a suitable origin, Gibson claimed to be a native American, born on a U.S. ship, storm-tossed off Gibraltar (or in the Bay of Biscay) en route to the United States. He embellished this story of his birth in telling it to Nathaniel Hawthorne, then the American consul at Liverpool. Actually, he assured Hawthorne, two infants had been born on that vessel. In the turmoil of the storm, the babies were mistakenly exchanged: he was taken from his real parents, an English lord and lady, and given to the commoners whose name he bore. The mistake deprived him of the noble status to which his blood entitled him but he was able to claim American citizenship by birth, since the vessel was of United States registry.

Reality was unacceptably prosaic. It is true that Walter sailed with the Gibson family when they migrated to the New World, but that was in 1832, when he was already a boy of ten. Baptismal records of the Church of England show that Walter Murray Gibson was born—presumably on January 16, as he always said—in Kearsley, parish of Stamfordham, Northumberland, and was there baptized on March 9, 1822. His parents, John and Lucy (Murray) Gibson raised sheep there, as had his grandparents, John and Ann (Cheston) Gibson.

Kearsley, no more than a tiny hamlet comprising the homes of a few tenant farmers, lies on the bleak Ingoe Moor in the windswept country rising toward the Scottish border, inland from
Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The land stood apart from the changes imposed elsewhere upon north England by the Industrial Revolution. Around settlements such as Kearsley a scanty population tended gaunt pastoral farms, each isolated on its ridge, looking down on the rough sheep walks where passed the meager flocks they depended on for cash income. No railroad ever approached these moors. Since the Roman legions had marched away from Hadrian’s Wall nearby, no highway had penetrated this far into Northumberland. The ocean, romantic backdrop to Walter’s later accounts of his childhood, was not to be seen, except in a young boy’s active imagination.4

Ingoe Village, a mile across the moor from Kearsley, had a population of about 20 in the 1820s. Stamfordsham, the nearest town, where Walter was baptized, was six miles away, perhaps close enough for him to have attended its charity day school. It was there, or at home, that were somehow laid down the foundations for the extraordinary linguistic ability that he demonstrated in later life. He would have heard and spoken the dialect of the area, with its strong guttural r and heavy Northumberland burr. This rustic accent he later replaced with the softer tones of the American South in a deliberate denial of his origins as unfitting for the romantic hero he saw himself to be.

His fate required splendid antecedents. These the Gibsons of Northumberland did not provide—though not for lack of ancient lineage, for Gibsons (or Gibbsons) are to be found in parish rolls dating back to 1538. However, they generally answered the muster of their lord “without horse or harness,” showing themselves to be members of the poor if sturdy yeomanry. After the religious riots in 1718 and the Stuart uprising of 1745, some of the Gibsons were listed among those suspected of being Catholic. To be born to poor sheep farmers, part of an extended family thought to have Papist leanings, and isolated in Northumberland was no way to start on the glory road. Walter utterly repressed this meager childhood—except what he learned about the raising of sheep. That knowledge was to benefit him decades later in Hawaii.

The Gibson family made up a large portion of Kearsley’s tiny population.5 Walter was the third son of the farm household when he was born: John Cheston was then four and Thomas almost two years old. By the time the family left England in 1830 or 1831,
two more sons had been added: Richard Porter, born around 1823, and William Howard, three years later. The uplands of sparsely inhabited Northumberland, picturesque with ruined castles and peel towers surviving from the long period of border warfare with the Scots but short on fertile soil, was no place to sustain a large brood by farming. Like many of their countrymen from that corner of England, the Gibsons sought a better life in North America.

They sailed, however, not to the United States, as Walter would claim later, but to Canada. A Canadian childhood, a Canadian schooling, did not fit into the life Gibson was to construct for himself as an American, especially as a Southerner. So he suppressed these years in telling of his origins. The Gibsons emigrated to Montreal, then the second largest city in Canada with a population of some 30,000.

First glimpses of the town for such rural immigrants as the Gibson family would have been dramatic. “The roofs, covered with tin, and glittering in the sun, give them a singular impression. … A number of steeples rise between the buildings, at the head of which appears the majestic cathedral.” The low houses, chiefly of brick, which the newcomers viewed as they passed through the narrow and crooked streets of Montreal, may have suffered by comparison with urban architecture in the England they had left behind, but now they themselves were town folk and part of city life.

Not least of their new advantages was good schooling for the boys, far better than that provided by the charity school at Stamfordsham. Walter and his two younger brothers, Richard and William, were enrolled as day pupils at the College of Montreal, where their teachers were brothers of the French Order of St. Sulpice. The two older boys presumably stayed home to help their father earn a living, first on a farm in the outskirts of Montreal, and later as a grocer in town.

Students not intended to take orders in the Catholic priesthood, such as the Gibson children, were registered in the Petit Seminaire. Walter later avoided any mention of his experience at the college, preferring to “recall” how he had been taught by an old missionary and by living with the Indians of South Carolina, but the curriculum of the Petit Seminaire was nothing to be ashamed of. For two years (1834–1836), between the ages of twelve and fourteen, he
studied Latin, French, geography, history, mathematics, and religion. Although many of the students, like the Gibsons, came from English-speaking families, and a few others were immigrants from Germany, the language of instruction was French, and for those with a good ear, learning and living in a French-speaking community established a strong facility in that language. Walter must have become bilingual quickly, for all his life he showed an extraordinary ability to learn new tongues. Latin history provided a stock of classical references he was to use advantageously, as evidenced in his most autobiographical writing, *The Prison of Weltevreden and a Glance at the East Indian Archipelago*. The class in geography gave Walter the shapes and names of the far-off places that always fascinated him. Somewhere, too, he acquired a taste for epic poetry.

Perhaps it was the rigid discipline of the College of Montreal that caused Gibson, as a man, to blot out these years of school life. A typical weekday for the students began at 5:30 A.M., with prayers and then study before breakfast at 7:05, followed by mass at 7:20. Morning classes ran from 8:00 to 11:00, with a brief recreational recess; then there were religious readings before lunch at 11:30. Afternoon classes extended from 1:00 to 4:00, and after time for refreshment and a brief recreation period, study and more religious readings occupied the students until supper at 6:30. Prayer and spiritual readings closed the school day before an early bedtime. Day students were instructed to follow at home the same schedule for the hours before breakfast and before bedtime.

Rules of discipline that thought of everything applied to students boarding at the college and to daytime scholars alike.

They had to go to Confession once a month. If they came back to college before the afternoon recreation period, they were asked not to shout, not to wrestle, not to run after one another in the parlor, the street, or the terrace, nor to throw snowballs or stones.... They were not allowed near dangerous places, such as the riverbanks, the guardhouse, the ramparts, the Champ-de-Mars, the powder room, the barracks and the tennis court.... They will not go boating on the river, they will not go aboard ships, they will not drink tea or take other refreshments together, they will not go into the forest for fear of meeting bad company therein.... they will not exchange, barter or trade their personal possessions.
Making the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers, which then bounded Montreal, off-limits to the students of the college must have particularly galled Walter, fascinated as he was by pathways to the sea, by ships, and by those who adventured on them. However, habits of diligent work, which he preserved in prison and used to good advantage as businessman, farmer, writer, lecturer, religious enterpriser, journalist, and politician, were formed during Walter’s two years in this Catholic school. Also, hidden away until near the close of his life, there was now established a connection with Catholicism and a knowledge of its ritual, which would help the future prime minister of the Kingdom of Hawaii in his complex relationship with Mother Marianne Cope and the church in Hawaii.

The Gibson family had been in Canada only a few years when death carried off three of the sons in appallingly quick order. John Cheston, the eldest boy, and then Edward, the Canadian-born baby of the family, died in 1834 during the cholera epidemic that the people of Montreal suffered that year. Two years later Thomas died, leaving Walter, then fourteen, the eldest child. A priest officiated at the boys’ funerals, indicating that the family, Anglican Catholics back to England, were observing rites of the Roman Catholic Church in Canada.13 (In later years Gibson said that his mother was a Catholic.)

Walter was absent from school for two months during the epidemic-cursed year of 1834, and after 1836 his name disappeared from the registrar’s list of students. The stunning loss of his brothers, the abrupt stop to his schooling, suggest that it was because of the pain he experienced that he expunged the years in Canada from the boyhood he later constructed. Here was the suffering that was to inform his compassion for other plague victims, the lepers of Hawaii.

The surviving Gibsons quit Canada in 1837, the year after the death of Thomas. Their relocation to New York City was necessarily overland, by riverboat, stagecoach, and railroad, and not by ship down the St. Lawrence to the sea, since the rapids of the river above Quebec were not yet circumvented by ship canals. Crossing into the United States, they left behind not only their allegiance to Great Britain but also their accustomed means of livelihood. John Gibson, long-time English farmer, briefly a Montreal grocer,
in New York set up business as a confectioner, first solely on his own account, then later (as the 1841 City Directory indicated) in company with his wife Lucy. From 1843, the family lived in the Bowery, on Sixth Avenue, moving north on the same thoroughfare of Manhattan in the mid-1850s.

Long before that time, however, Walter left home. The move to New York City had brought him at last to the shores of the sea. Dreams of adventure, personified by an “uncle” more real to him than any kinsman of the flesh, were stimulated by the tall sailing ships tied up at the wharves, but those dreams were not to be acted out while he was under the control of his father. So he took off. “I was a wanderer from home and left to my own guidance at the age of fourteen,” he wrote in his autobiographical account, The Prison of Weltevreden.14 To Nathaniel Hawthorne, in 1854, Walter reportedly said that the Gibsons, his legal (but not natural) parents, had not loved him and that he had not lived with or seen them for many years.15

Whether driven out by lovelessness or attracted by adventure, Walter next showed up—probably late in 1837—in South Carolina, along the upper Savannah River among the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. In New York City he had hired on as carriage driver to the William Van Dyck family of Pendleton, South Carolina. Even as coachman, he impressed the local community with his knowledge and style. Once, while driving Mr. and Mrs. Van Dyck, his employers began speaking French in order to converse in private. “Gibson took the hint, and although a carriage driver, was a gentleman as well. Quickly turning to Mr. Van Dyck he remarked in a respectful manner: ‘I presume you do not desire me to know what you are talking about—I understand the French language perfectly.’ That gave them a good opinion of Gibson.”16

The local school board was equally impressed with his knowledge of French and other indications of learning, and they employed the “sharp educated Yankee” to teach in a country school near Pendleton.17 He was tall, talked well, already had impressive self-possession, and the board may have taken him to be older than a mere lad in his mid-teens. After his appointment, rural schoolmaster Walter boarded with the family of Jesse and Hannah Lewis at Sandy Springs, outside Pendleton.

The young boy, who had just left his own family, soon found
himself with the responsibilities of a rather. Gibson’s account of how he encountered sexual romance in the highlands along the Savannah River is characteristically rhapsodic but does reveal that the match was a bad one.

When I was yet a boy, I met in my wanderings in the backwoods of South Carolina a fair gentle girl of my own age, who had never been more than a half a day’s ride from the plantation of her father. We often sauntered together in the still woods of Milwee on summer days; we would wade, barefooted, the shallow pebbly streams; cross the deep and rapid creeks, with mutual help of hands to our tottering steps, as we walked the unsteady swinging trunk that bridged them over. We rambled hand in hand to gather wild grapes and the muscadine, then we would rest beneath the dense shade, and at the foot of some great tree, and talk of our boyish and girlish fancies; and then without any thought to our mutual tastes, character, or fitness, or anything that had to do with the future; but listening only to the music of our young voices; to the alluring notes of surrounding nature; and having only our young faces to admire, we loved; and ere long I was a man, we were married.\(^\text{18}\)

The girl he had “met in his wanderings” was Rachel Margaret Lewis, the daughter of his landlord and landlady, Jesse and Hannah Lewis. Their romance blossomed quickly in those halcyon days, for they were married in Pendleton on July 10, 1838, during Walter’s first summer in the South. She was twenty years old, he sixteen. The Reverend Thomas Dawson officiated, indicating that Walter was not then a practicing Catholic, irrespective of the religious tendencies of his family up north.\(^\text{19}\)

For a time the newlyweds continued to live in the Lewis home on the north bank of the Savannah River, but they soon moved to the opposite shore, where Walter taught in an “old field” rural school in Elbert County, in northwestern Georgia. With the help of neighbors, in the backwoods custom, he built a log cabin at the Burnt Store Fork of a country road outside the town of Anderson. He supplemented his schoolteacher’s salary by peddling a small stock of goods that he and Rachel stored in their cabin. Once he was asked by the nearby Sardis Church (Baptist) to organize their records, which had been accumulating since the congregation was organized in 1811. Local memory, a century later, was that he did “a splendid job.”\(^\text{20}\)
Gibson’s own account of those years along the Savannah characteristically presented his experiences in a romantic mode. Money-making tasks, such as teaching school and peddling to support his family, went unmentioned as he sketched a picture of life in Arcadia more fitting to his persona of youthful woodsman.

I lived the philosopher’s covered life, in my unambitious years, among these people, in these woods, and by these streams. A light labor got me all I wanted then, of simple dress, and simple food: the homespun garb, both inner and outer one, from the coat to the stocking feet, was carded, spun, dyed, woven; and made up, by the same hands that cooked the backwoods fare. And I cared not for more than this supply of simple wants, and my pine log home.21

The “same hands” that tended to his wants were those of his young and repeatedly pregnant wife Rachel. However, Gibson’s own idyll presents him as a self-sufficient backwoodsman, equally ready with skillet and musket.

When this light labor [how that would have amazed Rachel!] was laid aside, which was often, then I turned to other toil, with my rifle and hatchet and hunting knife, in the woods; and I roused the red deer abounding in the glens and valleys, and on the hillsides around Oconee.22

Thus went the days in Gibson’s imagined account of his early manhood along the Savannah River. Reality, which preserves birth records, suggests that it was otherwise. Although Gibson omitted any mention of fatherhood—or of marriage, other than his meeting Rachel and then her death—he was thrice a father by the age of twenty-one.23 His firstborn, John, was named after Walter’s eldest brother, buried in Montreal. A second son, christened Henry, came next, and then in October 1843, Rachel gave birth to a daughter, Tallulah, who was to be her father’s favorite.24

With a country school to keep under control, with peddling in neighboring backwoods settlements to supplement his modest salary, Walter was kept scrambling to support the growing family in his “curious little cabin.” How his irrepressible imaginings of wealth and glory were received by Rachel are clearly hinted at in his summation of those summer days when they fell in love and married, “without any thought as to mutual tastes, character or fitness.” A wife and three infants barred the road to the adventuresome action he craved.
But he dreamt, nevertheless. And he talked. Later, Gibson was to impress many—Nathaniel Hawthorne in Liverpool, Dutch governors in the East Indies, Brigham Young in Salt Lake City, King Kalakaua in Honolulu, and public audiences across the United States—with the force and vivacity of his speech. In Hart County, Georgia, he was remembered for his stories of travel and adventure as “a garrulous Munchausen” whose yarns could not always be swallowed but who entertained mighty well.\(^{25}\)

Hero of his romances was an uncle, brother of his mother, by Gibson’s romantic account. This uncle, he said, as a youth had run away from home “to go to sea, to become a sailor, to live a life of adventure, and to see strange people and far-off lands”—Walter’s very dream.\(^{26}\) After much derring-do in the Far East, the uncle “entered the service of an Arab merchant of Muscat; and after a time, fell into the favor of the Imaum. He made many voyages to the Malay Islands, chiefly to Acheen, in the Island of Sumatra.” Then, touching at Bombay, he found letters from his sister and sailed back home (to England? America?) to see her again.

In speaking to his sister of his future in the East, he said that he wanted one of her children to share his fortunes with him there. He singled out her third son, a child rocked upon his much-loved sea. His love for this nephew grew strong from the first moment of seeing him, though the child could barely lisp his name.... As I grew up ... I had often heard them speak of my adventurous uncle; who had caressed me in my childhood, and had chosen me to be his heir; and his partner in foreign lands.\(^{27}\)

The “sun-bronzed” uncle then disappeared from Gibson’s chronicle of the life he had created for himself. In Carolina, the uncle’s place was taken for the moment by a “wealthy and intelligent planter [who] often spoke of the hidden wealth of the Eastern world.”\(^{28}\)

He often times traced out a route on the Eastern Hemisphere, which I followed with eager eyes. I recalled again the first impulse given to my boyish imagination; and now, aroused by this man’s fervour, the Sumatran land began to gleam in revery before my eyes again; and the Indian Ocean lay outstretched, a shining path before me, ... leading to fortune and honorable renown.\(^{29}\)

But at home were the babies and dull responsibility. Anchored by his impulsive, regretted marriage, Walter in his comings and
goings searched for a way to gain wealth and release swiftly. Once, whether in fact or fancy cannot be said, he found a piece of silver while walking along a creek among the Oconee Hills of South Carolina. He wrote, years later, that the specimen dark stone he dug out was identified by an experienced miner as silver. “Now there were visions of great treasure, and of a pomp and pride of wealth, which these backwoods had never known; and now the rude forest home, and the simple dress and fare had lost the quiet charm which once they had worn for me.”

Poverty barred the way to any silver fields, whether they existed in the Oconee Hills or only in his mind. At twenty-one, his declared means were “a rifle, a mule, some old books, and the little furnishings of my rough log shelter.” The treasure lay beyond his reach, as inaccessible as if it were on some far-distant sunny island described by his uncle.

He carried conflict within him as he trudged to school each day, as reluctant as any of his pupils. He had been raised in a decent family to be a responsible person, and he loved his young children. And yet his ill-matched marriage had made him its prisoner. He had left the home of his parents to seek adventure in the southland, and now he was cribbed, caged, tethered, and cooped by his imprudently begotten family. They closed to the rural schoolmaster the shining pathways of the sea revealed by his ghostly uncle; they locked him in a crude backwater society where he was not able to prosper.

I was indeed but a dreamer then; in those days before I became a man; or I had not found my calling. I felt myself fit for little, in a planting country, sparsely peopled, where few or none were wanted but those, who could handle the plough, the hammer or the axe; who were shrewd in the exchange of peddlers’ wares; or could drub some knowledge of books into rude backwoods, barefooted boys, in an ‘old-field-school,’ for which pursuits I had but small skill, and less of taste. I longed to look at the sea again. It was a strong, yearning wish I felt. I gazed with pleasure on the swift waters of the Savannah; and I thought of them flowing on towards the ocean, my heart almost tempted me, at times, to launch forth in a well-stored canoe, descend to the river’s mouth, and there join any great ship going to any distant land. It was a boy’s thought; whilst I had a man’s cares to fix me in my backwoods home.
The coils tightened around him and held him bound for six years of marriage. He spun dreams of adventure on far-off islands until they became more real than the smell of woodsmoke in his cabin or the clatter of slate boards in his schoolroom. He strained to be free for outward passage, yet held himself back in the service of his wife and infants. Opposing forces tore at him, growing in contrary strength as the months stretched on.

Then release came at a stroke. Rachel sickened (some thought it came from the chill of their dirt-floor cabin in the winter cold; others thought she never fully recovered after the birth of Talulah), and on May 4, 1844, short of her twenty-sixth birthday, Rachel died. Walter attended her burial in the Lewis family cemetery plot at Sandy Springs, South Carolina, left his three young children in the charge of his in-laws, and was off on his quest of money and adventure—not in that order of importance. “After a time my young widowed heart felt free to range again; and I wanted to fly on the wings of the wind towards the rising of the sun.”

The rising sun became his emblem, giving direction to his hot ambition. Gibson now had a vision of himself as a potentially extraordinary man, one of mythic quality and power. Like Phaethon, he would ride with the sun—not in a wheeled chariot, but in the winged chariots of the sea. They had already carried him from the Old World to the New. Henceforth they would bear him to the islands of Oceania, blessed of the sun, as promised by the uncle of his dreams. Like Phaethon, he was driven to attempt startling feats beyond his abilities. Three times he was to seize the reins of power beyond his ability to control, each time to be flung to earth ignominiously. But the vision of soaring, of flying high and mighty, was to sustain him his whole life through.
On the afternoon of May 19, 1851, a smartly painted two-masted schooner beat its way seaward out of Long Island Sound. As it passed Block Island, it hove to while the new owner climbed aboard from a fisherman’s skiff. Once up the Jacob’s ladder, Walter Murray Gibson instructed Captain E. C. Townsend to move on to Newport, Rhode Island, close at hand, to take on stores for a long voyage. He hoped the open waters off Rhode Island would give them sea-room to elude any naval vessel alerted to the escape of the *Flirt* from the custody of the federal officers who had earlier seized the vessel and her contraband cargo.

Gibson had almost disappeared from the record of history since leaving the South in 1844. Much later, in newspaper interviews, he gave an account, as exciting as it was imaginative, of this period of his young manhood. At twenty-one, he said, he had commanded the “first iron steamship ever built in the United States.” He then “planned an expedition to California, and bought a schooner,” but the project fell through. Other unspecified ventures to California succeeded, and with some wealth, he confided to the reporters, he went to Washington, D.C., where he was consul-general for Guatemala, San Salvador, and Costa Rica.

Installments of another account of the early years apparently were included in Gibson’s diaries, but most of these were destroyed. Judging from what was extracted from the diaries before they were burned, Gibson recorded great commercial success gained in New York City, where he had returned after the death of Rachel in South Carolina. He described his “elegant office on Broadway with an exquisite statue of the goddess Hebe in the window before which great crowds gathered daily.” He noted that

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**Captain Gibson of the Flirt**

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CHAPTER 2
his business was in providing gold-ore washing equipment for the forty-niners then flocking to California.\(^1\)

The New York City Directory for the period does include listings for Walter M. Gibson: as a commercial agent on upper Broadway, in 1847–1849; as a seller of diaphragm filters (used in ore-extraction machinery), in 1849–1850; as a manufacturer with offices on lower Broadway, in 1850–1851. No record independent of what might have been written in his destroyed diaries has been found to substantiate his claim to have served as captain of a steamship or as a consul-general. However, his asserted affluence as a businessman is corroborated by his addresses: he moved to an office building of prosperous appearance and he lived in a good neighborhood, near old Tammany Hall on Frankfort Street. Gibson left no indication of having seen his parents since leaving home at the age of fifteen, though his Broadway office was within a mile of the Greenwich Village house where the elder Gibsons then lived. Indeed, he later told Nathaniel Hawthorne that he had not talked with them for many years.\(^2\)

Gibson’s highly selective autobiographical passages in the opening pages of *The Prison of Weltevreden* are uncharacteristically reticent in their cryptic references to the half-decade before he boarded the *Flirt*. As to his career in business:

There were some calls to common practical pursuits, which led me to the business world; but beneath this outside of everyday toil, there glowed the hope ... to get the means to draw forth a silver sword from the hills of Oconee that would open up a road to the charmed East.... I soon learned that an adventurous spirit, and ambitious hopes, and all lack of training to any labor of the head or hands, were but poor stock in trade among the busy marts of men. The drudge and routine of the daily life of trade, soon drove away all dreams of the past. But wealth was eked out of this dull toil; even as the bright gold is dug out of the dull earth; and so I gained some fortune, and then I traveled.\(^3\)

Gibson’s travels, by his account in *The Prison of Weltevreden*, took him throughout the Republic of Mexico, apparently in 1849, shortly after the close of its war with the United States. Years later, in newspaper interviews, Gibson enlivened his recollections of that journey with theatrical details: how he had traveled in company with a Russian envoy, protected by a convoy
of soldiers; how General Santa Anna, dictator of Mexico, had entertained them; how he had been saved from robbery and death by an old Aztec, whose beautiful daughter had then hung around the neck of the traveler a bloodstone amulet, which he still wore for good luck.  

Whether Gibson then went on to Central America (as he was said to have written in his vanished diaries, but did not claim to have visited in The Prison of Weltevreden) cannot be established. He did, however, somewhere make the acquaintance of Latin American political leaders. By his own account, corroborated by testimony given much later to the congressional committee that investigated the affair of the Flirt, once back from his travels Gibson met “a diplomat from a Central American State, who offered me a gratifying position, and prospect of great moneyed gain, if I would fit out and equip a small, swift and stout-built vessel, for the service of his government, which I resolved to do.”

The country that had recruited his services was Guatemala, then establishing its own military force after the collapse in 1839 of the Central American Federation that had briefly linked it with Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador. Gibson’s mission was to run guns to the army of General Carrera, dictator of Guatemala, in a ship, which he was to provide, capable of serving as a man-of-war—the nucleus of the Central American navy, as Gibson termed it.

He found the Flirt, a small but eminently seaworthy schooner. She had been built in 1839 for the U.S. Navy, designed to be fast and maneuverable for service as a revenue cutter. The federal government had recently sold the sailing vessel as part of the navy’s conversion to steamships, and the Flirt passed into the hands of one James Gadsden (later to gain a place in American history books as the negotiator of the Gadsden Purchase of lands from Mexico), who registered her at Charleston, South Carolina. She was described as being 94 feet long, 24 feet broad, and with a draft of 8 feet, rated at 153 tons. Gibson bought the schooner from Gadsden on April 7, 1851, for $3,500, whether with his own funds or with money advanced by General Carrera is not clear. He spent as much or more in fitting the Flirt for the voyage ahead: her copper bottom was cleaned, the decks calked, the hull and superstructure repainted, and a new suit of sails provided.
The bulkhead between the captain’s stateroom and the old wardroom was removed to provide a large and elegant saloon for her new owner, quarters appropriate for the commander of the future Guatemalan, or even Central American, navy.

Early in May 1851, the converted man-of-war lay in New York harbor, low in the water with her declared cargo, 80 tons of ice, and a hidden cache of guns and ammunition. She was cleared for departure, as her manifest declared, to Bahia, Brazil, and to the East Indies. However, before Captain Townsend could get under way, a U.S. marshall, responding to a tip that the vessel carried contraband, searched the ship and seized it for violation of the neutrality acts, which prohibited American ships from taking arms to the warring areas of Latin America. Despite the protests and pleas of the owner, all ordnance was removed and the vessel forbidden to sail.

[Thus] the pleasant and harmless scheme of the Centralian navy failed; yet still, I held the Flirt, and I longed to have a sail in her. I had lost the chances of winning great profit and naval glory; but my beauteous ship was ready for sea.... A vessel was on my hands, bought for a purpose which could not be achieved. She was not fit for the common carrying of trade. Her sale would have been a great sacrifice at home, which was so promising of profit abroad; and so I thought I had some cause to make a venture in the little ship, and felt, being most willing to believe, that Providence bid me go.⁷

Marketing considerations, while now part of Gibson’s way of looking at the world, here gave only the color of rational calculation to his decision. He would not be thwarted in his determination to follow the path of adventure traced by his sun-bronzed uncle. Heedless of the embargo forbidding the Flirt to sail, Gibson ordered Captain Townsend to put to sea as soon as the harbor patrol relaxed its vigilance.

To throw off suspicion, Gibson went ashore and then secretly made his way to Block Island, the previously arranged rendezvous point, and there boarded the schooner in company with Franklin Whittlesey, a young New York businessman who had arranged passage to Brazil. Once the owner and Whittlesey were aboard, the Flirt made for Newport, Rhode Island, and a hasty provisioning for the long cruise ahead. Early on May 21 the anchor was
hauled up. As the *Flirt* stood out of the Newport harbor, a navy cutter loosed her sails and took after the fugitive. Pursued and pursuer crowded on more canvas, but Gibson had under him the fleeter vessel. The *Flirt* pulled steadily away, and by the time the receding shoreline of Long Island was lost to view the ocean behind him was empty. The adventure had begun.

It started with ludicrous discomfort. Gibson was a poor sailor, and when the little schooner reached the queasy waters of the Gulf Stream—being in bad trim, Gibson wrote—he retreated to his fancy saloon at the stern. “The owner became very sick, and lay for many days in his berth. His cabin companions were better seamen, and fed well and drank well, whilst he was a prey to nausea.”

Word of a growing mutiny at last forced him up on deck. Captain Townsend was losing command over the patchwork crew signed on in New York. Several were landlubbers working their passage to Brazil, but even they realized, after weeks of erratic sailing, that they were still well above the equator, and the food was getting worse. Seaman Williams, one of the few experienced hands aboard, set off a mutinous incident by mimicking the actions of the inept captain—taking noon-time observations of the sun’s position, holding a mock sextant in one hand and pretending to scan the sky for an elusive solar disk. Townsend unwisely banded words with the sailor, then ordered him to go about his work. Williams refused to obey; so did another crewman when commanded to put him in irons. At that point Gibson intervened and, with the aid of his cabin boy Luigi, seized Williams and had him manacled for confinement below decks.

After a few days on sea biscuits and water, Williams begged pardon and was released. However, shipboard quiet was again broken some days later (Gibson noted it was July 5th, six weeks out) when the crew came aft to present their complaints to the owner. Their recurring gripe had been about the bad and filthy food, but now they complained that they did not know where they were and did not believe the captain knew, either. Since food was running low, they demanded that the owner take control and that the schooner be headed for the nearest port. Gibson brought up the ship’s articles and register to prove that he was indeed the owner and assumed responsibility for the voyage. However,
he said, they had to rely on the captain, since he was the only man aboard “who could make any pretensions to navigation.” That evening, Townsend changed course for the Cape Verde Islands, off the western shoulder of Africa. In that direction the trade winds would be favoring and they could reasonably expect to replenish their stores at Porto Praya in a week or less.

In fact, it was eighteen days before the *Flirt* reached port, and then only after a chance meeting with a British transport, carrying troops from Cork around the Cape of Good Hope, replenished their low supply of provisions. On July 22, 1851, they entered the harbor of Porto Praya, Cape Verde. Once ashore, Townsend requested the Portuguese harbor master to investigate the vessel and its insubordinate crew. Gibson’s fine manners and a serving of the spirits he had reserved for such important guests helped assure the harbor master that his initial suspicions of the low, rakish schooner were not justified—but not until the hatch covers had been raised, exposing the ice cargo to a heat that hastened its reduction to slush.

Townsend asked to be relieved of his command, a request Gibson had to honor, though it left the *Flirt* without a navigator. Passenger Whittlesey, who had boarded at Block Island with the understanding that he would be carried to Bahia, also left the ship, preferring to take his chances on the next vessel to call rather than continue on the *Flirt*. While ashore, Whittlesey could distil his recent experiences into the charges he would later make against Gibson for breach of contract in the courts of New York.

While taking on supplies and seeking a replacement for Townsend, Gibson had several days to explore the old gun emplacements and other crumbling ruins of Porto Praya, once a rendezvous point for the ships of King John of Portugal and of Prince Henry the Navigator, a harbor used by Vasco de Gama, Sequeira, Albuquerque, and Galvan. The local commandant, a Major Morraes, governor of St. Jago Island, was his guide on this moribund outpost of a fallen empire. It was from him that Gibson gained first acquaintance with *The Lusiads* of Camoens, the sea epic that he was later to enjoy and write about in Hawaii.

Back aboard the *Flirt*, Gibson promoted Jacob Hoffman, mate on the passage from New York, to the position of master; and for his place Gibson recruited a Swedish sailor who wanted to get
off St. Jago. So they departed on the long voyage back across the Atlantic to South America with no one aboard well qualified to navigate, and, they soon discovered, with no means of fixing their position: the chronometer had been smashed and the tables necessary for celestial navigation were missing. A prudent man would have turned back, but Gibson, with a recklessness that was becoming characteristic, pressed on.

It seemed a wild risk to run a small ship across the ocean without any guide of art, or a skillful hand on board; but I thought not of the risk, because I did not know, and could not feel its full extent; and so, with faith in a Hand that had led me safe o’er many a strange path before, I struck out with compass alone to guide my little ship, across the ocean, for the coast of Brazil.  

Two thousand miles of Brazilian coast presented a target sufficiently broad to induce the new captain and mate to proceed by dead reckoning alone. Actually, they fared better than any sober heads aboard could have anticipated. Aided by position fixes obtained by hailing passing ships, on the eighteenth day out of Porto Praya they sighted a thickly wooded coast, which they correctly took to be Brazil. Running down the coast in a southerly direction, they gained the port of Maceio, some 300 miles north of the Flirt’s declared destination, the harbor of Bahia.

Maceio, though only a small town, supplied the stores they needed, as well as the liquor expected in liberty ports. After two days, all hands aboard were drunk, except the rather abstemious Gibson and one young seaman. Drunkenness brought the sailing master and the mate to blows, with the two men slugging out the jealousy that had grown between them after the Swedish mate, who proved to be the better seaman, had been given chief responsibility for conning the schooner. The crew took sides, and a general melee bloodied the quarterdeck of the Flirt. Hoffman, the master, drew a knife and stabbed the mate repeatedly. Both officers were taken ashore; the local magistrate ordered the arrest of the commander and drunken crew for disturbing the peace.

Gibson took refuge in the house of the British vice-consul, there being no American diplomatic representative at Maceio, where he stayed on parole while the affray was investigated. Aboard the Flirt there remained only the solitary sober young seaman.
Days went by while the men were called up for individual interrogation. Gibson also was summoned but refused to appear, suspicious that the Brazilian authorities were bent on enlarging the incident to justify their seizing his vessel and sending it to Rio de Janeiro, “there to await the destructive delay of Brazilian law, or of my own Government’s interference.” Deliverance came from British sea power. The sloop-of-war Conflict, sighting a distress signal hoisted by the boy aboard the Flirt, came into the roadstead to investigate. Her commander, Captain Drake, went ashore to interview Gibson. After checking his papers and consulting with the vice-consul, Drake asked Gibson to accompany him to the building where the Court of Instruction was sitting. The young American shipowner then saw how readily Anglo-Saxon authority dominated the “wretched half-breeds” posturing as judicial officers. Captain Drake said that he did not assume any right to interfere but that he doubted the sincerity of the inquiry before the court. There was not a shadow of evidence of wrongdoing by Mr. Gibson, and therefore he would advise them to let the Flirt and her people go in peace.

The result showed that he was wont to utter, and they to listen, to such dictation. They showed the craven spirit everywhere seen in Spanish and Portuguese America, among the vicious stock of mingled race, now holding sway over the old masters from the Peninsula. This court of mestizoes rose with much trepidation, and said they were glad to learn from the Senhor Capitao that the American and his vessel were clear of all suspicion, which would save them the trouble of further investigation.\textsuperscript{12}

Gibson was certified by the British vice-consul to be the master of the schooner Flirt. Henceforth, he was “Captain Gibson.” He engaged Charles M. Graham, a Scotsman off the vessel Swordfish, to replace the wounded mate, signed on a small crew of coast hands, and ordered the Flirt to sail northward to the larger port of Pernambuco (Recife). There he hoped to find an American consul, a better crew, and a fresh start toward the destination he had always marked on the map in his mind—Sumatra.

Indeed, in recounting his stay at Pernambuco, Gibson again conjured up his ever-lost, ever-beckoning “uncle.” This time, he said, he received news of that uncle from a Hamburg sea captain,
“an old cruiser in the East Indies,” and memories of what he had heard, read, or imagined about Sumatra were quickened. The American consul caused a delay by commissioning the Flirt to rescue a Yankee vessel shipwrecked off Cape St. Roque. With a new crew aboard, the Flirt departed on her mission, but found the wreck abandoned and stripped.

Nothing to save, what should he then do, the wide ocean being before him; there being nothing for him to do in Brazil; the returning home a fruitless sacrifice; then thoughts of the Eastern islands, of the uncle and his strange fate, rose up to view; and there, he resolved to steer for the East; and, with bounding heart, he headed for the Cape of Good Hope.¹³

Emptied of ice and ice water, carrying no cargo, the Flirt was angled into the southeast trade winds. In seven weeks, they sighted the volcanic island Tristan da Cunha. From the isolated British settlers there they bought fresh produce. While stores were being loaded during an overnight stay, Gibson had the chance to survey the island and note how valuable it could be to the United States as a station for India-bound ships—“of great use in time of war.” Ten days later, in mid-November 1851, the Flirt rounded the Cape of Good Hope and entered the Indian Ocean. Mate Graham, who was serving as sailing master under Gibson’s command, took them on a route that skirted Madagascar and Mauritius and then bore sharply south to the isle of St. Paul, more than a thousand miles south of Sumatra. But Gibson was not much interested in exploring these landfalls, not even, after again turning north to the last ones before Indonesia, the coral islands of the Cocos, where by popular belief Captain Kidd had buried some of his treasure. The schooner kept her course for the Netherlands East Indies. Finally, on Christmas Eve, three months after leaving Brazil, Gibson came within sensory range of the island, long yearned for, where he believed his fortune lay.

We were nearing thick masses of land-clouds, when there came a faint aroma of sweet woody scents, wafted on the breeze; as we sped through the yielding vapor banks, the fragrant air came strong and pleasurable, like distant strains of song; then the retreating clouds presented to our gaze a dark blue peak, piercing the skyey blue above; the wood, and blossom, and gum-scented breeze came stronger and
more thrilling, rivalling in pleasure sweet melody on the waters; and
the peak, and the odor-laden winds were the first sight and first wel-
come breath of the land of long dreams, the Island of Sumatra.14

As the Flirt headed into the Sunda Strait between Java and
Sumatra, Gibson considered his course of action. He had reached
the island foretold by his uncle, where adventure, fame, and per-
haps fortune awaited him. Romantic Walter Murray would make
for the pungent shore. However, the crew must be paid, stores
must be bought, and the Flirt had earned no money since Gibson
had sold off the few chunks of ice still afloat in the hold when the
schooner had reached Brazil. Practical Walter Murray ordered the
mate to chart a course for Singapore, the chief port for the Indian
trade and Southeast Asia. There they would find a cargo for Indo-
esia, and then seek out the mystery of the archipelago. Up the
Sumatran coast they beat against the winter’s north monsoon, but
a heavy squall drove them to seek the lee shore of Bangka Island,
across the narrow strait from Sumatra.

Ashore at Minto (Muntok), the Dutch governor of the island
queried Gibson about his purpose in visiting the Netherlands East
Indies. Was he bringing some American machinery or tobacco?
Was he seeking a cargo of tin? Rubber? Tea? Spices? Gibson
bridled at the interrogation and said nothing about Singapore, an-
swering merely that he was cruising out of a love for travel and
a curiosity, such as had first brought the Dutch explorers to this
far corner of the world. The governor received with “a skeptic’s
smile” this explanation of why an American vessel of man-of-war
design was calling at his quiet island.

Gibson thought him suspicious, as well he may have been. The
Dutch administrators certainly had not forgotten the punishment
inflicted on Sumatra by the U.S. frigate Potomac in 1832, in retali-
ation for the plundering of an American merchantman by local
pirates in those waters. The governor must have been puzzled
when he was informed that his visitor had sold the spare anchor of
the Flirt and one of its boats to the chandler at Minto for supplies
and cash. Was the Yankee really so strapped for funds, or was this
part of the masquerade of a clever spy?

Nevertheless, while the storm held the Flirt at Minto, the
governor and other Dutch officials extended hospitality to Gibson,
which he then reciprocated aboard ship. Proudly he showed them his elegant stateroom, refurbished during the cruise from Brazil with scarlet brocade and mahogany purchased there, making it “an ocean boudoir.” The visitors could admire their reflections in the decorated mirrors that hung on the silk-draped bulkheads along with a small portrait of Countess Marguerite Blessington, then famous for her Irish beauty and popular novels. To his detriment, Gibson responded to jibes about American slavery and about the failure earlier that year of the American-backed invasion of Cuba by the filibusterer Narcisco Lopez with criticism of Dutch colonialism. His loquacity released, Captain Gibson impressed his listeners with accounts of his resourcefulness in reaching the East Indies and the intensity of his interest in the archipelago. They made notes of what he said. He in turn noted to himself that many of the Dutch had been rendered boorish by their devotion to profit from trade. Nor did he admire their style in religion. “They worship a gloomy God,” he wrote.

The storm abated after three days, and again Gibson ordered his mate to set sail for Singapore. Again a squall beat the schooner out of the Bangka Strait. This time they took shelter in the roadstead off the mouth of the Musi River on Sumatra. The Hand that had guided the captain of the Flirt since he escaped from New York had brought him to his uncle’s treasure island.

Willem Valberg, the Dano-Malay commander of the bark Jane, a troop transport out of Bali in the service of the Dutch, offered guidance up the twisting river. The Flirt followed the transport across the shallow bar of the estuary, and, towed by longboats, for four days struggled upstream against a strong current to reach the city of Palembang, some thirty-five miles inland. The floating town, “Venice of Sumatra” as inevitably it was styled by Gibson, epitomized the exotic East he had dreamed of. First, he was charmed by the local river craft:

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15 tambangans of many shapes and sizes, darting past, or shooting athwart our bows; some very plain—the rough, scooped log alone, half-filled by some lonely fisher; and he half covered by his broad, bowl-shaped tudong hat; others richer with varnish gloss outside, and carpet within, where turbaned men were seated.... Large, laden prahus passed by, in which long ranks of rowers, shaded by the broad banana leaf, sang as they rowed along ... keeping time with the dipping dayong blades.
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Farther upstream, an international merchant fleet swung at anchor: junks from China, prahuas from all across the long archipelago, heavy naval and merchant ships from Holland, shallow-drafted traders from Singapore and the Indian Ocean beyond. Behind them, in rising tiers, were the raft houses of the river dwellers, the more substantial wooden houses lining the canals of the city, and the Dutch fort at the upper end of the town, whose guns dominated the inland port. Gibson went ashore to pay his respects to the Dutch authorities. The Havermeester ("a middle-aged Creole, with a mild and kindly look of face") received him courteously and then introduced Lieutenant Louis Nicolson, commander of the Pylades, a small gun brig anchored nearby, and Colonel C. A. de Brauw, governor of Palembang. The latter two Dutchmen were to be the chief villains of the melodrama Gibson was about to create and star in.

The Flirt remained at Palembang from mid-January to mid-February 1852. Inquisitive, ever-observant Captain Gibson, charming when minded to be, made his way into the local society. He avoided the chaperonage of the captain from Bali, and of Bandoor Rachman, a Malay whom he had taken on as valet-interpreter at Minto on the recommendation of the island governor. Already, Gibson was systematically recording Malay phrases, as well as Dutch, which he used at every opportunity ashore and in greeting visitors to his stateroom. He also began collecting Malay songs he heard while being entertained in the home of Sumatran chieftains.

Captain Gibson also collected information. He was told how a hero of Sumatra, Fernando Mantri Karma Djaya—once a fierce enemy and still feared by the Dutch even after years of service to them—had been entrapped by Governor de Brauw and imprisoned on Java. (Did the American captain perhaps know that many hundreds of thousands of rupees waited in safe hands at Singapore, to be paid to the daring man who would rescue Fernando Mantri?) Gibson heard too about the sultan of Jambi, farther north on Sumatra, who wished to sell to Americans the "gold, pepper, camphor, cinnamon, nutmegs, benzoin, and other rich commodities" his lands abounded in, which he denied to Dutch traders. A Dutch army captain, wanting to buy Gibson’s breech-loading carbine, showed him the topographical maps that he was drafting of the Palembang territory, extending to the Sultanate of Jambi.
To Gibson, Jambi was the quintessence of Indonesia, rich and not yet despoiled by the Dutch colonists, still possessed by mysteries even more remarkable than those whispered by his shadowy uncle.

I wanted to go and see a Prince, who was not surrounded by the trammels of European power; I wanted to see the Malay, the ruling race of the Archipelago, in his highest state of independence; and I wanted to see more of the Kubu and Gugur [orangutans] the lowest of human kind in these islands, or in the world; and far more than to get gold and spices, did I want to find out, what were their claims to the family of man; and on what side of the line of demarkation between men and brute, did they stand. 16

Graham, mate of the Flirt, volunteered to explore the river route up to Jambi, accompanied by a local guide, two bearers, and Gibson’s interpreter, Bahdoo. Gibson instructed his new Malay secretary, whom he had just employed on the recommendation of an officer of the fort, to write out in more elegant court language a letter of introduction for Graham, which Gibson dictated in broken Malay, his vocabulary notebook in hand. As recorded by Gibson, the letter he had drafted in English was innocuous—unless read by one suspicious of American adventurers.

I _____, residing in the great land of America, send greetings to the lord Sultan who rules over the empire of Jambee. This writing will be brought into your presence, by the chief officer commanding my vessel; a man of truth and skill, in whose words and knowledge I have great confidence. He will speak of the great land from whence I come; of the wealth and power of America, and of the friendly dispositions of the American people towards his Highness of Jambee. He will inform my lord Sultan of my wish to visit the Kraton [court] at Jambee, that I may present some gifts, and sentiments of friendship to his Highness. Therefore my lord Sultan will be pleased to give orders to his officers, that the bearer of this may be allowed to dwell in the territory of Jambee; and afterwards, when he shall have accomplished his desire, to be permitted to go his way without molestation. 17

Instructing his secretary to complete the letter in Malay with an appropriate preamble and to cast it in correct style, Gibson went ashore to attend a wedding feast at the home of a wealthy Chinese merchant. On his return to the Flirt, past midnight, Gibson claimed to have given the letter prepared for his signature
merely a cursory examination, recognizing only a few words of the formal Malay used by the secretary. Graham then came aboard with the pistols and muskets he had obtained in preparation for departing early the next morning.

Gibson overslept the departure of his ambassador. He was awakened by the noise of boats coming alongside the Flirt. Hastily going topside, he saw Lieutenant Nicolson, the commander of the gunboat Pylades, coming aboard, backed by a dozen Dutch marines. Gibson and his crew were placed under arrest. Nicolson ordered Gibson to haul down the American flag from the staff at the stern of the Flirt. Gibson replied that he was accustomed to giving orders to lieutenants, not receiving them. Nicolson, enraged (and drunk, by Gibson’s account), ripped the ensign down and threw it overboard. Then the Americans were hurried over the side into waiting boats and rowed ashore to the fort.

Gibson was temporarily imprisoned in the hospital ward. Governor de Brauw questioned him there, and then wrote to the governor general of Netherlands India that the commander of the Flirt was a dangerous man. He suspected that the American was trying to imitate James Brooke, the English adventurer who had become the “White Rajah” of Sarawak on the island of Borneo, where British and Dutch imperialism were in contention.

Another visitor was Captain Valberg, whose troopship had led the Flirt into Palembang. He told Gibson how grave was the charge being prepared against him: high treason for scheming to stir up native princes to revolt against the Dutch. He warned him against de Brauw, since the governor had discovered that Gibson knew of his role in the entrapment of Fernando Mantri and wanted him put away in order to shut his mouth. Nicolson was still breathing fire in his denunciations of Gibson, out of personal jealousy, Valberg thought, as well as anti-American prejudice. Gibson’s letter to the sultan of Jambi had been found hidden in Graham’s shoe and was regarded as strong evidence of seditious intent. The officer from Bali urged Gibson to escape but, before plans could be made, the American was marched aboard a Dutch vessel and four days later was interned in the prison of Weltevreden at Batavia (Jakarta), Java, the Dutch capital. There he was to remain for fifteen months, repeatedly interrogated and brought before courts of inquiry. The charge was inciting to rebellion against Dutch authority. Informants against him
included Governor de Brauw, Lieutenant Nicolson, Bahdoo Rachman, and the secretary who transcribed the letter. (Both Malays were later revealed to be police agents.)

The letter itself was the chief piece of real evidence. Gibson swore that the message he had dictated was worded as quoted above. However, the document produced by the prosecutor, purporting to be the letter seized from Graham and signed by Gibson, was clearly seditious: it offered ships, guns, and ammunition on behalf of the United States to use against the Dutch; it promised that Gibson in a month would be at the mouth of the Jambi (Hari) River, to “bring in good order” the upper regions of Palembang and Jambi. Gibson denounced the letter as a patent forgery but did not rebut testimony quoting him as telling the local Dutch administrators that he shared the sympathy for weak nations that Americans generally felt.  

As the case proceeded, with many interruptions and appeals to the High Court at Batavia, Gibson wrote to the Dutch governor general, protesting his innocence but admitting that his ebullient manner of speech might have misled his literal-minded auditors at Minto and Palembang. “Whilst my poetic imagination might lead me into many excesses or extravagancies not approved by matter-of-fact opinions of the world, yet still I am not of a nature to plot treasonable designs, much less to execute them.” His only purpose in coming to Indonesia, he insisted, was to see a part of the Orient that had long fascinated him, and he had only paused en route to Singapore, where he was headed in order to inquire about an estate left to him by a deceased relative.

In prison, Gibson was visited by E. W. Cramerus, who acted as American consul in Batavia. Since the consulate was not officially recognized by the Dutch, his power to assist the prisoner was limited, but Cramerus did find a Dutch-speaking attorney for Gibson, and he agreed to forward to American authorities any letters of distress.

Gibson first appealed to Commodore John Aulick, whose flag as commander of the East Indies–China Seas squadron was flown by the Susquehanna, stationed at Hong Kong. Aulick also received a copy of the letter Gibson addressed to the U.S. consul at Singapore, W. W. Shaw. The commodore, who had been showing the American flag in the seas around Japan, ordered the
sloop-of-war *St. Mary’s* to touch at Batavia en route home. The sloop’s commander, Captain George A. Magruder, visited Gibson and then called on the Dutch governor general, who gave easy assurances that his executive order would free Gibson—but only after the *St. Mary’s* departed, so as to avoid any appearance of being dictated to by an American officer. The ship resumed her voyage, but Gibson remained in prison, though in a larger cell.

He dispatched more letters of appeal. One reached Humphrey Marshall, U.S. commissioner to China, stationed at Macao. Marshall read through the voluminous attachments and wrote to Commodore Aulick:

> I have examined the papers submitted to me by Mr. Gibson. I regret to say that they afford strong persuasive evidence that if his hand has not executed, his heart conceived, a course of action exceedingly reprehensible upon the part of an American citizen.... It is evident ... from the letter of Graham ... that a Quixotic scheme had been formed to emulate in Djambi [Jambi], by a forcible resistance to the authority of the Netherlands East India Government ... the career of the Rajah of Sawaraf [James Brooke], in the eastern archipelago.²⁰

Nevertheless, Marshall asked Commodore Aulick to dispatch a vessel to give the Dutch at Batavia “a silent reassurance that the United States watches with sleepless vigilance over the rights of her citizens.” Aulick answered that he was going home on sick leave and would leave the matter to his successor, a reply Marshall easily decoded as a refusal to act.

The prisoner of Weltevreden, receiving no helpful response from underlings, went to the top. He sent a remarkably dispassionate letter to the president of the United States, attaching a set of the documents he had amassed. The thick packet went to Washington through the chain of command—Acting Consul Cramerus, Consul Shaw, under secretaries of the State Department, the secretary of state, then to the White House. There it was added to the mounting pile of petitions seeking the attention of newly inaugurated President Franklin Pierce.

Gibson’s behavior in prison added to the suspicions of his inquisitors. In the torporific climate, he continued to study Malay and Dutch. He kept asking questions of fellow prisoners, sentries, and occasional visitors about the history, fauna, flora, customs,
and beliefs of Indonesia and Indonesians. He sketched maps for the young daughter of his cellmate, a Dutch infantry captain, while she added to his Malay vocabulary. Most irritating, on the Fourth of July, 1852, Pirez—the youngest of Gibson’s crew, himself recently released from the prison—smuggled into Weltevreden the American flag from the Flirt, ransomed from one of the Dutch boarding party. While Gibson stood lookout, Pirez fixed the colors to a length of bamboo and lashed it to the top of the tree in the exercise yard, where it waved for an hour until hauled down by the indignant warden.21

On occasion, however, Gibson was a useful prisoner, as well as a worry and a nuisance. He was approached by a government contractor who urgently needed a brick-making machine. The Dutchman had been told that such machines were used in America. Could the captain draw the design of one—for cash? With little to lose and energy to burn, Gibson accepted the commission. He summoned vague recollections of the contraptions he had seen: “revolving cogs, of a huge clay hopper, and then of little sliding boxes and scrapers, and of brown bricks shoved out on a platform, like brown bread from a Dutch oven.” He got hold of a few ragged books on mechanics, in Dutch, that were useful for their illustrations of gears and cogs. After spoiling many sheets of drawing paper, the erstwhile vendor of gold-mining machinery produced a design acceptable to the contractor. Other commissions followed: one, to sketch out the workings of a mechanical woodsaw; another, to design a steam washing machine. Gibson completed them to the satisfaction of his clients. He now had money to buy “some of the undergarments of civilized life” and to have them washed. Going with unwashed linen distressed him more than the monotony of food and confinement in a cell at Weltevreden.

Repeatedly, Gibson was told he would be set free for want of proof. Once he was released on the finding of the High Court that the governor of Palembang had acted illegally in arresting him without a warrant. However, at a dinner in Batavia celebrating his liberty, Gibson was re-arrested, this time with due process.

He returned to his busy prison life, complete with language study, maps, designs, conversations, occasional viewing of the bastinado and of hangings on the gallows standing just outside
the walls of Weltevreden. Daughters of wealthy Malay families he had come to know on Sumatra visited Gibson; one (no less than a princess in his later reminiscences) came frequently. They brought mangosteens and other tropical fruits, news of the outside world, messages of encouragement, and—twice—plans for escape. Gibson remained confident that he would be freed by the Dutch.

Prison also gave leisure for examining all manner of ideas, such as the relationship of diet to health. He noticed how much better his digestion was on a diet of rice, fish curry, and fresh fruit. “I found indeed my stomach strengthening; for it had been a little ailing in years past, as is with nearly all at home in America, feeding on fats and sweet and pasty compounds; I no longer awoke with the accustomed clammy tongue and dizzy head, that followed the richer fare at home.”

Coffee, that “fragrant promoter of sick liver and sick headaches,” he missed not at all. Wine brought to him in occasional baskets of delicacies he gave to the guards or his prison mates.

As his incarceration stretched on, religion increasingly occupied Gibson’s thoughts. He heard about the teachings of Buddha and the preachments of Mohammed from fellow prisoners. He learned to read the New Testament in Malay and told Gospel stories to the daughter of his Dutch army officer cellmate and to his “princess.” He talked with a Catholic priest, the only clergymen to visit Weltevreden regularly. In the absence of the priest, Gibson claimed to have converted to Christianity a condemned Malay prisoner and to have baptized him on the eve of his execution by hanging.

And he pondered the relations of the dominant Caucasian (here represented by the unadmired Dutch) with the subordinate dark races of the tropics. The style of Gibson’s conclusion is characteristically florid, but that does not disguise an attitude toward people of darker skins not usually to be expected of an antebellum Southerner. Rather, it foreshadowed the views on race relations that Gibson was to express, years later, in Hawaii; it was the kind of opinion that led to his rise and fall as a politician there.

The world is not to be all Caucasian; it needs the contrast of stronger and weaker brethren; of the practical and the intellectual; with the sympathetic and the imaginative; the Caucasian ceases to be such
within the tropics; his superiority is only a little more oxygen, and that belongs to his temperate latitude. That man is a vulgar egotist, who exults in the accidental advantage of his greater strength over his weaker brother; the fancies and dreams of the one, should have a place as well as the bold conceptions of the other; flowers fill the eye, as much as great trees, and repay as much by their cultivation.23

Once more, in March 1853, a court found Gibson to be innocent of all charges. For six weeks he waited to be freed, packing his small wardrobe and books and papers accumulated during fifteen months of imprisonment. Again came a reversal: the High Court granted the motion of the attorney general that the accused be condemned to hang in the gallows of Weltevreden. This time, Gibson was ready to attempt an escape. The wily young Pirez came over the wall with the articles of disguise: a loose-draped hunting costume (“such as worn by gentlemen on excursions in the neighborhood of the palace of the Governor General”), an officer’s cap, a dark wig and mustache, gum, and dye for the face.

The prisoner spent the afternoon of Sunday, April 24, in covert preparation for his escape. He softened his beard in readiness for shaving, donned the hunting suit, except for the coat, and covered himself in his prison garb. At twilight, when the day’s visitors were leaving Weltevreden and the cell doors were being opened for distribution of the evening meal, Gibson swiftly changed his appearance. Off came his beard, on went the false mustache and wig, topped by the officer’s cap; dye covered his prison pallor. As a final touch, Gibson, a nonsmoker, stuck in the corner of his mouth one of the cigars he kept for the pleasure of visitors and prison staff. Muttering something in Dutch as he bit off the end of his cigar, Gibson hastened out of the exercise yard to join the last of the departing visitors before the gates closed for the night.

Such is Gibson’s account of his escape from Weltevreden, and it may well be substantially accurate, if artistically embellished, for the Dutch authorities later complained that he had been under sentence—but of imprisonment, not death—and had left prison without their permission. (Later, newspaper interviews with Gibson further dramatized his getaway as made in women’s clothes, smuggled in by his Malay princess.) He quickly made his way to the harbor and was helped into the waiting longboat of an American clipper, the Palmer, en route home from China. The vessel
already had her anchor raised, and when the rescue party came aboard the sails were loosed and the ship made for the Java Sea. As they neared the sea buoys, guns of the harbor guard ship Boreas opened up on the Palmer and were readily answered by her twelve-pounders. No hits were made. Smoke from the funnel of a pursuing steamship was sighted, but the full-sailed Palmer escaped into the gathering darkness. Gibson’s sea-going adventure had ended the way it began off Block Island two years earlier—he had eluded the short arm of the law.

Thus Gibson described his escape under fire. According to Captain Charles Low, the commander of the Palmer, it went somewhat more easily. Acting Consul Cramerus privately told Low that they would like to put Gibson aboard the Palmer; the Dutch wanted to hang him and no U.S. naval vessel was available for his rescue. Low visited Gibson in prison and, favorably impressed ("he was a very able man, and did not worry at all, for all that his life was in danger"), agreed to take him aboard.

Arrangements were made in Batavia with two Englishmen, ship chandlers, to get Gibson out of prison—how, Low did not say. They did have him at the end of the jetty, and into the Palmer’s longboat, at nightfall as the clipper was to sail. The Palmer did indeed fire her eleven guns as she headed out to sea but only in salute to the Dutch frigate serving as guard ship in the harbor. “Our guns were then run in and we paid no more attention to the frigate or to the shore."²⁴ Low was relieved to be gone with the escapee, and perhaps so were the Dutch, at least for the time being. However, the affair of the Flirt, left empty and plundered in the roadstead of Batavia, was by no means ended.
CHAPTER 3

Gibson vs. the Government of the Netherlands

The long voyage of the Palmer from Java to New York gave A Captain Gibson three months in which to consider his grievances against the government that had seized his ship and imprisoned him for more than a year. En route he rehearsed his story of entrapment by a xenophobic colonial administration made suspicious of visitors by its greed to monopolize the wealth of Indonesia. The officers of the Palmer and his fellow passengers (six American missionaries returning home from Asia) formed a sympathetic audience whose reactions gave Gibson a useful preview of how people in the United States would react to an account of his humiliating experience, and to the insult to the American flag (he reported), ripped from the stern of the Flirt. Discourses aboard the Palmer, daily except for Sunday, provided the format for Gibson’s apologia-adventure story, a book that he entitled The Prison of Weltevreden and a Glimpse at the East Indian Archipelago.

The Palmer docked in New York harbor July 27, 1853. By mid-August Captain Gibson was in Washington, D.C., to present to the federal government his claim against the Netherlands. He worked his way up the hierarchy until he reached, and favorably impressed, William L. Marcy, secretary of state under President Pierce. To Marcy he described the persecution to which the Netherlands East Indian administration had subjected him and the injuries he had suffered: fifteen months imprisonment, damage to his health,¹ and loss of property—his schooner and personal possessions. To establish his claim, he put a value of $50,000 on the Flirt (a generous multiple of what he had paid to buy and refit the ship), and $50,000 more for other damages, a round $100,000
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in all. In addition to claiming that amount in indemnification from the Netherlands, he demanded the return of his papers and the dismissal of the colonial officers responsible for his illegal arrest and detention.

Secretary Marcy was receptive to a complaint about the way Americans were treated in the Netherlands East Indies. Like other nations, the United States was allowed only commercial agents to represent it in Indonesia, and Washington wanted its fully accredited consuls admitted as well, in part because they would have greater authority in protecting American mariners who got into difficulty. The Dutch, fearing American and British intrusion into their Indonesian trading monopoly, resisted. Gibson’s claim seemed to provide a dramatic example of what could go wrong when consular representation was denied.

Marcy therefore instructed August Belmont, the U.S. chargé d’affaires at The Hague (later promoted to be minister there) to look into the matter. Belmont discovered that the Dutch were somewhat uneasy about a prosecution alleging that Gibson had sought to subvert their sovereign rule in Jambi, since it was not at all clear that they held sovereignty over the Sumatran sultanate. There was an agreement in force giving them trade concessions, but it was in the form of a treaty which explicitly acknowledged that sovereignty was retained by the “well-beloved illustrious Sultan.” Under the scrutiny of lawyers in Washington, or even in The Hague, Gibson’s conviction might be found spurious. The Dutch minister of foreign matters, M. Van Hall, assumed a defensive diplomatic stance, denying any wrongdoing by his government but not pressing the case against Captain Gibson, a fugitive from justice.

Gibson, however, pursued his claim with the passionate intensity that was to mark his subsequent career in public life. Indeed, the case provided his passage from adventurer on the high seas to publicist and politician extraordinaire. In New York City he spread to the newspapers and to leaders of the business community the story of how Dutch injustice had taken his ship, his liberty, and his country’s flag. In Washington, Gibson’s story, eloquently told, impressed President Pierce and many a senator and congressman. As the discussion of the State Department with the Netherlands government proceeded with ritualistic
notes, memoranda, questions, explanations, exceptions, thrusts, and ripostes, Gibson came to realize that he would need a constituency to maintain governmental interest in his claim. He became a public lecturer on Indonesia, the El Dorado of the East, making his debut before the American Geographical and Statistical Society in New York.

A return to Pendleton and Anderson, South Carolina, provided sympathetic audiences of old neighbors, including local congressmen, to hear how the Dutch had mistreated him and the American colors. As Gibson discovered how responsive his listeners were to charges of desecration to the flag, he improved the story. The sozzled Lieutenant Nicolson had not merely torn down the sacred ensign and hurled it into the river at Palembang, he had thus dishonored Old Glory before “many thousands of assembled Sumatrans.”

Memorials supporting Gibson were adopted at these meetings. Congressman James Orr of South Carolina had them referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives. The entire House had already, by resolution, called on the president for a report on Gibson’s claim for indemnity and for copies of correspondence between Marcy in Washington and Belmont at The Hague.

Gibson, increasingly impatient at the slow pace of diplomatic and legislative discourse, sailed to Holland—openly, in his own name—carrying with him instructions from Marcy to Belmont “to press the matter temperately but resolutely.” There Gibson stayed during the summer of 1853, untouched by the Dutch as he sought new evidence against them, even though the punishment finally imposed by the court in Batavia—to stand under the gallows for half an hour, then to serve twelve years at hard labor—remained unexecuted.

Belmont reiterated the demands of the United States: that Gibson be paid US $100,000 (or 250,000 florins) as indemnity and that the Netherlands government return the papers and other personal property that had been seized from the Flirt or that Gibson had voluntarily submitted to the court in Batavia to establish his identity and good faith. Belmont argued that the government at The Hague was responsible, in view of the direct control over the judiciary held by the executive in the Dutch system of governance.
Foreign Minister Van Hall continued to deny Gibson’s claim for any indemnity but agreed to restore his personal papers.  

Dissatisfied with Belmont’s advocacy, or seeking a more congenial European capital from which to stimulate the diplomatic process, Gibson moved on to Paris. There he presented himself as being attached to the American embassy. That might have been true literally, for it was at the embassy that he spent his days, but it was not correct in the usage of international relations. Marcy’s letter to J. Y. Mason, U.S. minister in France, revealed some disillusionment with the contentious grievant but nevertheless a determination to see justice done.

I have reason to believe that W. M. Gibson, the man who has of late annoyed Mr. Belmont not a little, has rather unceremoniously attached himself to your Legation. He has engraved cards as “Attache” of the American Legation at Paris and I have seen a copy of one of his letters headed “U.S. Legation Paris.” Somebody told me this was unauthorized. I hope so, but it may be otherwise, for he is a specious man. If you knew as much of him as I do, you would not have allowed the connection (entre nous). I think he has been harshly treated by the Dutch and I have done and shall continue to do what I can to obtain indemnity for him.

Mason investigated and reported back to Washington that Gibson had presented himself to a Judge Donn Piatt in the Paris embassy, bearing a letter of introduction from the president of the United States. Impressed, Piatt had invited Gibson to his home, where there was “some talk about his becoming ‘attache’,” but with no promises made. The judge expressed surprise when told about Gibson’s engraved cards and letterheads. The White House, when asked about the letter of introduction, was equally surprised. President Pierce said he had talked with Captain Gibson, but had written no letter for him.

Early in October 1854, Gibson quit Paris to return home. En route he stopped at Liverpool and there called on the American consul, Nathaniel Hawthorne, who had earned that appointment by writing a campaign biography of his college friend, Franklin Pierce. The novelist, generally a solitary man, was sufficiently taken by Captain Gibson to invite him to his home for an overnight stay and to record in his notebook his perceptive impressions of the adventurer as he appeared in his early thirties.
He is ... slender, with a prominent nose and handsome, intelligent, moderately-bearded face, of a light complexion. Like most men of an adventurous turn, he is of a very quiet deportment, rather inclined to silence than conversation. He is gentlemanly, seems to have read a good deal on such subjects as interest him, and show signs of a native fastidiousness of taste. The vicissitudes of his life appear to have tinctured him with superstition, inclining him to look upon himself as marked out for something strange.11

Gibson told Hawthorne that he had tarried in Britain, missing the sailing of the vessel that was to have carried him home to New York, in order to begin tracing his real parents, who were English and of noble birth. After dinner the consul persuaded his guest to recount his travels and tribulations, “which, methought, had hardly been paralleled since the days of Gulliver or De Foe.”12

When his dignified reserve was overcome, he had the faculty of narrating these adventures with wonderful eloquence, working up his descriptive sketches with such intuitive perception of the picturesque points that the whole was thrown forward with a positively illusive effect, like matters of your own visual experience. In fact, they were so admirably done that I could never more than half believe them, because the genuine affairs of life are not apt to transact themselves so artistically.13

If Hawthorne had realized that Gibson had rehearsed before American lecture audiences his tales of Indonesia—of the spices, rubber trees, the Malay pirates, and, above all, the wild man of the forest, the orangutan of Sumatra—and that the manuscript of The Prison of Weltevreden and a Glimpse at the East Indian Archipelago was well toward completion, he would have judged him as a fellow professional storyteller and not as a gifted amateur. Realization came closest when he heard the captain tell the story of his birth at sea.

Gibson vividly described the storm-tossed ship whose agitations off Gibraltar induced labor in two wretched pregnant women aboard—one an American housewife, the other an English lady. He pictured the confusion below decks that caused the two infants to be interchanged, and he given to the bosom of the American. That mixup had occurred thirty-one years ago, but he had been able to identify his true parents only now. In the picture gallery
of a certain lord’s country house he had just discovered a portrait bearing an unmistakable resemblance to himself. As soon as the Dutch paid the indemnity owing to him, Gibson said he would return to England and claim his heritage. In the meantime, he required a loan to cover his passage to America.

As soon as I heard the first chapter—so wonderfully akin to what I might have wrought out of my own head, not unpracticed in such figments—I began to repent having made myself responsible for the future nobleman’s passage homeward in the next Collins steamer. Nevertheless, should his English rent-roll fall a little behind-hand, his Dutch claim for a hundred thousand dollars was certainly in the hands of our Government, and might at least be valuable to the extent of thirty pounds, which I had engaged to pay on his behalf. But I have reason to fear that his Dutch riches turned out to be Dutch gilt of fairy gold, and his English country-seat a mere castle in the air—which I regret exceedingly; for he was a delightful companion and a very gentlemanly man.14

Actually, Gibson was then a good risk to cash in on his claim for Dutch gold. When, on November 3, 1854, he stepped ashore in New York City from the steamship Arabia, he carried with him documentary material highly embarrassing to the Netherlands government. While he was still in The Hague, the Dutch had acceded to Belmont’s demand that Gibson’s private papers be returned. Van Hall had directed that the Gibson files be sent to him from the Ministry of the Colonies. When three large bundles of these papers arrived, Van Hall, on the mistaken assumption that his ministerial colleague had retained all items not intended for American eyes, negligently handed the entire dossier over to Belmont, who transferred it all to Gibson.

When he untied the bundles, Gibson was delighted to find not only his own papers, but also scores of memoranda, letters, and reports concerning his case that had been exchanged within the colonial administration of Indonesia. They exposed the ludicrousness of some of the prosecution’s case, for example, that the Dutch authorities had taken as evidence of Gibson’s subversive intent the fact that he carried a card identifying him as a member of the Constellation Lodge, No. 353, New York City, Order of the Odd Fellows. They revealed that the personal servant and the translator whom Gibson had taken aboard the Flirt on the rec-
ommendation of Dutch officers, and who testified against him, were police agents. They showed that the letter of introduction addressed to the sultan of Jambi, which was the chief evidence produced in court, was on white paper, while Gibson had sworn that the letter he had signed was written on a blue sheet. They demonstrated that Gibson had been found not guilty by the trial court but that the verdict had been peremptorily reversed by the High Court of the Netherlands Indies.\footnote{15}

Back home, Gibson repeatedly cited the indications of anti-American prejudice, political persecution, entrapment, harassment, and denial of due process that he mined from the gift packages. Reporters gained access to choice items from the papers, many of them marked “secret” or “confidential.” Van Hall repeatedly called upon Belmont for the return of the materials mistakenly released to Gibson. Belmont did not admire Gibson’s tactic of leaking to the press documents favorable to his claim. He had some sympathy for Van Hall when the minister was called before the Netherlands States-General to explain why Gibson had not been arrested when he appeared in The Hague and how he had obtained secret files of the Dutch government.

Moving to Washington, Gibson lobbyed strenuously for his indemnity claim, calling on members of Congress, cabinet officers, the president, and also journalists. Newspaper stories demanded action by Minister Belmont, the “Jew banker.” There is no reason to suppose that the epithet, ready at hand for any reporter or rewrite man, came from Gibson, but Belmont was certain that the newspaper attacks were instigated by the busy claimant. To Marcy, Belmont surmised that the captain’s hostility stemmed from his refusal to lend Gibson $500.\footnote{16}

Despite their disenchantment with Gibson, Marcy and Belmont continued to press the Dutch government for the indemnity, as well as for acceptance of American consuls in the Dutch East Indies. But the lack of visible progress toward a settlement angered Captain Gibson and the constituency he had created for his cause. Talk became tough. Under pressure from Washington, Belmont told the Dutch that “ulterior measures” would be resorted to if necessary to secure redress of the wrongs to Gibson. Less obliquely, the \textit{New York Herald} editorialized: “We have only one course to pursue, and that is, to enforce the redress that is denied
us by taking possession of Curacao and holding it as a guarantee for the payment of the indemnity.”

Gibson went the whole way. He wrote to Secretary Marcy on November 11, 1854, urging the United States to use force of arms to bring the Dutch to heel.

I believe that I am justified in assuming that active measures will be adopted to complete what has been already begun by pacific agencies. As to the nature of these measures, the opinions of all writers upon public law, and the precedents of our own as well as of other countries, recognizing the same principles of international law, point to armed reprisals as the appropriate means of redress.

My confident conviction that the employment of these means will lead to great and eminently desirable results upon our intercourse with the East, assures me in urging this course upon the government.

Communications among the diplomats became more testy. Belmont wrote to Van Hall that the refusal of the Dutch government to make amends for the injuries suffered by Gibson and for the insult to the American flag was forcing the United States to “take such measures for the enforcement of Mr. Gibson’s claim as it may deem fit and proper.” Van Hall asked what precisely was meant by these English words. Belmont, going by the formula for such diplomatic sparring, asked the Dutch minister to “communicate to me the exact word or words with which you are not familiar.” At this point, the diplomats went off the record to find a way out of the impasse they were creating, for neither government wanted to go to war over Gibson, the Flirt, or its flag. Van Hall wrote to close out the round: “I will willingly attribute to the fact that my less perfect knowledge of the English language had caused me to give to the word ‘enforcement’ another construction than, after your explanations, it seems to me to belong to it.”

Viewed as a case in international law, the argument between the two governments raised by Gibson’s claim was based on whether the United States was warranted in looking behind the forms of justice administered in the Netherlands East Indies, no matter how repugnant to American concepts of fairness and due process they might be. However, Gibson’s unceasing intervention in the case, on stage and behind the scenes, made his character the decisive element in its outcome. The State Department and the
White House were angered by Gibson’s dissimulation—or worse—in pretending to have an official status in the Paris embassy. He had deeply offended Belmont by the newspaper attacks he apparently inspired. Secretary Marcy was soured on the man. He wrote in confidence to Donn Piatt of the Paris legation:

I think your friend Gibson is in a bad way in relation to his claim. There is an impression here ... that the statements in the Newspapers purporting to give the precise dates and contents of my dispatches and private letters ... came from him. He has the credit of having the pen of a ready writer, and of using it very indiscreetly.\(^{20}\)

On the last day of 1854 the Chevalier de Gevers, Netherlands minister to the United States, reported to Van Hall that the chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and other official acquaintance in Washington now held it against Gibson that he had sought in questionable ways to influence public opinion. Gibson still retained papers mistakenly given to him at The Hague, and it was believed that he had also removed from the files of the State Department a letter highly detrimental to his cause. De Gevers promised to take pains to see to it that the letter would be included in the forthcoming report of the Foreign Affairs Committee on the Gibson affair, which was supposed to include all papers relating to the claim.\(^{21}\)

The letter in question had been addressed by Captain Gibson to the governor of Netherlands India, dated February 25, 1852, when Gibson had been released from prison on a finding that his arrest was contrary to due process but was momentarily expecting (correctly) to be again imprisoned in a judicially approved manner. It read:

May it please your excellency, I once more take the liberty of addressing you in relation to my case; and I now desire to do so without feeling of attempt at defense; but rather to throw myself wholly upon your excellency’s clemency, and that of your government.

I am, at the moment, at liberty, but expecting incarceration at any time. I must say, that I feel this state of uncertainty to be a severe punishment. I know, and avow most respectfully, that I have allowed my fancy and my vanity to get the better of my judgment. Much of that time, during my stay within the jurisdiction of the Netherlands Indian government, I remember to have indulged in bravadoes that I
would become a potentate in the East; and this to Europeans and natives, who I cannot suppose attached any importance to what I said, than as a vain-glorious boast; but I must ever add, in extenuation, that this was after a plentiful indulgence in wine. I have been too often led away in life by some high-colored romantic idea; but, as I said at the commencement, I write not for defense on the occasion, but to avow that I committed grave errors in a too free way of speaking with natives; and ultimately in allowing my mate to depart into the interior, and in signing a letter addressed to a native chief, in the Malay character, without sufficiently examining, or endeavoring to know, its inflammatory contents. I acknowledge the serious fault of sending a communication of whatever nature to such a personage, and allowing the mate of my vessel to leave to penetrate into the interior, without acquainting the authorities. I cannot remember more particulars than I have already given in previous statements; and I now crave your excellency’s consideration of all the facts, and then dispose of me as your leniency shall dictate. I make no defense, but only pray for a speedy judgment; hoping that there will be found a sufficiency of extenuating circumstances to mitigate the sentence I may strictly deserve.  

When, early in January 1855, the House committee report was issued and found to omit this penitential letter, a mine was sprung under Gibson with a quickness that suggests joint action by the American and Dutch diplomats. On January 10 de Gevers wrote to Secretary Marcy, indicating his “astonishment” that the House report did not include a dispatch from Van Hall forwarding Gibson’s confessional letter as part of the case against the captain. On January 19 Marcy wrote to President Pierce on the matter, noting that Gibson had been given ready access to his file in the State Department and clearly implying that it was the claimant who had removed this document. For the president’s understanding of the importance of the missing paper, Marcy attached a copy of Gibson’s letter, supplied by the Netherlands’ legation. That same day the White House transmitted the set of letters—Gibson’s, de Gevers’, Marcy’s, and Pierce’s—to the House of Representatives, where it was immediately referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs. The committee included the text of the confessional letter in its report to the House.  

Newspaper editorials, the influence that Gibson had so sedulously promoted to build public support, now turned against him.
(He claimed that the New York Times had the story of the purloined letter four days before the House report was released.) Vainly, Gibson sent a long appeal to Representative Bayly, the new chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. He proclaimed his innocence and protested against the innuendo employed by Marcy in making him out to be a sneak thief. Gibson argued that he had no reason to repress the letter, since he had told Marcy about it more than a year earlier, when first presenting his claim for indemnity.

However, de Gevers was able to report to Van Hall that Chairman Bayly assured him, “I have investigated thoroughly the case, and you will have no further difficulty about it.” The chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations congratulated the Dutch minister on having destroyed Gibson and his claim.  

With Gibson’s troublesome case effectively dismissed, the two national governments got down to business. Belmont so pleased Van Hall when he apologized for defending the discredited Gibson that the Dutch minister assented to the long-sought agreement on consuls. By the end of January 1855, they had signed a convention that admitted American consuls not only to East Indian ports—which was the goal of the United States before the Gibson case intruded—but to all other Dutch ports open to foreign commerce. Belmont was congratulated by the diplomatic community in The Hague for his triumph, even as de Gevers was being applauded in Washington. The contriving captain, who had unwittingly brought Van Hall and Belmont into sympathetic understanding, was not thanked for his contribution to the rapprochement between the two governments.

Gibson, short of funds and low in favor around Washington, did not yet abandon his claim for indemnity, the only asset he possessed other than the manuscript of his Indonesian memoirs. He continued to lobby and write long letters to the State Department and to members of Congress. Since the Netherlands had refused to pay indemnities, he petitioned the U.S. government for recompense, or that it take “such measures as will compel compensation by the Netherlands India government.” The final report of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, printed in August 1856, fully rehearsed the long, complicated claim and let the captain down gently, with no special mention of the purloined let-
But it offered him no remedy, other than resolving that the president renew conversations with the Dutch on the indemnity.\textsuperscript{28} However, by that date Franklin Pierce was near the end of his presidency, and Captain Walter Murray Gibson, late of the \textit{Flirt}, was without a ship or employment.

He had one resource, however, in the manuscript of his heavily romantic, yet illuminating account of his adventures overseas. Gibson hastily completed \textit{The Prison of Weltevreden and a Glimpse at the East Indian Archipelago}, and in 1856 it was printed by a New York publisher, in time to capitalize on the public attention that Gibson and his cause had stirred up.

Gibson himself inspired much of the demand for the volume, which in its Dedication he “Consecrated to the the native races of the East Indian Archipelago ... and to the mitigation of the selfishness and asperity of European dominion in the East; through the development of a closer sympathy between Western Intelligence and Eastern Imagination; under the fostering influence of the faith and enthusiasm of woman.” It was to the “Women of Christendom” that the author dedicated his first book. Well supplied with copies, Gibson now resumed his rounds of the lecture halls in New York and other cities of the East Coast. Using his abilities as a fascinating, utterly persuasive raconteur, which had so impressed Nathaniel Hawthorne as he had recounted these very adventures, Gibson had many of his listeners digging into their pockets to buy the volumes available at the door as they left the auditorium.

That is how he supported himself for two years, on lecture fees and sales of his adventure story. It was a living, but one that would dwindle as public fancy turned to other subjects, to other people in the news. He was in no position either to sustain his children—still living with their maternal grandparents in South Carolina—or to begin realizing his abiding dream of splendid adventure in the islands of the tropical seas. He had to make something happen.
Walter Murray Gibson the romantic visionary with his dreams of Pacific empire could always count on Gibson the resourceful man of many talents to find a connection with the holders of power. Even before his claim against the government of the Netherlands had to be acknowledged a lost cause, he had sought to hitch his wagon to a more promising star, the heavenly body being the Mormon church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

While patrolling the halls of Congress in search of support for his Netherlands claim, Gibson had become acquainted with Dr. John M. Bernhisel, a Mormon, delegate of the U.S. House of Representatives from the territory of Utah. The Mormons there were being threatened by a federal army force, dispatched in the spring of 1857 to constrain this disturbing new sect after they resisted the installation of a gentile governor of the Utah Territory to replace their leader, Brigham Young.

The New York Times reported that Gibson had submitted to Bernhisel a plan for the Mormons to move from the disputed territory and resettle in a land where they would be welcomed—New Guinea. In early 1858 Bernhisel presented the idea of a peaceful emigration to the federal government, which rejected it. Nevertheless, said the Times, a ship was being fitted out to take a Mormon vanguard to Oceania. Gibson had prepared detailed maps and much descriptive information about the East Indies for the Mormon leaders. He was quoted as envisioning goals of the mission that transcended even those of the Mormon Church:

Such an event, the settlement of great islands, some ... twice as large as Utah, now possessed by a few miserable savages and the beasts of
the jungle, by a race speaking our language and possessing all the arts
of our civilization, must be productive of beneficial results to the civili-
zed world. It would destroy Malay piracy and Dutch monopoly, the
two curses of the Indian seas, and could make the Anglo-Saxon race
and name preeminent throughout Oceania.¹

Gibson was in New York a few months after this article appeared and told Bernhisel that he intended to visit Utah soon. Reclaiming his three children from their grandparents in South Carolina, he set out by wagon for Salt Lake City, and from St. Louis in May 1859, he wrote ahead to President Brigham Young himself:

> It has been in my heart, many years, to propose to you and your peo-
> ple, emigration to the islands of Oceanica.... I spoke in this wise to Dr.
> Bernhisel at Washington three years ago.... It was in my heart when
> a boy to dwell in thought upon “Java and the isles afar off; that have
> not,” as said the Lord by Isaiah, “heard my fame, neither have seen my
> glory.”

> I have spent many years among the “isles that wait” for the Lord; and
> while I lay in a dungeon in the island of Java, a voice said to me: “You
> shall show the way to a people, who shall build up a Kingdom in these
> isles, whose lines of power shall run around the earth.” My purposes
> of life were changed from that hour.... I have thought again and again,
> that your people were the people; and yet as often rejected the idea;
> but now I have resolved to come into your midst and declare the bur-
> then of my spirit.²

By October 1859, Brigham Young had had several talks with Gibson, who was still trying to persuade him that the Mormons should move to New Guinea or Papua, where the climate was mild and the native population was ripe for proselytizing. Young advised Gibson to investigate further the creed and works of the Mormons. If he found their faith to be true, he could be baptized and ordained an elder. Then Young would send him and a few other elders to those distant peoples in the Pacific of which he spoke so persuasively.³ Gibson, perforce, took Young’s advice and spent the winter in Salt Lake City studying the Book of Mormon, the church, and its leaders, organization, and enterprises.

Gibson was on the eve of the most fateful venture of his life. He began by casting his lot with the Mormons. On January 15, 1860,
he was baptized in City Creek by Heber C. Kimball, who stood next to President Young in the theocracy, and was then confirmed as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the president’s office by Brigham Young himself. That was the day before Gibson’s thirty-eighth birthday, and his daughter Tallulah, sixteen years old, was baptized and confirmed on that same winter day.\(^4\) (It may have been this ceremony, misunderstood by the busy globe-trotting author, Sir Richard Francis Burton, that led him to write that she had become one of Brigham Young’s many wives.\(^5\)

Apart from his dream of glory in the Pacific, Gibson’s early relationship with the Mormons indicates that he was genuinely attracted to their faith and sincere in his professions. Wallace Stegner has pointed out that Mormonism, especially the early Church of Latter-Day Saints, held particular appeal for one of Gibson’s character and talents. As a world religion teaching that the Mormons would inherit the earth, it fit his vision of himself as a savior of Pacific peoples. As a “revealed religion, filled with miracles, prophecies, revelations, and the other evidences of God’s active participation in the affairs of men,” it fit the strain of mysticism in Gibson.\(^6\) As a practical religion concerned with the social welfare of its adherents, teaching that salvation is first to be found through deeds here on earth, it appealed to Gibson’s respect for work and achievement. As a young religion, the Mormon faith offered a convert greater opportunity than did older faiths. Gibson could envision himself converting first an island and then the whole Pacific, and his revelations need not be limited to those of other Mormons. He could serve the church in his own way.

Clearly in the beginning there was trust, mutual respect, and social intimacy between Brigham Young and Elder Walter Murray Gibson. The president provided a forum for the eloquent newcomer and for a time took Tallulah into his household. Gibson wrote to Young in late January 1860: “Your kindness and attentions … fill my heart with the liveliest emotions of gratitude. It is now one of my chief desires to prove ever worthy of this kind interest.”\(^7\)

Gibson’s first assignment was to use his demonstrated abilities as a writer and speaker on behalf of the church. Young instructed the church historian to assemble materials useful for several articles that Gibson was to write for an encyclopedia to be published
by D. Appleton and Company, including an essay on Mormonism and biographies of Brigham Young and Joseph Smith. Gibson gave several lectures, mostly on his Malay experiences, and at times had the honor of sharing the platform with Brigham Young. On February 28, he lectured at the Social Hall on the flora and fauna of the Malay archipelago. Young called it "a very interesting lecture," unfortunately missed by the many people who had to be turned away from the overcrowded auditorium. Therefore, the next lecture was given in the much larger tabernacle. There Gibson spoke to a full house about the peoples of the East Indian archipelago. Young, who followed with a lecture of his own, praised Gibson's talk and declared himself thankful for the knowledge he had gained from Gibson's book, *The Prison of Weltevreden and a Glance at the East Indian Archipelago*, from many conversations with him, and from his lectures.

The Mormon leaders were obviously much taken with Gibson's lectures, but what did they really think about his proposal for emigrating to islands of the Pacific? The Utah correspondent of the *New York Times* wrote in May 1860 that "the Captain is more smitten with Mormonism than the Mormons with Malayism." In September the same correspondent wrote that Brigham Young never really considered selling out to the federal government and moving to the Pacific. Gibson had not made his case, but he was left to believe that in time he might.

The Salt Lake City lectures showed that Gibson's eyes were on the Pacific and Indian oceans, but before he could sail west he had to go through a period of trial and testing in the opposite direction. On April 9, 1860, he was commissioned an elder for a mission to the eastern United States. Brigham Young gave him a letter of introduction to William H. Hooper, Utah delegate in Washington, saying that Gibson, "after a careful investigation of our faith, concluded to cast his spiritual lot with ours. So far as my acquaintance has extended with the Captain, I have invariably found him to be frank, kind hearted, intelligent, upright, and gentlemanly."

Young advised Gibson, in his missionary work, not to come out too quickly and fully with professions of Mormon faith. Hasty disclosure might "bar avenues and opportunities for doing good." By proceeding slowly, Gibson would "be able to successfully cope
with the bitter prejudices of those who are opposed to the truth only because of their ignorance, and be instrumental in disseminating correct principles where they would otherwise be excluded.”

It was advice that Gibson took to heart.

He set out from Salt Lake City on April 27 by ox train, leaving the children there, Tallulah as a member of Brigham Young’s household. At the beginning of July, Gibson reported to Young on his trip, which thus far had taken him to Nebraska, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and New York. Reaching New York City on June 25, he found that his father had died a few months earlier. (His mother had died in 1856. Both parents were buried in a Catholic cemetery on Long Island.) He stayed with friends in Brooklyn (where he fended off a street assault by a thug), addressed a meeting attended by some three hundred Mormons, and completed the articles for the encyclopedia.

In New York, Gibson also visited at length with members of Japan’s first embassy to the United States. He claimed that before he left them he could communicate without an interpreter, presumably partly in Japanese. Gibson wrote to Brigham Young that he had once urged upon the American State Department the importance of a mission to Japan, but the government had disregarded his advice, just as they had his views about closer relations with the Malay islands.

Japan with her 30 millions of souls opens a great field for the missionary labor of the Saints. I have faith that a wonderful work will be accomplished there, but I doubt not that the Spirit of God will enlighten you as to the right time, when it shall be commenced. From Japan the work will roll on, as wisdom shall dictate, to the Philippines, to the Malay Islands, to Madagascar, to Polynesian groups, and all throughout the tens of thousands of “islanders of the sea.” Dear brother, I long to be engaged in this work; but I will be obedient unto your dictation.

During his travels on the East Coast, Gibson was beset by questions about the intentions of the Mormons to sell out and move from Utah to the Pacific. He reported to Young that he kept denying that the Mormons had any such intent but because his name had been linked to such a scheme in the past, the newspapers were speculating that Gibson’s present trip must be part
of the preparations for a trans-Pacific migration. More probably, speculation about the Mormons leaving Utah to avoid further conflict with the federal troops was stimulated by Gibson in talks with reporters—conversations he especially enjoyed for the opportunities they offered to expand upon his persona and ideas.

The *New York Times* claimed it had information showing that Gibson’s scheme would be carried out; if the Mormons could not sell their property in Utah they were prepared to abandon it. Gibson was quoted as saying that he would sail for Sumatra in the fall on a voyage of exploration and discovery. Recalling his troubles with the Dutch, the *Times* commented: “His antecedents do not afford any solid guarantee of success. It is not impossible that the captain has speculative views of his own in his sudden conversion to Mormonism, and that he is not wholly disinterested in this matter.”\(^{15}\)

For several months, Gibson spread the Mormon gospel and his own rumors in Boston and New York and then returned west, reaching Salt Lake City on November 3, 1860. Over the next several days he had talks with Brigham Young that set the course of his future. The president asked if he had any local missions in mind, but Gibson was not thinking of anything in Utah. His thoughts continued to run westward, across the ocean. Young said he could carry the word of the church to China, Japan, the East Indies, and the Malay islands.

For the last time, Young and Gibson shared the lecture platform at the tabernacle on November 18, 1860, when Gibson discussed his anticipated mission to the Orient. He spoke with his customary eloquence of “the feelings that now inspire [me] to go forth with a message of life and salvation to the dark and benighted people of the Eastern hemisphere.” Young said that Elder Gibson had been given full authority “to negotiate with all the nations of the world who would obey the gospel of Christ.”\(^{16}\) If Gibson were to enlarge his view of his mission, he would do even more good than he now envisioned. To Gibson, it sounded as if he had been given carte blanche to act for the Mormon church in the Pacific.

Gibson received a set of commissions, impressively adorned with ribbons and seals, and signed by Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and David H. Wells as members of the First Presidency.\(^{17}\) The first document was addressed to the Malay potentates and
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peoples; the second, a message of good will, was addressed “To the Illustrious and Renowned Potentate of His Imperial Majesty the Tycoon of the Islands of Japan”; the third was a general commission stating that Elder Gibson was on a “mission to preach the Gospel and administer its ordinances” and invited “all men to give heed to his teachings and councils as a man of God, and to assist him in his travels.”

“A pretty liberal commission, certainly,” commented the correspondent of the New York Times, who speculated that “it may be that Brigham Young has some important designs to view in regard to the East, and takes advantage of the Captain’s faith and zeal and enthusiasm, and his knowledge of Eastern peoples, countries, languages, manners, customs ... to accomplish these designs. Or, it may be that the Captain feels a strong call to go and preach the Mormon gospel to the Archipelagian heathen, and Brigham says, ‘go, and prosper.’”\(^{18}\)

An overseas mission was advantageous to both men. To Brigham Young, it provided at little cost to the church a reconnaissance of possibilities for westward expansion. To Walter Murray Gibson it was a new start, another chance at power and fame in the islands blessed by the sun.

Thus, after a decade of restless moving about within the limits of dry-land America, Gibson was once more on his way to the Pacific Ocean, but this time bearing impressive-looking credentials. He left Salt Lake City on November 21, 1860, heading southwest toward Los Angeles. His daughter Tallulah went with him, but his sons John and Henry remained behind in Salt Lake City.

Along the way, Gibson lectured in several towns in Utah and California, speaking to gatherings of Mormons and taking note of the religious and political climate. He wrote to Young in February 1861: “A malignant and cowardly apostate and gentle spirit prevails in California.” He heard reports that American “Bible Christians” had made themselves disagreeable in Japan by “vicious, disorderly, and overbearing conduct.” In view of this, he thought he might enter Japan as the representative of some other political state, believing that would aid his acceptance as ambassador of the Mormon church.\(^{19}\) The new ambassador was heeding Young’s advice about using discretion when entering uncertain territory.

Gibson next went to San Francisco, where he and Tallulah
stayed at the home of Dwight Eveleth, a Mormon who had worked in the Sandwich Islands. The San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin reported that Gibson proposed to voyage by way of the Sandwich Islands to the “gum and spice islands that sprinkle the Eastern Ocean,” speculating that he was again trying to realize his ambition of establishing a Pacific colony from which a wealth of East Indian products would pour into the United States. Young wrote Gibson urging that he stop at the Sandwich and Society Islands, if that routing were convenient; Eveleth could supply the names of native brethren.

At the San Francisco Academy of Music, on March 13, Captain Gibson lectured on his favorite subject, Malaysia. The large hall was almost full, although only two days’ notice had been given. He spoke from notes but referred to them only sparingly, describing the geography of Malaysia, its climate, people, and especially its products and the opportunities for San Francisco to open up trade with the islands. He contrasted this possible commerce with the China trade: “From China we fetch some $40,000 of luxuries ... to be paid for in silver. They will not take our goods. The trade enriches a few of our capitalists, but the Malays, who are a lively, curious, inquisitive, imitative race, desire our goods. Whatever we bring from there we may pay for in the products of our factories—in our cutlery, crockery, etc. The trade of these islands might be increased five-fold, without conflicting seriously with the Dutch, by looking especially to those independent Malay States which the Dutch do not control nor distinctly claim”—such as the Sultanate of Jambi, once his land of desire.

An enthusiastic response to Gibson’s talk led to an invitation to address a joint session of the California state legislature “upon the products, climate, and inhabitants of the East Indies, and their commercial importance with reference to the Pacific Coast.” In his address to the state senate and assembly, Gibson urged the government of California to send a commissioner to Malaya (a person knowledgeable of the area, of course) to open up trade with California. A resolution to create the post of commissioner narrowly failed. Since he himself had been the obvious candidate for the office, Gibson attributed the defeat to anti-Mormon prejudice.

General Edwin Sumner, the commander of federal troops in California, invited Gibson to call on him and tell him, in that Civil
War year, about Brigham Young’s views on secession. “I told him that you [Young] and all true Mormons had a favorite motto to which they adhered closely—’Mind your own business.’ Being assured that the Constitution of the late U.S. was by the inspiration of God, [the Mormons] were determined to cherish it.”

Gibson reported back to Young on how public opinion in California was divided in sympathies for the warring States:

The lines between Northerners and Southerners are clearly marked, not only in politics but in society. The hate is mutual and unappeasable. The Southerners being less engrossed with business, being mostly professional men and place men, make up in political activity for decided numerical inferiority. They are well organized and drilled; and the old watchword, “rule or ruin,” ascribed to the dead democracy of the late Union, is the pith of the principles and purposes of the proslavery political force in California. They hope to fascinate the restless, fortune hunting people of California with prospects of conquest in Mexico and Oceanica; and with the immigration and subordination of millions of Chinese and other Asiatics, who are to develop the resources of the Pacific slopes of the continent in the same manner that “tropical labour” is developing the cotton and rice fields of the Atlantic Coast.

This was a politically ambivalent report from a man who was by nurture a Southerner: the Union was pronounced dead, without any token of mourning, but there was no admiration expressed for the partisans of the Confederacy, only a hard-eyed appraisal of their organization and propaganda. Gibson’s own views on the Civil War were to mystify his associates and opponents throughout the rest of his life.

Satisfied that his mission among the Gentiles so far had met with Young’s approval and responding to the president’s suggestion that he go to the Sandwich Islands, Gibson wrote that he would be glad “to meet the simple hearted brethren of the islands, with words of instruction, encouragement, and consolation.” And, looking toward his broader task: “The vast island world of Polynesia, Malaysia, and Australasia, inspires me with increased desire to impart the words of saving truth, now ... where I can look out on the great ocean.”

Gibson complained, however, that he lacked the means to fulfill his mission or even to open the way to “the isles of the sea.”
He had made a little money by lecturing, and Brother Meeder of Santa Cruz, a man of means, had donated $120 for the mission, but that was scarcely enough to take him across the ocean. To be sure, Brother Meeder had offered to supply and provision a schooner of 150 tons, but Gibson had prudently declined the offer, reasoning that, given the passions aroused in California over the Civil War, building a boat might attract a mob. Then, too, he thought it would be unwise to go to Japan from the American coast or in a vessel under the flag of “the late United States.”

What was Gibson’s ultimate destination? This is not clear, but it seems that his recurring thought from the time he left Salt Lake City was to go to the Malay archipelago by way of Japan. But his uncertainty was evident. In mid-May 1861 he wrote to Young that he was getting ready to go to the Sandwich Islands, but that there was some inducement to visit Australia instead. However, that plan of travel was not working out and he was thinking of sailing directly to Singapore. In fact, he was “only considering the best way to enter the Malay Archipelago.”

By early June he had given up any thought of Australia and wrote that he would embark for Honolulu. He had learned that the Hawaiian Saints were badly disorganized, and he would report to Young on their condition. He was “wishful to be gone from the sound of strife and corrupt traffic—and bear messages of good will to simple-hearted islanders.” He expected to sail from San Francisco for Honolulu on June 15, recalling that on that very day seven years earlier, he had embarked for Europe from the Atlantic coast to pursue his claim against the Dutch government.

These plans held. He and Tallulah sailed aboard the bark Yankee. On June 30, 1861, they arrived in Honolulu. There was to be no continuing on to Australia, Malaya, Japan, or any farther port. For virtually the rest of his life, Gibson was to reside in the Hawaiian Islands.

The arrival of Captain Gibson was noted in Hawaii’s leading newspaper, the Pacific Commercial Advertiser, which identified him as a “well-known traveller” who would stay about two months and visit all the inhabited islands of the Hawaiian group. The editor referred to frequent articles in California papers that touched on the captain’s past, including his troubles with the Dutch, and expressed the hope that he would lecture in Honolulu.
as he had in California on the “social conditions and commercial importance of the Malaysian group.”

A distinguished group of Honolulu residents, including U.S. Commissioner Thomas J. Dryer and Hawaiian Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert C. Wyllie, did invite Gibson to give such a lecture. He spoke on July 12 at the Fort Street Church, and the Advertiser reported that his hearers “went away delighted and instructed.”

The lecture consisted of an account of his personal adventures…. It was no second-hand tale.... Of the Malayan races ... but little authentic information is known and their islands are now nearly as much closed against foreign commerce and travel as they were centuries ago. The Dutch have held an absolute monopoly on the trade with them, and most strictly do they guard their exclusive privileges and keep out other foreigners. Captain Gibson is endeavoring by his lectures and personal efforts to effect a change in their exclusive policy, and open up the East Indies to the commerce of the world but particularly to American commerce.

After this free lecture, Gibson arranged “at the urgent request of many residents” to give three more talks, with an admission fee of one dollar. All were well received; the Honolulu newspapers devoted long columns to reporting them. One quotation excerpted from his maiden speeches in Hawaii shows how quickly Gibson came to understand what was destroying the native culture. It also reveals an ambivalence on his part about white domination that would put him in conflict with other Americans in Hawaii. Members of New England missionary families must have found portions of his talks puzzling or disquieting, though they began well enough.

I have some occasion to object to the spirit of Dutch monopoly and nonintercourse, but cannot doubt the value of their policy and some respects in fostering Malaysian increase. And, inasmuch as the replenishing of the earth was the primal command, it does seem that the same kind of policy, with certain ameliorations, might be applied advantageously to the material development of land and races in the Pacific—for instance, Hawaii nei. I have said it again and again, and repeat it now, that civilization in Oceanica, house and home civilization, the civilization of good clothing, decency, and cleanliness, the civilization of prosperity on earth, as well of hope of heaven, is to be best developed in the production of needed staples for the world’s
use, rather than in a loafing life on barren coral reefs, and eking out a low grade, vegetating existence on poi and pandanus. The Polynesians are dying out on such a diet, and wasting away also—owing to some civilized virus in their blood, and the lack of all national hope in their hearts; but the Malaysians are increasing on rice, sago, and plentiful meat and fruits, which increase is also owing greatly to organized labor in plantations and mines, and furthermore because they have some congenial native governments, and a national hope which the white man has not yet been strong enough to destroy with his false ethnological views and ill-adapted contrivances of governmental, and even of social order.

However, it is far from my object to prove that the Malaysians are so well and flourishing that they need not be bettered—on the contrary, they are a people eminently in a condition to be blessed by the white man—by the lettered, enlightened, a great man—by the man with the spirit of truth—with the spirit of Christ, who, taking no local standpoint of view—looking beyond his traditional associations of ecclesiastical and governmental order—not seeking to establish his mere educational associations, but contemplating the people before him with a spirit of love ... whose interlacing bonds, fastening heart to heart, are the sure foundations on which to rest the institutions of society and religion. It is impossible that a mission that seeks to plant a miniature European form of religion in Malaysia can succeed. Malaysia, i.e., all Asia, Polynesia, and all shades and qualities of races and nations, has within itself the elements from which must be built up the outward and visible form of its institutions.31

Gibson quickly got on good terms with Foreign Minister Wyllie, one of the persons who had urged him to give the lectures. Both men were well-read intellectuals; both were British expatriates but nevertheless sympathetic to English traditions and somewhat unsympathetic to those of the northern United States, especially those of the New England missionaries. Both were bachelors, though Gibson was accompanied by his handsome young daughter, whom Wyllie often referred to in their subsequent correspondence.

Gibson soon lent Wyllie a copy of his Prison of Weltevreden. In early July 1861 Wyllie wrote to him, asking to keep the volume a little longer. He had “Flirted” as far as Sumatra and he found the book more and more interesting.32 Later in the month, Wyllie sent Gibson an obituary of John Ricord (the first attorney
general of the kingdom), “a distinguished American, who like yourself, had strong sympathies in favor of the colored races of men—a readiness to espouse their cause, where just, against all opponents, a love of travel and excitement, coupled with great moral fortitude, disinterestedness and high honor.” Wyllie extravagantly praised a letter that Gibson had written in 1857 to the American Secretary of State Cass, proposing ways to open up the Malay archipelago to trade with the United States. “I do not see,” wrote Wyllie, “that either Sir Stamford Raffles, John Crawford, or the Earl of Elgin could have surpassed you in a State document devoted to such objects.” Wyllie added that Cass should have recommended that the president of the United States appoint Gibson as agent to the independent sultans of Malaya and that he himself had once conferred a similar general power on Charles St. Julian of Australia, who had visions of uniting all Polynesia under the leadership of Hawaii.  

Gibson thus came to know of St. Julian’s fantasy very soon after his arrival in Hawaii, found it most congenial to his lively ambition, and eventually made it his own. Even from tiny Hawaii, the Pacific empire Gibson had dreamed of could be projected, with lines of power extending across the Pacific, controlled by himself.  

Wyllie invited Gibson and his daughter to dine with him and meet a number of distinguished residents of Honolulu, among them the American, British, and French consuls. Distinguished company, indeed, but what of Gibson’s intended work among the Mormons of Hawaii and the broad Pacific Ocean? Following Brigham Young’s injunction to be discreet, in his lectures he had said nothing of his Mormon mission. However, later charges that he had deliberately tried to hide his mission were not entirely justified. Biographical sketches appearing in the Honolulu newspapers of the time mentioned his plan for resettling the Mormons on a South Pacific island and also told of his contacts with Brigham Young.  

Aboard the Yankee en route to Hawaii, Gibson had found two prospective converts to Mormonism, Haven B. Eddy, age fifteen, and Charles O. Cummings, age twenty-two, who he hoped would assist him in missionary work. (As it turned out, they were seeking adventure, more attracted by the prospect of finding riches in the South Seas than in saving souls.) Not long after his arrival in Honolulu, Gibson began to meet with the Mor-
mons of Hawaii, quietly at first. He told them he had come to take charge of the church in the islands and would do a great work for them, but for the time being they were to tell no one about this.35

Gibson found the Mormons in the islands to be sadly disorganized. Their first mission, ten men under the direction of Elder Hiram Clark, had arrived in Honolulu in 1850. Clark soon left to work in the South Pacific, and George Q. Cannon remained as leader of the mission. He helped organize the first branch of the church at Kealokou, Maui, learned Hawaiian, and with the aid of a native convert, translated the Book of Mormon. In 1855, when the church had about 4,000 baptized members in Hawaii, a gathering place, “The City of Joseph,” was established in the volcanic basin of Palawai on the island of Lanai.36 However, armed conflict between the Mormons and the federal troops sent to Utah in 1857 caused the recall to Salt Lake of missionaries overseas, so that by the time Gibson arrived in 1861, the Hawaii stake had fallen off in numbers and energy. Gibson wrote to Young that a tour of Oahu revealed there were only about 400 Mormons, most of them very poor. He estimated that throughout the islands there were about 1,400 faithful members of the church and about 3,000 more who had fallen into “bad habits.” Gibson had found only three nonnative brethren, Charles Wing and Brother Pool on Oahu, and Robert Brown on Kauai. He wrote that he had baptized Eddy and Cummings on July 13. Cummings would preach on Kauai, and Eddy on Maui.

Gibson also reported to Brigham Young on the land available for sustaining the Hawaii mission and its congregation. The Hawaii Mormons had the chance to buy an extensive tract on the island of Lanai, three thousand acres in Palawai Basin, their present gathering place, for only $500, but they had been able to raise less than half that amount. A great variety of crops and livestock might be raised there if an adequate water supply could be developed. He was short of funds for supporting himself, let alone for purchasing land, but accepted his responsibility for raising money as best he could. He and Talula—as Tallulah, adopting a Hawaiian style of orthography, now spelled her name—were in good health and spirits. He was learning the language and also how to eat poi, the Hawaiian staple.37

Competing with the other Christian missions in Hawaii, he told
President Young, was especially difficult because of their superior financial support. The Congregationalists had announced that their annual mission fund was $24,000, while the Catholics could depend not only on the De Fide Propaganda account in Rome but also the “liberal endowments of the French order active in the Islands.” As to their own church:

The Mormons are regarded as a despicable set of beggars by all outsiders; but the intelligent natives who have embraced the gospel, and it is manifest that it is the smartest of the islanders who are Mormons, they say: “We love the white brother who comes amongst us; who will eat poi with us; share our mats and the shelter of our straw cottages. The Mormons are our Saviors: they bring a hope of life; that we shall live and increase; and not die away.”

Gibson also noted that Hawaii was at least as divided over the Civil War in the United States as he had found California to be. The Hawaiian king, as well as Foreign Minister Wyllie, the French and English consuls, and many of the European foreign residents supported the South, and they might well aid any privateers of the Confederacy who might venture this far from the continent. Opposed were the more numerous residents of the kingdom who had come to Hawaii from the United States. Almost all of them supported the North. Some of them talked of inviting filibustering raids from California, or even of efforts to annex Hawaii to the United States. They were apprehensive about prospects for a long war, after reading of the initial failures of the Union Army to crush the rebellion.

Gibson did not go unnoticed by the partisans of the American Union. His conduct, as well as his Southern accent, helped mark him for suspicion. Samuel Long, the American consular representative at the port of Lahaina, Maui, thought Gibson might be covertly engaged in some kind of privateering venture directed against the United States. He reported to U.S. Commissioner Dryer in Honolulu that Gibson, seemingly in no hurry to proceed to his supposed destination in the East Indies, had rented a house at Lahaina, the chief port on the island of Maui. Gibson’s man Eddy had been observed reconnoitering the harbors of Maui and Lanai, and Long suggested that Gibson be watched closely. Indeed, considering the vulnerability of the American whaling
fleet that called at Lahaina, a warship should be dispatched, and at his first overt act against the United States, Gibson should be arrested and deported from the Hawaiian Islands.  

Before leaving Honolulu for Maui, the Gibsons had been invited to a social gathering at the home of Commissioner Dryer. Dryer told his guests that the United States could never be destroyed by the Southern rebels. “They are scoundrels…. There is Toombs of Georgia, and he is a villain and a thief.” Gibson jumped up, his fists clenched. He spoke deliberately, but in a ringing voice: “My daughter there was born in Toombs’ late Congressional district. I know him and he is a gentleman. And you are a liar, a mean blackguard liar.” Dryer ordered Gibson out of his house.

That same day, Gibson and Talula left for Lahaina, and several days later a Hawaiian named Kailihune took them from Maui by whaleboat across the channel to the small island of Lanai, where they were to join the Mormon community. They rode on horseback to a ridge overlooking Palawai Basin, where the lovely landscape moved Gibson to tears. He wrote in his diary: “The Hawaiian Islands take the place of the Malay Archipelago in my thoughts…. I will plant my stake here and make a home for the rest of my days.”

A strong resolve was needed to look with any confidence beyond the poverty of material resources at hand. Only some six hundred acres in the basin proved arable, and the severely limited water supply was a barrier to making Palawai habitable as a gathering place for the Saints of Hawaii. Gibson began his stewardship by prospecting for water and having tanks set out to collect the sparse rainfall. With $70 garnered from his lectures in Honolulu, he bought farm tools but reported to Salt Lake City that he hardly had money enough for seed or for the other supplies needed for the survival of the Hawaii mission.

Repeatedly he wrote to Utah of the poverty of the Hawaiian stake. In all the islands, he now estimated, the Mormons numbered no more than nine hundred. By his calculations, about three thousand had been baptized since the beginning of the Hawaii mission in 1850. On Maui, regarded as headquarters for the Mormons, there were fewer than five hundred.

For a time, Gibson was satisfied that at least he had the assistance of his two young shipboard converts, Eddy and Cummings.
To Young in Deseret he reported that they were “full of the spirit of Latter-day work,” building huts and mending boats by day and preaching by night. In one month they had baptized about fifteen persons. They were also busy trying to collect money for Gibson, not always gently, according to Brother Brown, the leading Mormon on Kauai.

American officials in the kingdom continued to be wary of Gibson, and the movements of Eddy and Cummings among the islands reinforced their suspicions. From Lahaina, Long informed Dryer that Gibson had bought a whaleboat and was trying to get a sloop, very likely for use in privateering or piracy. Foreign Minister Wyllie, keeping on good terms with Gibson, wrote to him about his conversations with Dryer. Wyllie concluded: “As for your being engaged in any desperate enterprise, the best proof you can adduce is Miss Lucy [Talula]. Would any man in his senses take his daughter with him when about to peril his neck?”

In a letter to King Kamehameha IV, however, Wyllie sounded quite a different note. He cited Dryer’s belief that one or more vessels were being fitted out at Lahaina for privateering. He reminded the king that Hawaii had proclaimed her neutrality in the American Civil War and suggested that the governor of Maui and the collector of customs at Lahaina be instructed to investigate and to take any action necessary in support of the proclamation. The king himself wrote Wyllie that he had heard bad reports of “your friend Gibson” from “authentic sources,” and asked Wyllie to keep an eye on him.

In early October 1861, under Gibson’s leadership, the Hawaii Mormons held their semiannual conference at Wailuku, Maui. About a thousand attended. Attracted by rumors of secret goings-on, including the reported raising of a secessionist flag, Henry M. Whitney, son of an early missionary and editor of the Pacific Commercial Advertiser, went to Maui to investigate. Disappointingly from the point of view of journalism, the flag turned out to be a church banner that Gibson had designed especially for the Mormon conference.

Editor Whitney wrote that on first arriving in the islands Gibson had represented himself as a traveler and lecturer, not as a Mormon. He thought that the government should investigate a stranger who conceals his motives and collects money from the
poor natives. He also reported that he saw a lot of silver coin at the Wailuku meeting from the sale of certificates of church office to native members.  

Gibson denied to Whitney any attempt at concealment, at secrecy about the Wailuku meeting, involvement in any secessionist scheme, or interest in surveying of harbors, except those that might serve the Mormon colony. But he evaded a direct question: Had he come as an agent of Brigham Young to reorganize the Hawaii mission? He answered that he came to Hawaii as a friend of the poor and despised native Hawaiians, praising the Mormon system of “social polity” as the best in the world, well adapted to the needs of Polynesians.

Continuing the interview, Gibson said the earlier selection of Lanai as a gathering place had been a mistake because the island was too dry, but the Mormons intended to develop it, then perhaps move to a larger island later. He denied any encouragement of polygamy among the Hawaiians, saying that that doctrine was taught nowhere outside Utah. He bore no enmity to the Protestant religion or to its missionaries, but he was against the spread of the Catholic faith, or rather of the French, who, he believed, would try to subjugate the Hawaiians. His mother was a Catholic, Gibson said, and he had early been taught to venerate that church, but he himself believed in no particular sect or creed.

To counter the rumors about the conference at Wailuku, Gibson wrote to Foreign Minister Wyllie, anxious to retain his support and reassure the government. He said the island Mormons were “unquestionably among the most intelligent and loyal of his Majesty’s subjects”; moreover, even though the Mormons of Lanai were very poor, they were among the healthiest and most fruitful in the Hawaiian Islands. He promised to submit a report on the Mormons and to propose to the Hawaiian government certain measures in their behalf.

Wyllie, in replying, recalled discussions with Gibson of his earlier proposal to transplant a Mormon population to New Guinea, and warned Gibson against encouraging Hawaiians to leave. The United States, with its 30 million people, might be glad to have them go, but emigration would be disastrous to a kingdom of 70,000. Whether they numbered 4,500 (Gibson’s latest figure) or 450, the government did not want the Mormons to leave.

Gibson then sent Wyllie a detailed account of the Wailuku con-
ference, of the history of the Mormons in the islands, and of his intentions with respect to them. Wyllie gave the letter to Editor Whitney of the Pacific Commercial Advertiser to publish, evidently as a means of offsetting the newspaper’s suspicious accounts of the meeting. In this long letter, Gibson stated that on arriving in the islands he had found the Mormons in almost complete disarray. They had solicited his help in reorganizing their religious community. He had no intention of encouraging native Mormons to emigrate. Just the reverse: he hoped to bring Polynesians and Malaysians to the Hawaiian Islands to regenerate the Hawaiian people and inspire them with new hope of a national life. In due course, he would submit a proposal to the Hawaiian government for settling all of Hawaii’s Mormons on Lanai, even though there was a problem of water supply, in the solution of which government help might be needed. Gibson ended his letter with a ringing pledge of loyalty to His Majesty the King.

Wyllie also enclosed a copy of the letter with a note to Kamehameha IV, saying he was convinced that Gibson was not hostile to the king or his people, that all evidence was against Gibson’s being a privateer, but if he should in any way violate Hawaii’s neutrality with regard to the American Civil War, prompt action would be taken. Wyllie added that Gibson admired the king’s speeches: “He caught at the idea of your recommendation from the throne of increasing the population by the immigration of other kindred Polynesian races, as one of great wisdom.” Indeed, Gibson was to adopt that idea as the centerpiece of government policy in Hawaii and make it his own.

Wyllie was Gibson’s only friend at court, and even he was kept on guard against possible misconduct by the newcomer. Among others in authority, and particularly among U.S. officials and Americans in the Hawaii government, suspicions of Gibson were almost paranoid. Finance Minister David L. Gregg—lowering himself, he conceded, to “what may be called gossip”—told the king that Gibson was an agent of Brigham Young and that his “pretended daughter is a whore and not a fit associate for your family.” Dryer wrote Wyllie that he believed Gibson was hostile to both the Hawaiian and American governments and that if this were proved, he would not hesitate to take steps against him.

Even without proof, Dryer revoked the visa of Gibson’s American passport on October 16, 1861, and announced the revocation
in the Pacific Commercial Advertiser. The reason given was that "sentiments repeatedly uttered, and the conduct of Walter M. Gibson and his associates, have been such as to induce me to believe he is not entitled to the protection of the U.S. government."\textsuperscript{59}

At a ministerial conference, where Prince Lot Kamehameha (heir-apparent to the throne) and Wyllie were also present, Gregg warned that Gibson was a desperate adventurer spying out the land to try to take possession on behalf of the Mormons.\textsuperscript{60} The cabinet council agreed that Walter Murray Gibson and his associates must be watched and authorized the governor of Maui to spend up to $50 for this purpose. The postmaster was to note all letters to and from Gibson, and if necessary his mail was to be intercepted and examined. After paying out $10 of this money, the governor wrote Prince Lot that he had not been able to learn much. "I am beginning to believe like you said, that this foreigner was going to be reviled because he was from the South."\textsuperscript{61}

William Webster, a member of the Privy Council, offering the opinion that Editor Whitney’s excitement about the Wailuku conference was a "silly business altogether," drew an image of the captain-turned-priest in the community. He noted that in Honolulu Gibson had been something of a lion among the Yankees until he used the words "late U.S." Then he was called "damned secessionist" and a lot of gossip had started about his daughter. "Yet," wrote Webster to the king, "Gibson is a singular adventurer, and although a talented and very pleasant man, I should doubt the propriety of ‘trusting him a calf in a market.’"\textsuperscript{62}

While Honolulu gossiped and speculated about him, Gibson was getting on with the work on Lanai: building, planting, preaching, baptizing, and, aided by Eddy and Cummings, shaking the collection boxes. Early in November 1861, he noted in his diary that he had built a grass house and was completing "various outworks and embellishments.” He was satisfied that he governed men and women who were ready to do any work or sail away (to Malaya?) if he gave the word. But “the people are poor; in pocket, in brain, in everything. They are material for a very little kingdom.... But they are thorough.... There is no cant among these kanakas. They bring a chicken or some yams to make up for their deficiencies in courtesy in approaching me. It is a little kingdom of love and worship.”\textsuperscript{63}

Again and again he rejoiced over the charms of Palawai, call-
ing it the best land in the Hawaiian Islands. Some ten thousand acres in Palawai that could be bought for only $10,000, with irrigation could be made worth $250,000 and could support ten thousand souls. The irrigation project would require “the resources of a corporation,” but with a few hundred dollars and the assistance of the government he might at least secure the land.

With no financial support coming from Salt Lake City, the contribution box remained his abiding concern. (Close readers of the Bible noted that Gibson, using his church association as a member of the Melchizedek priesthood, had taken to referring to himself as a High Priest of Melchizedek, after that mysterious Biblical figure who had collected tithes from Abraham himself.) His mission could not survive without more money. Not only land was needed, but seed, tools, plows and harrows, draft animals, money for books and medicines, and a boat to carry people and produce to Maui. He wrote to Charles Wing in Honolulu, asking him to buy a sloop for the church, but in his own name, because as a Hawaiian citizen he could fly the Hawaiian flag, a privilege that Gibson, now a man without a visa, did not enjoy. He urged Brother Wing to mortgage his property, or that of his sister-in-law, if necessary to complete the purchase.64

Brigham Young heard about Gibson’s wish to buy a boat and did not like it. Through Dwight Eveleth of San Francisco, he warned that Gibson should “not take too enthusiastic or strong a hold where pecuniary liabilities are concerned, lest he meet disappointment and loss. Time we all have; money we have not near to the amount we think we could use.” Young was under the impression that Gibson wanted a vessel in which to move on eventually across the Pacific and wrote that if the California Saints wanted to donate help for Gibson in the Sandwich Islands or to help him on his way to Malaysia, that would be all right.65

Gibson wrote to Eveleth toward the end of 1861, reinforcing the reports of accomplishment and of work in progress that he had been sending over the months to Brigham Young in Salt Lake City:

I continue to abide at the Hawaiian Zion on this island; chiefly employed in organizing the labour of the Hawaiian Saints. I have built a good meeting house here; a dwelling house; and am now engaged in a large school house, 50 by 20 feet. We have 82 children on Palawai;
and it is noted for being the healthiest and most prolific spot, this “Mormon den,” in all the Kingdom. I have sown 52 acres in wheat, planted 5 in sugar cane (on Maui), 5 in corn, and preparing to plant about 5 in rice. I have set out to raise the funds here, out of the soil, to advance me on my way to Malaysia. However, I am well content with what I have to do here; wherever I may get hereafter.66

He continued to be a controversial figure, an easy target for gossip. In March 1862, the Pacific Commercial Advertiser printed rumors of forced labor on Lanai, telling how a gang of ten Hawaiians had been harnessed to a plow and whipped like mules. Kahuhipahaahaa, a native of Palawai, denied the story. The fact was, he said, that as an experiment, some twenty Mormons, including Gibson himself, had pulled a plow before they had oxen or harness for their horses. “We all work.... We believe in working for our salvation, and not in praying for it alone.”67

Gibson’s own account of the incident, given some years later, was similar but more playful. As New Year’s Day of 1862 approached, he decided to break ground for large-scale planting. With only one old plow at hand and no horses broken to the task, Gibson fastened one end of a rope to the plow, took hold of the other end, and asked some colonists to join him. Talula then took hold of the plow handle “and away they went, the Shepherd [Gibson] in the lead amid the shouts and laughter and merriment of the crowd of natives looking on.”68 However, it was the Advertiser story that became a part of the political folklore of Hawaii.

As 1862 began, Gibson noted in his diary how he rejoiced in the beauties of Palawai, in his way of life, and in the devotion of his Saints. He saw himself as their father, perhaps even as their ruler. Again, he put aside thought of moving on from Lanai to other islands of the sea.69

For some months he had been preaching in Hawaiian and was now translating parts of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, as well as a short account of the life of Joseph Smith. The reclamation of fallen Saints and the gaining of converts was going well, he informed Brigham Young: from September 1861 to January 1862, some 650 Hawaiians had been baptized. There were now in the islands about 1,200 good, reliable Mormons and 2,000 or 3,000 who were of “an indifferent character:” The Hawaiian Saints were still too backward to gather in Utah, but he had set up an organi-
zation similar to the main body of the church, creating offices for the title-loving Hawaiians.

Nor, he continued, had he abandoned his dream of establishing the Mormon faith throughout the Pacific Ocean:

It is manifest that [the Hawaiian Mormons] must remain ... within the range of their own tropic and fruity latitudes. But it is the desire of my heart to establish a centre stake for all the Oceanicans. The Hawaiians rejoice in the idea.... I rejoice in the hope that the fruits of my labour here will enable me to push on next season to Japan, or Malaysia in company with a few intelligent Hawaiian Saints. They will be invaluable aids in advancing the gospel in Oceanica.70

Gibson’s young assistants Eddy and Cummings were especially eager to venture farther into the Pacific for the adventures he had promised them on their voyage out from San Francisco. By the end of January 1862 they had left their posts on the island of Hawaii, Gibson wrote, because there was “no gold nor silver nor pearls ... nor spices to be found there.” Gibson proposed to fit them out for Samoa, and then they would go to the Carolines and Sumatra, where they would pick up much valuable information for him. Yet, wrote Gibson:

I must not desert the seed I have planted here on the Hawaiian Islands. The seed of Oceanican organization is in Lanai.... This is the nucleus of development. Lines of power, of influence, shall radiate from this shining crater. I set up my standard here and it goes hence to the islands of the sea. Lanai shall be famous in Malaysia, in Oceanica. It shall give birth to a better hope for humanity in Polynesia.71

Gibson was increasingly in conflict with Eddy and Cummings and toward the end of March 1862 cut them off from the church. His two shipboard converts, he now discovered, were so racially prejudiced—regarding the kanaka as “a nigger, a darkey”—as to unfit them to work with Hawaiians.72 The last straw, he reported, was that Eddy had been jailed in Honolulu for drunkenness.

The two young men brought their complaints to U.S. Commissioner Dryer. In a lengthy statement they called Gibson “a black-hearted secessionist and schemer” who had used them as political spies and informers. They swore that he planned to take natives into the farther Pacific (despite his denials to Wyllie), and that with the help of the Mormons Gibson planned to take over many
Pacific islands and found an Oceanican empire, where Hawaiians and other islanders would be used for drudgery to which Anglo-Saxons were not suited. They said that Gibson had taken possession of much land he was cultivating but that his real object was to recruit Hawaiians for his Pacific empire. As to his power over the Hawaiians, Eddy and Cummings claimed they had heard Gibson say, “I am King and God; and whatever I say—that will they do or swear to. I tell them to keep silent and they obey me.”

Dryer passed on the accusations to Wyllie, and he in turn gave them to Prince Lot Kamehameha, at that time minister of the interior. The denunciations were put before the king and cabinet council on April 24. Wyllie also included with the agenda two letters from Gibson to him, so that Prince Lot might know more about this controversial man.

Gibson’s first letter, dated December 10, 1861, claimed that he controlled 1,500 votes among the Hawaiian Mormons. He “should be happy to be a means, however slightly, in aiding [His Majesty] to develop measures for the welfare of his people.” The second letter (undated, probably written in March 1862) gave an account of what he had accomplished on Lanai and why he had cut Eddy and Cummings off from the Mormon community. He acknowledged that he had received contributions of $353 from Hawaiians on Lanai as well as $65.50 in payment for certificates from petty officeholders in the church but claimed that the money had been used on behalf of the Hawaiians.

Gibson confirmed that his contemplated field of action was Malaysia, where he had some influence. Far from intending to lead an exodus from Hawaii, however, he wanted to bring in more islanders. If it were desired by the government, within a year he could introduce a thousand Polynesian laborers from other island groups. But “I shall take no steps, nor make any movements towards taking any of a public character, without fully and frankly acquainting His Majesty’s Government in relation to them.”

I repeat that I have no other object in view than to give practical exercise to my strong sympathies, so long entertained, for the island races of the Pacific and Indian Oceans. I am well content whether I am exercising these sympathies on Lanai, or Tahiti, or Papua, or Sumatra. So
far I am happy among the docile, faithful, and laborious natives of this poor, and hitherto almost deserted island.\textsuperscript{75}

Considering the paucity of facts presented in the complaint of Eddy and Cummings, and that undoubtedly the Hawaiian government knew what was going on at Palawai, it is not surprising that no action was taken against Gibson. And yet, even Wyllie, who was friendly to Gibson, did not quite know what to make of him. He inquired of Dr. John Rae, a prominent citizen of Hana, Maui: “What do you hear of Captain W. M. Gibson and the Mormons? I have so many contradictory reports that I know not what to believe. Is it true that they are becoming more industrious and rearing more children than other Hawaiians in proportion to their numbers?”\textsuperscript{76}

Although the government made no move against him, Gibson well understood that it was by no means friendly toward him. “The Hawaiian government wants me to go away,” he wrote in his diary. Of even more pressing concern was the trouble he had in securing legal title to the land his “children” were cultivating on Lanai. He complained that “the landlord of Palawai, Haalelea, wants to back out of his bargain, and not let us have the land on the terms proposed or any terms.” He tried to buy contiguous plots of land from the government, but they were instead leased to others who, he claimed, were herding goats and making charcoal, which destroyed the vegetation. Still, according to the same diary entry, he was happy on Lanai: “Lanai is my calmest and healthfulest home thus far. I have been alternating for many days between plans of labor here for years and a purpose of speedy departure... And yet I am peaceful. I am hated and thwarted and yet I am cheerful and loving.”\textsuperscript{77}
In 1864 Walter Murray Gibson was excommunicated by the Mormon church. This, his second rejection by authority, turned him toward a political career in Hawaii and turned the Mormons out of Lanai. They were to transfer their stake to Laie on Oahu and make it the Pacific center for church operations, as Gibson had proposed might be done on Lanai.

Common opinion in Hawaii holds that the Mormon leaders thrust Gibson from the church because he had unlawfully or unethically taken its land. Land was indeed involved in his excommunication, but it was not the root of the matter.

Obtaining some legal right to occupy the lands of Palawai was a frustrating problem that plagued the “high priest” from the time he settled on Lanai. Haalelea, owner of Palawai, at first promised that he would sell the basin to Gibson, but then thought better of it. In August 1862 Gibson complained to Brigham Young that the Hawaii government would do nothing to help him. “By an act of gross fraud, connived at by the Government, the Church is forced to leave the land, that had been fairly purchased as a Stake on Lanai.”¹ Later that month he was in Honolulu looking for a new gathering place, but if the Saints could not get land in Hawaii, he was prepared to go elsewhere. “The island of Lanai is very desirable, if we can get it,” he wrote to Young. “If not—Westward ho.”²

Gibson then turned to seeking a grant of land on Lanai from the government, despite his feeling that everyone in it, except Wyllie and perhaps Prince Lot, was against him. Wyllie took up his cause and very likely helped place a feature story favorable to Gibson in the Polynesian, the Honolulu newspaper that was then used by the government as an official gazetteer and in which Wyllie fre-
quently placed, or planted, articles. The article called the public’s attention to what had been accomplished on Lanai as an example of what one man could do by way of “philanthropy and social reform” and went on to praise the many improvements Gibson had brought in agriculture, housing, water supply, sanitation, industry, education, morals, and the health of the people.\(^3\)

The Pacific Commercial Advertiser scoffed at this praise and doubted the reported improvements and statistics on production. “So long as Elder Gibson is content to quietly raise corn, or any other legitimate Mormon products on Lanai, we say nothing and care less. But when an effort is made through the court journal to foist him upon the world as preeminently a philanthropist, a model citizen, a saint, and the first practical exponent of the editor’s favorite theory of Roman ‘communes’ we think it due the public that the sham should be unmasked.”\(^4\) The editor reprinted the dubious statements of Eddy and Cummings that U.S. Commissioner Dryer had relied on as cause for withdrawing Gibson’s visa.

Gibson continued to press Wyllie for help in getting Lanai lands, and on October 9, 1862, he formally petitioned the Hawaii government for a charter of incorporation for the settlement. In the petition Gibson for the first time publicly identified himself as the director of the Mormon church in Hawaii, claiming for it a membership of five thousand. Wyllie assured him that he personally approved of his plans for improving the health and industry of the native Hawaiians and of encouraging the immigration of kindred races. “But,” he added, “what is wanted is to convince them [the king and council] of your sincerity—that the Hawaiian Mormons have no ulterior views—and that the improvements in their industrial, domestic, sanitary, and other habits are not exaggerated.”\(^5\) The government took no action on the petition. King Kamehameha IV himself rejected it at a meeting of the Privy Council.\(^6\)

Stubborn persistence, previously unavailing in Sumatra and in Washington, was at length successful in dealing with the people in Hawaii. By the close of 1863, Gibson had persuaded Haalelea to sell the Palawai lands and had obtained from the government the promise of a grant of additional acreage, giving him control—for the conveyancing was to be in his name—of some thirty thousand acres, most of it arable when the rains were right. That the persuasion, against all odds, must have been done by “some
species of legerdemain” was the conclusion of his new friend in Honolulu, the Reverend Samuel C. Damon. 

The Mormon church hierarchy in Salt Lake City never pressed a claim to the Lanai lands. It was then common practice, encouraged by the leadership, for elders to hold title to church property in their own names, so to circumvent laws or hostility against extensive holdings by the church itself. And Palawai Basin, after all, had been acquired by the sole efforts of Gibson and with the expenditure of some of his own money. By the time the deeds were filed, his funds and those of the church had been so thoroughly commingled that it would have required skills in accountancy beyond those available even in Salt Lake City to disentangle them.

Nevertheless, the appropriation to himself of church lands on Lanai was among the complaints lodged against Gibson. Late in 1863, several Hawaiian elders charged him with the following offenses: claiming to possess all church authority in Hawaii, allowing none for Brigham Young himself; selling church offices (and to women as well as men!) for $25 to $100 each, then applying those proceeds to acquiring the Lanai lands as his own possession; appropriating the crops grown on the settlement; and generally playing the tyrant over the Hawaiian Saints.

When Brigham Young read these accusations, he appointed two of the governing Council of Twelve, Apostles Ezra T. Benson and Lorenzo Snow, as a board of investigation. Elders Joseph F. Smith, Alma L. Smith, and William W. Cluff, who had earlier served on missions to the Hawaiian Islands, accompanied them as interpreters. The party left Salt Lake City on March 2, 1864, and arrived on Lanai on April 1.

Gibson may well have known that an investigation had been ordered. On March 13, 1864, he wrote a long letter to George A. Smith in Salt Lake City, making no reference to any charges against him but obviously trying to justify his actions. He noted that he had not heard from President Young directly since September 1862.

I have now spent two and a half years on these lands, doing the best I could, according to my light. I found on arrival religious profession everywhere among these islanders, and all more or less glib with Scriptures ... but at the same time lazy and filthy.... I leased and
bought land—cultivated and built, and carried on various works,— and now I have a little flock of brown skins that will stand to their guns, live their religion like first class white men....

I have drawn a line and created two parties in this poor Hawaiian Church:—workers and idlers. The workers are with me, and have helped me to make some civilized tracks on this desert island. There was not a habitation in this Valley of Lanai, when I came. What little had been done before had perished. We have now a flourishing village with meeting houses, school houses, male and female, and even a hospital. Broad fields of cane and corn occupy the land, and several thousand head of sheep and goats scamper in our hills.

Gibson went on to say that all would be well on Lanai except for some “pestersome old soreheads” who, though they had been properly baptized, contributed no work of value to the community. He continued:

We have built up a permanent stake and home for the Saints on this island. I have bought six thousand acres of land, and leased about twenty thousand. Some brethren, who were sent out to the Navigation Islands [Samoa], and to Central Polynesia, have sent me very interesting accounts of their mission. They have been well received by independent native chiefs.... I have felt that this poor little Island [Lanai] was the doorway to the rest of Polynesia.8

When the investigating party from Salt Lake City landed on Maui, Gibson received them formally, coolly, and with evident distrust, an attitude he evidently communicated to the Hawaiian Mormons around him.9 During the next few days the visitors from Utah talked with many of the Hawaiian Mormons and also with Gibson, who was busy preparing for the semiannual church conference to be held beginning April 6, five days thence. The investigators traced down the complaints and scandalous stories about the conduct in office of the leader of the Hawaii group.

Accounts of his own additions to Mormon doctrine were especially shocking to the men from Salt Lake City. Near Gibson’s house was a large hollowed-out rock where—the investigators were informed—he had some time earlier deposited the Book of Mormon and other writings. Wearing temple robes as the High Priest of Melchizedek, he had consecrated the rock as the cornerstone of a future temple. He then covered the rock with brush and
tabooed it, declaring that anyone who dared uncover it would be struck dead. Elders J. F. Smith, A. L. Smith, and W. W. Cluff grimly descended on the abomination. Cluff pulled the brush away, exposing the rock to wind and sun. Witnessing this violation of the taboo, the native Saints waited for the force of divine wrath to strike. Nothing happened. The investigation proceeded.

The visiting prophets recorded accusations against Gibson the High Priest that, if true, were yet more shocking, perhaps sacrilegious, and certainly subversive of the Mormon order. It was said that he had taught the Hawaiians to look upon him as an exalted person, even as a god. To approach him, some said, they had to crawl on hands and knees, the old way of entering into the presence of Hawaiian kings or high chiefs, and await his bidding to arise.

The investigators found that Gibson had organized the males on Lanai, young and old, in military companies and was drilling them in the arts of war. He had promised, according to some of the Hawaiians, that when they were well enough trained, a ship would come for them. They would sail off to the South Seas, take control of island after island, and organize a Mormon empire of the Pacific.10

When the conference was convened on April 6 in the meeting-house recently completed in Palawai Basin, Gibson arrived in company with the investigators, Apostles Benson and Snow. At the door to the meetinghouse, however, he left them to enter by themselves, saying that he had to return to his room. A few minutes later he made a solitary and theatrical entrance in his priestly robes. Ignoring the apostles, he announced the first hymn. Then he called on Elder Cluff to offer a prayer. After a second hymn, and no further acknowledgment of the five illustrious visitors from Salt Lake City or of the reason for their presence, Gibson began to speak in his fluent Hawaiian:

My dear red-skinned children: you are my children and I am your father; am I not? [Many answered, ‘ae, yes.] I presume you are all anxious to know why these strangers have come among us? ... I am as much at a loss to know what they have come for as you are.... Did I not come here and find you like a flock of sheep, scattered and without a shepherd? Did I not gather you into this fold and have I not fed you? When these strangers were here before your true shepherd
and father came, did you not have to feed and clothe them, instead of their feeding and clothing you, as your rather is doing?¹¹

He went on like this for about half an hour. Then Apostle Ezra T. Benson broke in to call on Joseph F. Smith to speak. Smith (in English) said:

I am pleased after an absence of over seven years, to return and meet with you again.... We have been referred to here as strangers.... Did we not travel on foot, and preach the Gospel to this people for eight years? Visiting you in your homes, administering to the sick, eating such food as you eat, depriving ourselves of the comforts and blessings of home and friends for the Gospel and your sakes.... Did we set a price on the offices of the Priesthood we conferred on you? Did we exact tribute from you to purchase lands for us and our heirs? Now, when you contrast the labors of Pukuniahi [George Q. Cannon] and his associates and us who came after them, with our friend here who assumed to be your leader and boasts of what he has done, you may say whether we are strangers among the Hawaiian people.¹²

In the afternoon Benson and Snow briefly addressed the congregation, explaining the purpose of their investigation. On the evening of April 7 there was a meeting of the entire priesthood—all male communicants above the age of twelve—again with a large attendance. Snow rhetorically asked Gibson what was the basis of his claim to preside over the Hawaiian mission and denounced him for exceeding the authority granted to him by President Brigham Young. Benson then summed up the charges against Elder Gibson:

In ordaining apostles, high priests, seventies, and bishops, he assumed an authority that belongs exclusively to the First Presidency of the Church.... His claiming that he had equal authority with President Brigham Young was most absurd. His purchasing this land of Palawai and having the deeds made to him and his heirs was a fraud and a robbery. For all these unlawful acts we disapprove of his course and say he is not the president of this mission. And we ask you Saints to sustain us in this decision.¹³

Benson and Snow demanded that Gibson sign over to the church all lands in Hawaii to which he had legal title. He refused, saying that he had received no counsel from President Young and owed nothing to the church. He would try to maintain his influ-
ence over the Hawaiians, and those who left him would receive no
benefit from the land, which he had developed and would keep.¹⁴

The issue was then put to the assembled Saints. Despite the
denunciation by the two apostles, all but one of the native Mor-
mons voted against Benson’s motion to condemn Gibson’s actions.
Nevertheless, the investigators advised the Hawaiians to leave
Lanai and return to their homes. Otherwise they would be “disfel-
lowshipped.”

The apostles and their party sailed back to Lahaina on April
8 and there held a council meeting at which they voted to cut
Gibson off from the church for the following reasons: he had or-
dained officers of the church without authority, and for a price;
he had bought land “for the Church” in his own name; he had
sought contributions under threat of disfellowship; he had refused
to acknowledge the authority of President Brigham Young; he was
trying to use the church to build a temporal Pacific empire; and
he had departed from the Gospel, introduced pagan superstitions,
and encouraged such vicious practices as hula dancing.¹⁵

Anticipating the action the investigators would take, on the
previous day Gibson had written a letter of farewell, reproach, and
assurance to Brigham Young, man-to-man:

I cannot forget my love and regard for your person, although you
have dealt precipitately and harshly with me.—My daughter remem-
bers tenderly your interesting family.—I think and feel that though my
spirit has not responded to your call, and we are now in different chan-
nels, that yet my course will never lead me into an attitude that will be
hostile to you, or the work you direct.¹⁶

That same day Gibson also wrote to Wyllie, hastily laying the
groundwork for a renunciation of Mormonism before he could be
expelled. Gibson’s letter has not survived, but Wyllie’s response
indicates its tenor: The prime minister called Mormonism “a delu-
sion disgraceful to the civilization of the present age.” He said
he was pleased to see Gibson “take a stand in regard to [the
Mormons] worthy of your education and antecedents.”¹⁷ It seems
reasonable to conclude that Gibson’s letter had said something to
this effect: “I was not ejected. I quit!”

Benson and Snow returned to Salt Lake City on May 29, 1864.
After receiving their report, “President Young stated briefly, at a
meeting in the Tabernacle, that the charge against Walter M. Gibson was not for owning property, or for claiming it, for no one cared how much he had, if he only did good with it to the poor who had given it, but the charge was his persistent refusal to be dictated to by the Priesthood.”18 Young then moved that Gibson’s excommunication be ratified, which the congregation voted unanimously.

By the end of July 1864 most of the Hawaiian Mormons on Lanai had gone back to their former homes on the other islands. Only some seven or eight families remained with Gibson,19 and for a time he continued to hold church meetings on Lanai with them. He looked forward to the arrival from Utah of his sons, John and Henry, then in their early twenties, dispatched from Salt Lake City after the excommunication of their father. Joseph F. Smith had earlier reported that Gibson was thinking of sending them as missionaries to Samoa or Tahiti, or both,20 but after their arrival in Honolulu they went to Lanai, where they remained.

Apart from his satisfaction in reuniting his family after the long separation, Gibson doubtless welcomed his sons as trusted overseers of the farm and ranch work on Lanai. For the first time in three years, and for only the second time since he had left them as infants in South Carolina to follow the gleam of the rising sun, Walter Murray Gibson, at age forty-four, had all of his children under his own roof. The defrocked Shepherd Priest of Lanai, dreamer of Pacific empire, was for the moment merely a patriarch, again earthbound and powerless.
EXCOMMUNICATION from the Mormon Church in 1864 stripped Gibson of his ecclesiastic titles and removed many of his parishioner-workers, but he still held the Lanai lands as registered owner and legal occupant. For a time he put aside all plans for a return to the East Indies or other transoceanic adventure. The dreams of his fantasied uncle were of no use to him now. It was to the remembered experience of his father in extracting a living from the stingy Northumberland moor that he had to turn for understanding of how his flocks could be made to multiply and yield marketable wool and mutton. Ironic that the Gibson family, far as they had traveled to escape, were again on the soil, once more raising sheep.

The perennial shortage of water and manpower on Lanai led him to concentrate his resources on ranching, raising goats, cattle, and horses, as well as sheep. Profitable ranching required more land than the 26,000 dry acres then at Gibson’s disposal, and the effort to acquire additional grazing areas was to provide him with a long and educational struggle.

In the 1860s a Western system of land law, which granted to individuals and their heirs absolute title to the land, was still new in Hawaii. The Polynesians were just discovering, frequently too late for their self-protection, that the traditional land usages, whereby commoners living in a designated area could take from that land what they needed for their livelihood and the support of their chiefs, had been replaced by Anglo-American laws that set boundaries around each parcel and imposed penalties for trespass. Officers of the kingdom were still overwhelmed by the task of
surveying and recording the thousands of land grants recognized following the Great Mahele, or division, which had begun in 1848.

Now came this aggressive interloper, seeking exclusive use of most of the small island of Lanai for raising his flocks and herds. Gibson repeatedly tried to extend his domain, by purchase from a resident Chinese and from Hawaiian landholders, and by purchase or lease of government lands. The minister of the interior, F. W. Hutchinson, had written to Gibson a year before his excommunication, saying that he could take possession of a 23,000-acre tract pending its survey, but in March 1866 Gibson was still asking for a written lease. The minister replied that Kamehameha V himself had pointed out that the offer of a lease had been made when Gibson was acting as the agent of a company of native Hawaiians. Since he no longer represented Hawaiians, who were to be given preference among applicants for land, the government was no longer bound by its promise.1

For the first and last time in his long adventure in Hawaii, Gibson placed himself in open conflict with native Hawaiians. Not only did some of the commoners on Lanai want the very land he was seeking, they also complained that their goats and sheep were being recruited into Gibson’s growing flocks. Spokesman for the Hawaiians competing with Gibson was Nahaolelua, governor of Maui and Lanai. He wrote to Kamehameha V about Kipikona (Gibson):

The natives are all fearful of Kipikona because of their animals being taken away by Kipikona. This is the way that Kipikona does, he drives his animals here and there on Lanai, and when the animals of others join in, then turns them on to his own premises, and when the owners ... see this and come after them, they are not returned, well knowing that the marks belong to others. Kipikona would say that you wait, I am busy, I go to Kaonai and on returning they would go after their animals, and he would say, I am not quite sure, maybe my son knows but he is now gone way down.2

A wearisome pursuit of land grants and leases had shown Gibson how frustrating the ways of government could be, even in a small kingdom, and especially to one not accepted into the political community. He asked Foreign Minister Wyllie how to go about getting approval of his request for government lands and was
advised to petition the legislature. Gibson drafted an elegantly worded appeal to that body and sent it off to the clerk of the Legislative Assembly in Honolulu. The document came back with a note from the clerk saying that it was outside his prerogatives to introduce petitions before the House; that must be done by a member. When Gibson readdressed his request to the Legislative Assembly proper, he was informed that the administration of public lands was in the hands of the minister of the interior, the very authority who had refused to grant the wanted lease.  

Robert Wyllie was the only one in high office whom Gibson could yet claim as a friend. Wyllie’s liking for this lively and perceptive man had continued through Gibson’s time of troubles with the Mormons. Now, as Wyllie was nearing the end of his long service as political officer of the Kamehamehas, he was impressed by Gibson’s dream of rehabilitating the Hawaiian race through a renewed life of agriculture and fishing. The man’s rhetoric was sometimes embarrassingly florid, but his central preachment, that it was the moral duty of whites in power to lead the natives back to communal health by education and inculcating habits of hard work, was only what Wyllie himself had professed two decades earlier to Kamehameha III. So the minister, universally respected and still influential both in the government and in the haole (Caucasian) community, helped bring Gibson and his ideas to the attention of those who formed opinion in the capital.

One such person was the Reverend Samuel Chenery Damon, seamen’s chaplain in Honolulu and editor of a widely read monthly church newspaper, *The Friend*. Damon wrote a feature story on “W. M. Gibson, Esq.” that included a brief review of *The Prison of Weltevreden* and a long account by Gibson of his “experiments in civilization with a lot of breechless subjects” on Lanai. Gibson described the regimen of the children who then formed the bulk of his work force: plowing and goatherding for the boys, housework and gardening for the girls, schooling for all (less when work was “pushing”).

Organization is my aim, and not preaching. I tell people under my direction,—they have had too much preaching ... and not enough of training in Hawaii nei. I have had with me breechless kanakas who can expound Bible all day, and pray by the hour, who made a living by picking up a few fish, a little seaweed, and stealing potatoes. I say to
 them, “you are called an enlightened, or at least a civilized people, but it is not true. You are a poor, miserable, scabby race.” ... And so I lash every spark of vanity out of them. But I also say to them—I like to work with you and for you. Your race of men is capable of good and great things. If I can make one of you a good man, a true man, a generous, independent, intelligent man, one that can hold his own with any race, that shall care for the fame of his family and country, then I shall re-

joyce and feel content with my work.⁵

The Friend carried Gibson’s denial that he had used any of the money donated by Hawaiian Mormons for the purchase of Lanai lands now held by him. “The ‘legerdemain’ by which I have acquired a moderate-sized tract of kula [open] land on this dry island, is hard work and good management”.⁶ The chief problem of management continued to be the water supply. On first visiting Lanai, Gibson had estimated that a two-inch pipeline, penetrating the central highlands, would bring in enough ground water to sup-
port a population of rejoicing thousands but that the outlay would require the finances “of a corporation.”⁷ Lacking such means, Gib-
son set out catch-basins to hold rain water and planted stands of trees on the higher slopes, on the theory that a forest attracts pre-
cipitation from moisture-laden passing clouds.

Wyllie also helped call to the attention of Honolulu’s general circulation newspapers what Gibson was attempting on Lanai. The pro-administration Polynesian, and later the Hawaiian Gazette, which editorially was in opposition, both found good copy in the development of the island under Gibson’s enterprise. “It is proved that the hand of intelligent industry can bring wealth from its dry and unwatered soil.”⁸ The 1867 census for Lanai (conducted by Captain Gibson) provided evidence of accomplishment, showing a human population of 394 and an animal count of 18,000 goats and 10,000 sheep. The Polynesian contrasted these numbers with the population of about forty families that Gibson had found when he went to Lanai five years earlier, a population that subsisted largely on fishing and hunting wild goats.

The Pacific Commercial Advertiser, however, remained skepti-
cal about the interloper, “that quondam secessionist” turned saint. It was quick to print a “strange story” alleging that Gibson had conspired with ex-judge A. J. Lawrence, then charged in the Hawaii courts with gross cheat, to seize the steamer Nettie Mer-
rill when it arrived at Lanai. Only two weeks later did the paper retract the story as having no foundation in fact. (The Advertiser, under the editorship of Henry M. Whitney, was to continue to be highly critical of Gibson until 1870, when Whitney sold the paper.)

Agricultural triumphs were not enough for a dreamer of Gibson’s scope. He offered to sell the Lanai lands to the Mormon Church in Hawaii—evidence that he had left with some good feelings, that he was not lacking in unmitigated effrontery, or both. Deprived of his role of leadership in the church, he soon began to find his island plantation—“my calmest and healthfullest home”—narrow and confining, as shut off from the great world as Pendleton, South Carolina, had been thirty years before. The lines of power he had felt vibrant on Lanai led only to its shores. Unless he was to abandon his messianic dreams of guiding the island people out of their degradation to a higher destiny, he had to enter the political mainstream, centered in Honolulu. He prepared himself for entry in the capital by becoming a citizen of the kingdom, by that declaration of allegiance separating himself from most other Americans then living in Hawaii, who retained their U.S. citizenship.

An important political issue, dear to his heart, was at hand, demanding public debate—the immigration policy of the kingdom. During the reigns of the last two Kamehamehas (Alexander Liholiho and Lot), the population had continued its steep decline. Whereas at least two hundred thousand people, virtually all natives, had lived in the islands in the time of Kamehameha the Great at the beginning of the century, fewer than sixty thousand of all races were recorded in the census of 1866. Both the government and the burgeoning sugar industry were anxious to obtain the manpower necessary to secure their future. Minister Wyllie, no alarmist, stated the problem succinctly: “Unless we get more population, we are a doomed nation.”

Wyllie sought to apply the ideas on immigration formulated by the Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society during the preceding decade. In April 1864, the month in which his correspondent Gibson was excommunicated, Wyllie took the lead in forming a Planters’ Society. High among its objectives was to find agreement between planters and government on an immigration policy that would bring in the field hands needed to grow sugarcane.
Ministers of Kamehameha V met with the planters and together they considered possible recruiting areas around the world. Should it be China, source of a limited immigration since 1852? Japan? The islands of Portugal? India? Malaya? Wyllie remembered the fascinating lectures on Sumatra and Java that Captain Gibson had given in Honolulu when fresh off the boat from San Francisco. At Wyllie’s invitation, Gibson enthusiastically renewed his proposal that the kingdom seek as immigrants islanders who were racially related to the Hawaiians—“cognate people” as he called them. In language as well as appearance, he saw a close relationship between the Hawaiian and Malay peoples.

A government Bureau of Immigration was established; initially it served to bring in more Chinese, mostly single men. When it decided to ascertain if Holland or Great Britain would permit a more balanced emigration from their Asian colonies to Hawaii, Gibson saw an opportunity to get into the thick of things. He offered his services in arranging for recruitment from the Indonesian archipelago, his old prison home, El Dorado lost. In early October 1868 he received the king’s commission to serve as commercial agent in Singapore, from which post he was to investigate “the probability of obtaining immigrants, both male and female,” from Malaysia and Southeast Asia. He was authorized, if opportunity came, to negotiate with the respective governments and enter into emigration contracts on behalf of the Hawaiian Kingdom.

On October 23, Gibson sailed for California in company with Dr. John Mott Smith, former finance minister of the kingdom who had been appointed chargé d’affaires in Washington. Smith’s immediate mission was to lobby for ratification of a long-sought reciprocity treaty, eagerly desired by Hawaii’s sugar planters to penetrate the high tariff walls enclosing the great American market. The strategy was that Gibson, who in any case had to reach an East Coast port for passage to Singapore, would stop in Washington and talk in his soft Carolinian accent to Southern senators while Dr. Smith was being persuasive among Northern members with his New Yorker’s speech.

From New York City, Gibson wrote to the Hawaiian Gazette about his month of adventures in crossing the continent by railroad and stagecoach. His route took him through Salt Lake City, where, he jocularly reported, a sudden toothache compelled him...
to muffle his face against the wind, and the glare of the alkaline plain made him don green spectacles. He passed through the Mormon community without recognition, he said, even though he shared a night stagecoach ride out of the city with a son of Brigham Young. Other divertissements along his route included a rescue (at Bear River City, western terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad) of a newspaper editor from a lynch mob; tenting out for two nights in bitter cold following a derailment; and a view of Niagara Falls, resplendent in a sheath of ice.13

In New York City there were newspaper offices to visit but only a few surviving members of his family. His mother had died in 1856, when Walter was on his previous lobbying and lecture circuit, and his father in 1860, at the time Walter was joining the Mormons. Brothers William and Richard, however, were still carrying on the family confectionary business on Broadway.

Gibson vigorously reentered the lists as lobbyist in Washington, this time not as a mere supplicant for personal indemnities but as a representative, however informally designated, of a sovereign nation, however small and weak. He enjoyed the Washington scene during the winter holiday season, reporting appreciatively how lovely the women looked after his long absence, “most tasteful and artistic” in their Grecian styled gowns.14 He and Dr. Smith called on Secretary of State William Seward, then rounding out his long political career in the beleaguered presidency of Andrew Johnson. Seward was not helpful in gathering support for the reciprocity treaty. Nor, indeed, were enough of the senators to whom the Hawaii delegation paid court, preoccupied as they were with the continuing struggle with the White House that had followed the impeachment trial of Johnson earlier in 1868. Despite all attempts at persuasion, the Senate adjourned its special session in April 1869 after voting down a motion to take up the reciprocity treaty with Hawaii.

Gibson’s primary mission, to secure a supply of plantation workers from Southeast Asia and Indonesia, fared no better. It was frustrated by Charles de Varigny, who had succeeded Gibson’s friend Wyllie as minister of foreign affairs after Wyllie’s death in 1865. When Gibson reached Washington, he found that Varigny (then in Europe as envoy extraordinary in a fruitless attempt to gain diplomatic concessions for Hawaii) had scotched
Gibson’s plans by approaching the British and Dutch governments on the idea of emigration from their colonies and getting flatly negative replies. Gibson protested that his plan, accepted by the Hawaii Board of Immigration, had been to seek recruitment agreements with the independent states of Malaysia, such as Jambi and Brunei. However, Honolulu sent neither permission for him to proceed to Singapore nor funds to continue his mission in any manner.\(^\text{15}\) Again, the way to the East was barred; he was to seek it no more.

To meet his expenses, which for his taste required traveling first class, Gibson returned to the lecture platform in the eastern seaboard cities he visited. The spellbinder had not lost his touch, as a sophisticated auditor reported:

> With bated breath we sat, while the veritable wizard of romance took us with him through the Indian seas, into strange lands and among strange people, upon wonderful adventure, all so vivid and so natural that you saw it all before you, and there was no thought of questioning or discrediting a word of it.\(^\text{16}\)

Relieved of his government assignments, Gibson resumed his reconnaissance of postwar America. He went South, to follow the route of Sherman to Atlanta, and then to visit his in-laws at Sandy Springs and Pendleton, South Carolina, where Rachel had lain buried for a quarter of a century. Her parents were also dead, but her brother, Captain Aaron Lewis, a survivor of Gettysburg from the Army of Northern Virginia, was still living at the old homestead.

Gibson reported to Honolulu on the reconstruction of the South; how liberated slaves lived near their former masters and sometimes worked with them; how the prostrate Confederate states were rising to their feet.

> The condition of the South ... is steadily improving. The land owners, no longer having such a supply of labor under absolute control as in former days, do not lay waste timber to open up fresh land, but strive to fertilize their old fields; hence they work with more skill and save their forests.... They have learned to economize labor, and make it more available, and are making as large crops as in the old days of slavery.... They are hopeful of a bright future. They doubt not that the lines of power will again be restored to their hands.... The freed men are quiet and harmless and perhaps too content with
a small subsistence. The condition they like is a hut and a patch, and no regular duty. To have a few chickens to sell, and to catch a few oppossum, is sufficient good fortune for a genuine child of Africa. Of course, education can work wonders with them. Education, discipline, and some subordination will be needed to save the race from extinction. The whites and the blacks want to work together harmoniously. Of course, the whites are more willing than the blacks. Both races are beginning to understand their mutual interests, and mutual dependence, and are less and less affected by outside influences. The freed men, when hired in gangs, and well directed, do good work; but, like our Hawaiians, do not like to work alone, and seem incapable of organizing a well appointed farm.  

He saw in the flight of disaffected white planters from the Cotton Belt to South America a potential new basis of agricultural diversification in the Hawaiian Kingdom.

Many Southerners want to try cotton-planting at the Islands. It would be very easy to turn the current of emigration from Brazil to Hawaii. An immense colony of ruined yet energetic planters, and of laborious freed men, would start for the Pacific with very slight encouragement. Many will go without that encouragement, and the opening of the great Pacific Railroad will send many adventurers to your shores, to assist in developing the Hawaiian Kingdom.  

For his own Lanai plantation, however, Gibson looked to the West Coast for manpower, perhaps because the cities of California were then overrun with men seeking employment, needing only to be signed up and put aboard ship for Honolulu. Returning to the islands early in 1870, frustrated in his political missions and uncertain about his future in Hawaii, Gibson stopped off in San Francisco. He posted in the Labor Exchange a notice of openings for farmers and artisans who were willing to share-crop for him on Lanai. From a list of “several hundred who offered themselves,” the captain selected thirty individuals who had converged on San Francisco from Prussia, England, Ireland, Australia, Canada, and from other states of the Union. They claimed experience in farming, stock-handling, carpentry, and metalwork, precisely the skills an expanded Lanai community would require. The company included two married couples, one (the Perkins family) with six young children. Gibson contracted, for $35 per adult, to provide passage to Lanai, including meals during the journey to Honolulu,
and on Lanai to supply land, housing, seeds, farm animals, and gear. The money was to be refunded to each person who worked at least twelve acres for a year. Crops were to be divided equally with Gibson.

Fair enough terms, but the share-cropping experiment was a fiasco. It even began badly. The recruits had a slow and miserable crossing to Honolulu, in March 1870, as steerage passengers aboard the misnamed Comet, followed by an uncomfortable sailing of four days on the schooner Kinau to reach Gibson’s landing at Maneie Bay, on the south coast of Lanai. There, the two married men, their wives, and the six Perkins children were put on horseback, but the rest had to trudge up the hot, drought-hardened coastal slopes. When they crossed the brow of Palawai crater, they could see the lush vegetation where crops were flourishing under the care of their landlord’s children. By that time, however, most of the weary company had already replaced the paradisiacal visions conjured up by Gibson with frightening thoughts of peonage under a mad dictator, fears implanted by the rumormongers of Honolulu during their stop in the capital. Soon they had formed cliques, each with a boss competing with all the others. Gibson, already sorry for the selection he had made in the San Francisco Labor Exchange, increasingly distanced himself from the project once the fields were allocated. Everything went slowly—getting plows and horses ready, rounding up the livestock, packing supplies up from the boat landing, building homes.

The rains came late and little. Though the soil was still easy to work when the party arrived in mid-March, by the time the men, animals, and gear were organized the ground had become too hard for a span of horses to break. In early April, only a scant planting of corn, potatoes, and garden vegetables had been accomplished. And when produce was ready for picking, only two of the thirty pioneers were still on Lanai. The others were again in Honolulu or elsewhere in the kingdom, scratching for passage money back to California and eager to tell how they had been bamboozled by the sweet-talking Gibson.

The Pacific Commercial Advertiser, which had ridiculed Gibson’s reports from the mainland on emigration prospects, printed a long complaint from Perkins, father of the brood of six. To the editor, it proved another example of how irresponsible was
this self-promoting, Munchausening, rebellion-loving interloper. Gibson felt obliged to explain the reasons for the failure of his sharecropping experiment to Dr. Ferdinand Hutchison, minister of the interior.

This abandonment was not because I had not a broad and rich domain, nor plenty of horses and cattle, nor tools, nor seed, nor subsistence; but because no rain had fallen during the few weeks of their stay in the island, and because the systematic slander of a lot of seducers of the stranger’s mind, who curse this beautiful country, made ignorant and prejudiced men believe that the drought was the normal condition of the country, and I had only brought them here for a speculative purpose.... The course that had been pursued towards my emigrants is the same that is tried to seduce Chinese and other laborers for plantations. I am convinced that if I could get a fresh lot of men from parts of the world where labor is cheap and the laborer content with small gains, and bring them direct, without contact with California, and the gossip of our ports, they would be happy at the opportunities I offer them.19

The experiment left Gibson out of pocket and with strained finances. He asked John Dominis (future governor of Oahu and consort of Queen Liliuokalani, then administrator of government lands) for a delay in the payments due on his earlier land purchases, lest he be forced into bankruptcy.20 He repeatedly petitioned the finance minister for reimbursement of his travel costs to Washington, but to no avail.

For a while longer, Gibson had to be content with his role as patriarch of Lanai. His two sons served as lunas (overseers) in the ranch operations, and John, the elder, picked up some extra income from the government by superintending the construction of a public road through a portion of Lanai. Much of the farm and ranch work continued to be done by children of the few Mormon families who had remained and of other Hawaiian families drawn into the Gibson enterprise. Henry, the younger son, contributed a worthy share by siring at least one half-Hawaiian boy who was to carry on the Gibson name in the islands. On the ranch, the boys helped slaughter and butcher the animals and dry and pack sheep and goat skins. The girls, supervised by Talula, hoed vegetable gardens, cooked, made cheese, and wove mat bags for shipping produce across the channel to Lahaina.
While giving general direction to his island enterprise, Gibson increasingly had time for leisure pursuits. He developed an interest in local flora, particularly ferns. One botanizing visitor, Dr. William Hildebrand, named a rare lobelia, a “striking and rather showy plant” in his honor, *Cyanea Gibsonii*. Other visitors brought books and conversation to feed the captain’s fascination with Hawaiian folklore and history. The accommodations and cuisine at the Gibson ranch, they reported, were rather simple, but the talk was always good.

As he was able to get books from Honolulu, Gibson picked up his reading on Portuguese explorers, a subject close to his heart. He especially delighted in the poetic celebration of the Portuguese discoveries in Luis de Camoens’ *The Lusiads*. The vision, the daring, the determination of the exploradors of the shining islands of the sun fascinated him. He began to take notes for an article or two.

Between work and such play, Gibson continued to ponder the future of the kingdom and his role in developing those lines of power he had felt were converging on these islands. Lanai was too isolated; he must go to Honolulu. He had prepared himself for full participation in public affairs by becoming a citizen of Hawaii, and as a loyal subject of Kamehameha V he addressed the king in September 1872, proclaiming that he had come to the capital “with a single, earnest, fervent desire in my heart.”

That purpose was to advance a solution to the dual problem that continued to plague the kingdom: loss of native population and insufficiency of the labor supply. Having himself demonstrated that the Anglo-American culture did not produce the farm workers needed in Hawaii, Gibson reverted to his original idea of bringing in members of a race “cognate” to the Hawaiian, such as the people of Malaysia, in whose features, manners, and language he found such striking similarities to those of Hawaiians. He conceded that the plantation owners had to find an immediate labor supply from “a Mongolian source,” but, for a permanent population source that would intermarry with and so reinforce the Hawaiian people, it was to Oceania that the kingdom must look.

With at least the tacit approval of Kamehameha V, Gibson submitted to the Honolulu press a series of articles on the immigration problem, signing them “Weltevreden.”
mercial Advertiser (no longer owned or edited by Henry Whitney), printed all five articles. Editorial acclaim brought Gibson an invitation to address the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce, first on October 29 and again on November 1, 1872. The latter meeting adjourned, and then reconvened as the new Hawaiian Immigration Society. Gibson was made secretary and a member of the executive committee, chaired by Samuel N. Castle (of Castle and Cooke, which was to become one of Hawaii’s leading businesses) and also including Charles Reed Bishop, Hawaii’s pioneer banker and husband of the High Chiefess Bernice Pauahi.22

Gibson the outsider, thus temporarily acquiring respectability, joined in a working association with some of the leaders of the planter-businessman coalition that was gaining ascendancy in the islands. However, despite the eminence of those leaders and Gibson’s own efforts to mobilize political support for an immigration plan, the society had no immediate success. On December 11, 1872, Kamehameha V died without having named a successor. All proposals for new government programs were suspended until a new monarch was placed on the throne.

Selection of the next ruler threatened to precipitate a constitutional crisis. Those who objected to the amount of power given to the king by the existing constitution argued that its force had expired with Kamehameha V and that a convention should be called to revise the constitution and to select a royal executive who would fit the limited authority to be granted to the next king. Rumors of radical political change agitated the little capital. The cabinet, however, acted quickly to quiet speculation. It ordered an advisory plebiscite on the succession, to be held January 1, 1873, and to be followed a week later by a special session of the Legislative Assembly, which would elect a sovereign. Bernice Pauahi Bishop, one choice of the dying Kamehameha V, had declined to serve, and thus the competition narrowed to William Charles Lunalilo and David Kalakaua, both nobles of the realm, though not in direct line of descent from Kamehameha I. Gibson, who had addressed some of his memorials on immigration to Lunalilo, backed him publicly (though most likely without effect, given his then limited circle of influence). As events turned out, Lunalilo was overwhelmingly preferred in the plebiscite and was selected by the legislature as the sixth ruler of the Kingdom of Hawaii.23
The new year brought a new direction for Gibson himself. Increasingly bored and confined by the bucolic life on his small island, Gibson created an outlet, a display case for his teeming ideas and a platform for his yet undefined political ambitions. Leaving the Lanai ranch to the administration of his children, Gibson moved back to Honolulu and there established a newspaper to carry articles both in English and Hawaiian, in which he now wrote with ease and force. *Ka Nuhou Hawaii* (The Hawaiian News) was to come out twice a week, with Gibson as reporter and proofreader as well as editor.

He began the first issue, on February 23, 1873, with a statement of purpose and style.

Aloha.... We tended our sheep, till they became a burthen; and so in the ‘naughtiness of our heart’, like David, we have left our flocks to come take a part in the battle of life.... Our first thought in coming here was to discuss the want of more people.... We have not the prospect of either office or job, and we can afford to speak the truth. ... I do not propose to establish a permanent journal.... I want to issue a paper for a time, which can discuss public matters more freely than official [the Gazette] or business [the Advertiser] newspapers may dare to do. This does not mean that I wish to indulge in the sensation of mere scurrility. The farthest from it possible. I shall meet no man’s argument with an attack upon his person; nor attempt to disprove his views by trying to prove that he conceals a wooden leg.

Gibson’s standards of editorial objectivity did not meet those of a sharp-eyed traveler then touring Hawaii. Isabella Bird, in 1873 beginning her amazing course of adventure and reportage throughout half the world, was puzzled by the new sheet. “The Nuhou is scurrilous and diverting, and appears run with a special object, which I have not yet succeeded in unravelling from its pungent but not always intelligible pages.”

That special object was to present the kingdom and its monarch with a program that would energize Hawaiian nationalism to defend the islands against the growing dominance of the plantation-business community. Gibson cast the descendants of the missionary families and their business associates as Americanizers, basically unaccepting of a Hawaiian culture or a government under a Hawaiian king who was more than a figurehead.
Upon himself he put the mantle of champion, the defender of the native kingdom from the Americanizers. It was to be a fight to the death.

Editor Gibson began with the critical question of immigration. What people should be brought in to repopulate Hawaii: a servile Asian labor force, which would further submerge the native people? Or other Pacific island races, who would reinforce and invigorate the dwindling Hawaiians? He presented an array of proposals for development that soon brought him into opposition with the haole leadership and the two newspapers that shared its views. The Nuhou backed the reciprocity treaty, but not at the price of ceding Pearl Harbor to the United States, which was the political deal then being advanced. In fact, asked Gibson, why limit Hawaii’s economic outreach to America? Why not reciprocity with Australia, a growing market across the Pacific? Indeed, why not an economic union of the Pacific islands, with Honolulu as its chief entrepôt and financial center?

From the editor’s facile pen came a stream of suggestions for expanding and diversifying the Hawaii economy so that it could exert a regional leadership. Hawaii could advantageously compete in the production of tobacco and rum. (That brought the expected and relished cries of outrage from the blue-nose scribblers of the competition!) Woolen mills should be built, so that the fleeces grown in Hawaii (as on Lanai) need not be shipped to distant ports, at loss of profits. A paper industry could employ in a modification of Western technology some of the old skills used in making tapa cloth from ivauke (mulberry) bark. Shipping must be encouraged by the government, and a dry dock constructed to service the increasing number of merchant ships calling at Honolulu. Hawaii’s skilled fishermen should be encouraged to supply a commercial market (“we ought to farm the Ocean too”), including the sanitary public market that Honolulu needed. Tourism would produce a great source of foreign exchange, if better facilities for visitors were provided and made known to travelers abroad. To secure a safe water system for visitors and resident population alike, the government must protect the forested watershed area in the heights above Honolulu. And so on.

Gibson was advocating a kind of government activism that was anathema to the businessmen and plantation owners whose views were reflected in the pages of the Advertiser and the Gazette.
They were not opposed to appropriate government action, as in aid to the sugar industry, but they saw fiscal ruination in suggestions that their tax dollars be spent in support of economic interests not yet established.

Most offensive were Gibson’s gibes and invective against high interest rates, which he blamed on the factors, those financing and marketing oligopolists that later were called the “Big Five” of Hawaii’s business world.

Interest is our taskmaster, and a hard and bitter one too…. Shake him off, shake off the old man who is perched on top of you … whilst you are groaning and sweating your life’s blood at the rate of 12 percent. Shake him off your neck, shake him off the country, and seek the pleasant companionship of 5 percent….

To get cheap money the Nuhou advocated seeking a large loan from within the British Empire, where it asserted that funds were available at 3 or 4 percent. “This suggestion will not sound pleasantly to those who are in the ring of twelve percent. But let them howl. We are on the war path against the public enemy, and we will not rest.”

Twice a week, the Nuhou presented a display of Gibson’s wide range of interests. He opposed capital punishment and argued for a limited women’s suffrage, that is, for single women, who had no husbands to represent them at the polling place. He pointed out the urgent need for checking the spread of leprosy in Hawaii through new medical approaches and by isolation of sufferers and praised the dedication of Father Damien in serving the lepers on Molokai (“this is the very spirit of Christ”).

Editor Gibson also wrote about sea shells and ferns, about Hawaiian legends and Captain Cook (debunking the idea then in vogue that Giuliano Gaetano, a sea captain in the service of Spain, was the European discoverer of Hawaii), and about the dull solemnity of luaus since the Puritans had suppressed the hula. If the missionaries had to ban native dances, he reasoned, why had they not replaced them with some dance, however circumspect, to gladden the heart and enliven what were supposed to be festive gatherings? “We believe that a good dancing school for the people would be better than a hospital for the preservation of the race.”

He advocated industrial education and the use of Hawaiian lan-
guage texts in the public schools, then bent on making English the standard language of Hawaii.

From its start the Nuhou published articles in Hawaiian. As Gibson became even more proficient in the language, and especially after he hired the younger David Malo (nephew of the Hawaiian scholar of the same name) as editorial assistant, the proportion of the paper printed in Hawaiian increased. So did the Hawaiian point of view, which Gibson, whose name in the masthead was Kipikona, increasingly took as his own, always in contention with the haole planter-merchant leadership and with the native landowning chiefs allied with them by marriage and in politics.

Gibson took aim at the proposal to cede Pearl Harbor as an American naval base in return for the reciprocity treaty sought from the United States as his prime target. The idea of offering this quid pro quo had emerged in 1873, when Hawaii’s plantation economy was experiencing bad times following a steep decline in sugar exports due to bad weather. When a confidential military mission (including Major General John Schofield, commander of the U.S. Army Division of the Pacific, who arrived aboard the California, flagship of Admiral A. M. Pennock, commander of the North Pacific Squadron) reported to Washington on the military value of Pearl Harbor, the trade-offs for a deal were in place.

It was Henry M. Whitney who presented the proposal—Pearl Harbor in exchange for reciprocity—at first privately to King Lunalilo and then publicly through the newspapers. The idea was most appealing, not only to the planters, plantation managers, and factors who lived by the sugar industry but to most Americans and Europeans residing in the kingdom. They were divided on the question of outright annexation of Hawaii to the United States, which had been attempted during the last years of the reign of Kamehameha III, but they were generally attracted by the vision of a U.S. fleet at anchor in Pearl Harbor; security against local instability and foreign intervention. Many—probably most—Hawaiians were adamantly opposed to giving up even more of their political independence.

When Editor Gibson took on the Pearl Harbor question, then, he was aware of touching a nerve center. His touch was not gentle. He railed against the cession of the harbor, correctly it turned
out, as the first step toward annexation of all Hawaii to the United States. He used news stories, editorials, and finally, a sort of chant:

I am a messenger forbidding you
To give away Puuloa [Pearl Harbor],
Be not deceived by the merchants,
They are only enticing you,
Making fair their faces, they are evil within;
Truly desiring annexation,
Greatly desiring their own good;
They have no thought of good for you.\(^\text{28}\)

Carefully distinguishing King Lunalilo, for whom in his writings he had only praise and deference, Gibson let fly at the cabinet with scorn and sarcasm (“a dummy government”). He decried their inaction, their cheese-paring economy when bold action was needed to stimulate economic growth, in terms that John Maynard Keynes could have applauded: “Personal economy, leading to personal accumulation, is certainly beneficial to the individual; but mere economy in a state, without any intelligent, active purpose directing its industries and vitalizing its energies, when it needs such direction, is simply being content to collect a moderate fee from a dying patient.”\(^\text{29}\)

A mutiny in September 1873 of the Household Troops (about sixty men who comprised the kingdom’s standing army) presented an opportunity for criticizing the cabinet, then consisting of three Americans and a Scotchman. The troops, stationed in barracks near Iolani Palace, resisted discipline imposed by their martinet Hungarian drillmaster, Captain Joseph Jajczay, knocked him down, and then defied both the adjutant general and the governor of Oahu when they attempted to restore order. It took an order from King Lunalilo to get the mutineers to stack their rifles and quit the barracks, after which Lunalilo dissolved the troop, leaving his Royal Hawaiian Band as the only regular “military” organization in the kingdom.

Gibson’s caustic reports on the ineffectiveness of the government in handling the mutiny, stressing the inability of haole leaders to deal justly with Hawaiian soldiers, fed the sympathy of native Hawaiians for the mutineers and their resentment against
white commanders. The *Nuhou* used the incident to demand a new ministry, one that would include Hawaiians: “Native talent is not wanting of sufficient merit and experience to aid in the administration of the Government, and it would appear to us simply a just and patriotic measure that one or more of the educated sons of the soil should aid His Majesty in the Cabinet.”

By the end of 1873 even the name of Lunalilo, theretofore mentioned only in praise, was included in the editorials of the *Nuhou* that attacked the government.

One year has passed away since the death of Kamehameha V. When he died there was not much sorrow, because there was a great hope in the new King. All people, the foreigners as well as the natives, rejoiced in the name of Lunalilo…. But now … there is a feeling of disappointment; and shame instead of glory rests upon this reign. The name of Lunalilo is tarnished, and this reign is considered a failure, not because the King whom his people still love has done any wrong, but because his Ministers have acted unwisely and cowardly, and have brought disgrace on the country.

By the time this editorial appeared, Lunalilo was gravely ill, and speculation had already begun about his successor and how one could be chosen in a way that would avoid a competition even more divisive than had attended the election of Lunalilo himself. Kipikona looked over the field and announced his support of High Chief David Lonoikamakahiki Keolo Keoma Kalakaua Kapaakea, who had unsuccessfully opposed Lunalilo the year before. The *Nuhou*, along with other Honolulu newspapers, urged that the question of succession be settled quickly. But while the government talked, Lunalilo, aged thirty-nine, died on February 3, 1874, and the kingdom was faced with its second interregnum in little over a year.

Dowager Queen Emma, widow of Kamehameha IV, was Kalakaua’s chief rival for the throne. Even though she was considered pro-British, many Americans preferred her to Kalakaua, who sometimes seemed anti-haole—and particularly after he was backed by the likes of Gibson. Kalakaua, to propitiate American opinion, wrote a conciliatory letter to the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, which the *Nuhou* commented on favorably. In his letter Kalakaua acknowledged that he opposed ceding Pearl Harbor.
but denied that native Hawaiians, including himself, were hostile to foreigners.\(^{32}\)

Selection of the monarch by the Legislative Assembly was set for February 12, 1874. Electioneering on behalf of both favored candidates was intense, dividing both the Hawaiian and the foreign communities. The Nuhou vigorously supported Kalakaua as the “chief hope of the Hawaiian people.” Queen Emma, though a “most noble woman and devoted to her native country,” was being promoted by “a cabal, or ring of foreign interests” and so did not satisfy the need of the Hawaiians for a ruler devoted to their interests.\(^{33}\)

Kalakaua was chosen by the legislature over Queen Emma, 39 votes to 6. When the results were announced to the crowd gathered outside the Honolulu courthouse where the assembly met, violence erupted. Members of a committee setting out to inform Kalakaua of his selection were set upon and beaten. Angry partisans of Emma broke into the courthouse and assaulted other legislators who had voted for Kalakaua, injuring a dozen, a few seriously. One representative later died of his wounds.

The riot was put down but only after a company of American marines and sailors, joined by tars off a British gunboat, came ashore after receiving a signal prearranged by the government with the U.S. and British commissioners and agreed to by Kalakaua. The next morning Kalakaua called on Emma, and they established formally cordial relations, but their partisans continued to talk and write in anger. The Hawaiian Gazette (now owned and edited by H. M. Whitney) blamed the inflammatory columns of the Nuhou for stirring up the people: “It has sought to inspire its native readers with the belief that in them rests the power to make such changes in government as they wish, and to make demands inconsistent with reason, as in its harangues to the native police to demand the same pay as foreigners receive.”\(^{34}\)

Gibson declined to accept responsibility for the riot but, tongue in cheek, did acknowledge that his newspaper, with a paid circulation of about fifteen hundred, did reach a much larger audience “because the Hawaiian reads his paper out aloud to a listening crowd, and therefore a journal of some vim and point as the Nuhou is supposed to be must go far in awakening the mind of an impressionable people like the natives of these islands.”
Offering his own eyewitness account of the rioting, Gibson wrote that no harm was intended to foreigners and therefore the intervention of foreign armed forces was not justified—passing over the fact that there was no Hawaiian armed force to back up the Honolulu police, since the household troops had been dissolved.

Kipikona of the Nuhou continued to advertise his support of King Kalakaua and of a government that would work to save the Hawaiian race from extinction. He reminded his readers (and the court) how early and ardent had been his support of the winner: “In the days of doubt when it was not deemed prudent to be taking sides, we showed our colors and nailed them to the mast; and now we can rejoice in a victory in the accession of His Majesty King Kalakaua.”

If Gibson had expectations of immediate political reward, however, he was disappointed. Kalakaua did replace the cabinet that the Nuhou had so sharply criticized, but the editor was not approached to join the new ministry. It did include a native Hawaiian (Maui governor Nahaolelua, Gibson’s old accuser in the Mormon days) as minister of finance, but the other three ministers were haole: an Englishman in charge of foreign affairs, a German as minister of the interior, and an American as attorney general. Gibson professed not to be excessively downcast.

While we labored to help elect King Lunalilo and were not appreciated afterwards as our vanity may have suggested, we were not disappointed, or at any rate did not stay our hand because without reward; but we worked on the same as ever for the benefit of the country in opposing the scheme of disintegration of Pearl Harbor.... Then again we have worked with brain and pen and voice to help elect another King.... And now that the indifferent, the lukewarm, or the hostile carry off palm and guerdon both, shall we complain because our brows are without bays? Not so, not so; because our work was for the people, and their appreciation and our consciousness should be our reward.

Nevertheless, Gibson was beginning to feel the strain of being an unacknowledged champion. The Nuhou, which ran with few advertisements, was a financial drain on his modest income from the family enterprises, and a physical drain, too. Kipikona cut his
work load by reducing the paper from a semiweekly to a weekly publication featuring articles in Hawaiian. For some months he continued to attack favorite targets: inadequate public sanitation; the need for more vocational education and less missionary Bible training (“Glorious redeemed islands; More than 8,000 Sabbath school children and only 20 apprentices!”); the threat of annexation by the United States; and the need for an immigration policy.

The strain of commuting between Lanai and Honolulu, compounded by the financial pinch and a constitutional inability to remain in any routine for long, caused Gibson to close down the Nuhou. In any case, Kipikona had accomplished his chief policy goal, which was the defeat of the proposal to cede Pearl Harbor. The last issues of the Nuhou, published April 21 and 28, 1874, focused on a movement that came to be a society called Hoʻoulu Lāhui (increase of the people, or national growth). One column, headed “The Childbearers are the Mainstay of the King,” combined Gibson’s favorite editorial exercises—exhorting native Hawaiians to reassert their own ways and forcing howls of outrage from the church-going haole community.

Let maternity in every class be honored;—and the cries of babies be more esteemed than even the tuneful chants of churches. Let humanity have every incentive to growth in Hawaii; these people are not doomed.... Let there be no terrors of law or religion, leading to infanticide, foeticide;—let not the law officers be the pimps of justice, to harass Hawaiians in the maintenance of a moral standard which they cannot appreciate; but let King Kalakaua have children, come how they may, to fill up his Kingdom.³⁸

Editor Kipikona defended himself against the charge, frequently made against him by Whitney in the Gazette and later echoed by other critics until the end of his days, that he had deliberately inflamed the native population against the foreigners in Hawaii. He did express satisfaction that the Hawaiians had taken his advice and sent “their own people” to represent them in the legislature. Soon he would seek to place himself at the head of these representatives.

In shutting down the Nuhou, Gibson did not quit journalism. The Pacific Commercial Advertiser (post-Whitney) not yet embracing his policies but glad to have his provocative columns,
printed Gibson’s articles on a wide range of subjects: Hawaiian history, economic and political issues, and European literature. During this time of relative calm in his life, Gibson further pursued his interest in Henry the Navigator and other Portuguese explorers whose history he had learned of during his days on the Flirt and while he was imprisoned in Java.

Accounts of Portuguese exploration led him to a more intensive reading of Camoens, the sixteenth-century poet. The books came from the library of the Reverend Samuel Chenery Damon, chaplain of the Seamen’s Friend Society in Honolulu. Damon, like Gibson, was regarded as an eccentric on the subject of race in that he saw an inevitability and virtue in the “happy blending” of the peoples who had converged on Hawaii. The chaplain, a gentle man, could not agree with Kipikona’s appeals to rouse the natives to political action, but he found in Gibson, the quiet-voiced conversationalist and facile writer, a man whose range of interests matched his own. Damon printed in his newspaper, The Friend, Gibson’s long account of the Portuguese sea captains, which was reprinted in a special supplement to the Advertiser. Six installments in the Advertiser, appearing from November 1874 to July 1875, were necessary to do justice to Camoens, his epic poem The Lusiads, and to Vasco da Gama, whose voyages of discovery Camoens had celebrated.

Despite his journalistic attacks on the haole establishment, Gibson continued to serve as secretary of the Hawaiian Immigration Society. In July 1874 the society distributed a report, written by Gibson, that detailed the manpower needs of the sugar industry, its inability to rely on the declining native population, and the necessity of bringing in more cultivators, whether sharecroppers, homesteaders, or contract laborers. The report was intended for distribution abroad as well as in Hawaii; to it was appended an array of statistical data—on population by island and race, temperatures, sugar yields, and the cost of sailing to Hawaii ($50 for a cabin, $30 for steerage from California) or living there ($3 per night at the Hawaiian Hotel, $5 restaurant board per week, 5 to 8 cents per pound for meat, 2 cents for interisland postage). Even the opposition press had praise for the report, though it did question the helpfulness, at a time when the government was seeking a foreign loan, of Gibson’s observation that, if the population con-
tinued to decline, in a short time it might not “be considered sufficient to constitute the basis for an independent state.”

The Gibson family itself was now invigorated by the infusion of new blood. Talula, her father’s favorite, had prepared herself for marriage within the mainstream of Hawaii’s haole population by being confirmed an Episcopalian, registered in Honolulu’s St. Andrew’s Cathedral in March 1874. Providentially, her age was given as twenty-four (seven years fewer than a strict chronological accounting), thereby making her younger than her suitor, Frederick Harrison Hayselden, formerly of Brighton, England, and Australia. They were married at Christmastime in St. Andrew’s by the bishop of Honolulu. Following their honeymoon, the couple returned to Lanai, where they provided the chief direction for the Gibson family enterprises when Father Gibson was otherwise engaged, as he increasingly was to be.

By 1875 Gibson had secured about nine-tenths of the island of Lanai for his ranching and farming operations, either under fee simple title or long-term lease. The land department of the kingdom, which had kept him dangling under earlier administrations, now preferred his applications, even over the occasional protests of Hawaiians living on Lanai. His flocks multiplied, he was living with his dear children, there were ferns and sea shells to be gathered and classified, correspondence with Honolulu, the United States, and Europe and yet the bucolic life again palled. In July Gibson was back in Honolulu, publishing a pamphlet on *Camoens and the Heroic Age of the Portuguese*, penning articles on Hindu poetry and religious prophecy for the *Friend*, and prowling around the capital, looking for an opening into political life. Minor appointments had come—to head the census-taking on Lanai, to serve there as agent of the national school system—but nothing that could satisfy the energies and ambition of the man. Even his old antagonist, Editor Whitney, suggested in the *Hawaiian Gazette* that Gibson be given a post, that of commissioner to the U.S. Centennial Exposition of 1876 in Philadelphia, which would have removed the restless trouble-maker a safe distance from Honolulu.

Gibson did not get the appointment (Damon did) but the celebration in Philadelphia of American independence did suggest to him that Hawaii, too, should celebrate its place in history. First,
he proposed a centennial observance of the European discovery of Hawaii in 1778 by Captain James Cook. While this notion was being mulled over by the haole community, to many of whom Cook was no hero, Gibson went on to suggest that a statue of Kamehameha I, first ruler of all the islands, be erected as a symbol of national identity. However, the public celebration of Cook’s arrival was only modest and the statue was not sculpted until Gibson gained authority to commission it, years later.

Kipikona stirred the political pot vigorously at the beginning of 1876 by publishing a lengthy “Address to the Hawaiian People!” printed in English and Hawaiian. It came out in January, during the time of legislative electioneering, but Gibson disavowed any (present) ambition to stand for office.41 (“I speak therefore from the promptings of a sense of patriotism and as a lover of Hawaii.”) The address proper began with a genuflection to the throne and a reminder that he had taken a lead in organizing public sentiment in favor of Kalakaua. He called on all Hawaiians to support their king. Next came a polite bow to the downtown establishment: the newly revived proposal for a treaty of commercial reciprocity with the United States, no longer joined to the cession of Pearl Harbor, deserved the support of native voters. And further, government expenditures should be reduced by cuts in the public payroll.

Then he took up his main theme, repopulation of the kingdom. Whereas in 1872 there were about 50,000 native Hawaiians, now, only four years later, there were but 45,000, including, he estimated, no more than 5,000 able-bodied men.

The whole Hawaiian nation could be transported in one ship, the Great Eastern, across the ocean; and therefore, you and we foreigners all included with you, are too small a people to be entitled to rank as an independent state, and would not be so recognized, were it not for the courtesy and permission of great states whose ships of war patrol the great ocean. And were it not for this recognized political existence of Hawaii, brought about by wise foreigners, advising your Kings, you would be subject to the dictation of any man-of-war that entered the port of Honolulu.42

Repopulation, he wrote, was the most urgent need for Hawaii, the deepest concern of the people and their sovereign. To find the
best means of restoring population, it was necessary to consider why natives amounted to only a tiny fraction of the number Cook found when he visited the islands a century before. It was not the coming of whites that had destroyed the Hawaiians—the people of Java and the Moluccas had continued to thrive alongside European colonists. The interbreeding of ancient Javanese lines with Malays and Hindus had created a vigorous stock, able to withstand the diseases of white men and the shock to their old culture. But in Hawaii the pattern of immigration had been fatally different. A “sad disproportion of sex,” with many more males than females, had led to promiscuity, the defiling of women, and the blighting of their wombs.

And were those islands to gradually receive 50,000 Hindoos and other red races, kindred to the Hawaiians, the offspring of these new people and of you native people would all be Hawaiians; and so your name and race would continue to possess this archipelago, even should you increase to 1,000,000 of souls.  

Gibson-Kipikona closed his address with a peroration calculated to appeal to all parties, all ministers, and all editors:

And you, O People! must strengthen the hands of your King with cheerful service and a zealous loyalty. And then you, united with true hearted and loyal foreigners, can all join together as a strong and harmoniously blended little community in the building up of Hawaii. We can with union and wise cooperation stop the prevailing wail of death with the voices of increasing people. We can with more women of chaste races to be found and got by the seeking have more fruitful union and gladden with marriages the land so saddened with funerals.... We can enliven once more the now silent shores of Hawaii with a thronging and busy people.

Even Editor Whitney applauded from the columns of the Gazette. In the silly season of election bombast, this pamphlet presented sound advice on a fundamental problem, advice that merited the attention not only of the Hawaiian people but of all residents and of the government. Not that the subject of immigration was novel. Kamehameha IV, Kamehameha V, Foreign Minister Wyllie, and many business and civic leaders had written, spoken, and organized committees to deal with the related problems of depopulation and labor supply. No coherent policy had yet been
adopted and implemented, however, and so Gibson’s advocacy reached a highly interested audience across the range of politics.

Finding so encouraging a reception to his “Address,” Gibson proceeded to the next step of a campaign to gain power that was taking shape in his mind. To go from rhetoric to action required formulating a policy, a plan, to be placed at the top of the government’s agenda, and he intended to be the identified author of the plan.

He therefore invited to his residence on Fort Street in central Honolulu, where he had recently moved, leaders of business and government to discuss how an immigration program could be developed. Gibson again proposed the formation of an immigration company, in which he was prepared to invest $2,000. However, H. A. P. Carter and other leading businessmen present argued persuasively that the undertaking was so great that only the government could manage it. Whereupon Gibson cordially joined in the motion that His Majesty be memorialized on the subject. He and two others were chosen as a committee to draft the memorial, which, as usual, Gibson actually wrote. After some amending, the memorial was adopted at a subsequent meeting of the group and was signed by more than sixty persons, including legislators, former cabinet members, planters, businessmen, clergy, doctors, lawyers—and Gibson. On Leap Year Day, 1876, the author and three others presented the memorial to Kalakaua. In his prepared response the king said that problems with the legislature had prevented his ministers from acting on the urgent question of immigration but that it would soon be done.⁴⁵

His Majesty might have been pleased by the memorial, but his cabinet was not. William L. Green, minister of foreign affairs, responded to the memorialists with a “circular,” which denounced them for their alarmist exaggeration of the population problem and lectured them for not understanding the complexities of the problem, concluding that God alone, not man, “knows what races outside of Polynesia have the affinity to the Hawaiian that may be necessary for this purpose.”⁴⁶ Green noted that only one native person had signed the memorial; whereupon Gibson prepared a Hawaiian translation of the document and secured the signatures of several native voters.

The memorialists had called on the government to concentrate
its energies and finances on measures to protect the dwindling Hawaiian population, for example, through improved sanitation and health education, and to “gain an infusion of fresh blood from kindred races.” The reaction of the Privy Council, to whom Kalakaua referred the memorial, was to allot $50,000 for recruiting more Chinese laborers—the very group that Gibson had found wanting (as not “kindred”) and that the planters had found difficult to keep on the plantations. In the legislative session of 1876, however, funds were appropriated not only for the continued importation of Chinese (almost all of them single men) but also $35,000 for the “encouragement of immigration,” which was understood to mean the introduction of families. The government Bureau of Immigration now turned its efforts to recruiting Portuguese (a nationality much praised by Gibson in his recent literary and political commentary) from the Azores and Madeiras, Micronesians and Melanesians from other Pacific islands, as well as Hindus from India. Gibson was proposed as emissary to London to negotiate for emigration from within the British Empire, but again the post went to another, this time to H. A. P. Carter, who was to become his chief rival for power within the government.

Successful as an instigator of action but denied a role in carrying out the new policy, Gibson looked around for another public cause on which to expend his energies—and keep him in public view. He found one in the forests of Hawaii, partly destroyed by the ruthless cutting of sandalwood earlier in the century, and now threatened by unrestricted grazing, as on his Lanai range lands.

This is not a new subject for me ... but I am taking a new interest in it, and feel that it is a life question for Hawaii, and that her trees come next in importance to her people.... [T]he isles are becoming naked at a fearful rate. The shrubbery and the shade have left forever many thousands of acres of our territory, upon which in times past thickly mingled plants and mosses formed a permanent sod, through which the bounteous showers of the mountain tops percolated down to the island shores with beneficial regularity. But with the loss of shade and sod, leaving arid slopes and plains stripped to their rocky bones, the summit waters have come down with quickly accumulating volume and fury—have torn their way through ruinous gulches to the sea,—and then in a while have left only a parched and a weary land swept by a blasting wind.
Gibson proposed that a “commissioner or guardian of forests” be appointed, with powers, as in France, to regulate the cutting of trees and grazing, even on private lands. In this concern and proposal, however, Gibson was too far in advance of his contemporaries to gain support. Not until the twentieth century was a government forestry service established in Hawaii, and even then it was never given the range of authority for conservation that Gibson suggested. Moreover, almost that long a period passed before his theory that a forest cover increased rainfall became generally accepted in the islands.\(^48\)

Lacking for the time being a political outlet for his ideas and ambition, Gibson turned back to his family and to his enterprise on Lanai. Business conditions in Hawaii had improved with the approval, at last in 1876, of the reciprocity treaty by the United States Senate. Gibson’s ranching operation, upgraded by the introduction of Merino sheep and made more efficient by the importation of sheep dogs from Australia, supplied the profits that Gibson needed to diversify his enterprise. Late in 1876 he bought from Colonel A. S. Cleghorn a general store in Lahaina, Maui, the old whaling port, increasingly somnambulant with the decline of whaling in the northern Pacific. He also leased an adjacent house and moved his residence there from Lanai—closer to an electorate of significant size. Active management of the store Gibson put in the hands of his new son-in-law, Fred Hayselden, who was proving to be a capable, versatile businessman. Advertisements of the Lahaina Store offered the public “a superior assortment of General Merchandise, Lumber and [reservations] for inter-island vessels.”\(^49\) The store briefly was also licensed to sell ‘awa (kava), which must have caused some Mormon voices to be raised against him.\(^50\)

Father Gibson, now well past fifty, gray bearded, increasingly patriarchal in appearance and manner, was able for some months to draw from his children and his businesses the connection and stimulation he needed. Then, suddenly, he lost his first-born child, John Lewis. John was on Lanai in the summer of 1877, supervising the ranch, when he was thrown from his horse and badly hurt. Brought to Lahaina for medical treatment, he died of his injuries in the home of his father. Gibson had him buried in the Episcopal cemetery at Lahaina (in a vault where much later he himself was
to lie for a time) and placed over the tomb a monument reading: “In memory of John Lewis, son of Walter M. and Rachel Gibson, died at Lahaina August 10, 1877, aged 34 years. Erected by a sorrowing father who mourns a faithful son.”

Talula, her husband Fred, and their children in later years became the center of Gibson’s familial concerns. Henry, the remaining son, also sired grandchildren for Gibson, but because he was not married, at least not formally, Gibson kept somewhat aloof from him. Nevertheless, Henry and his family continued to live and work on the family ranch on Lanai.

The merchant-rancher Gibson briefly resumed the role of captain when the interisland schooner Iolani was wrecked and abandoned in the stormy channel between Maui and Lanai. With the sheriff of Maui and a crew, Gibson set out in a rescue boat. They salvaged the sails, spars, and other gear and were attempting to right the wreck when the steamer Kilauea came along to tow the ship back to its owners in Honolulu. Gibson, who generously waived his claim to salvage rights when he learned that the local owners and not some distant underwriters would bear the costs, was thanked for his rescue operation in a notice printed in Honolulu’s Pacific Commercial Advertiser.

From Lahaina Gibson continued to write for the Advertiser, keeping before the reading public his name and his views on a cluster of issues he had earlier addressed in the Nuhou: population and immigration, the political independence of the kingdom, the survival of the Hawaiian race. He was deciding whether to take the plunge into elective politics—an immersion Charles R. Bishop had expected of him (and of a few other “prejudiced and unreasonable people”) two years earlier—by running for the legislature at the beginning of 1878. An election districting, which combined Lanai with Lahaina on the west coast of Maui, was most favorable to Kipikona, since it contained a preponderance of Hawaiians, to whom he could appeal in their native language, and relatively few haoles, who might feel threatened by his pro-Hawaiian rhetoric. No organized political parties existed to shape his campaigning, but his support of the throne against the constitutional notions of the planter-commercial interests was notorious.

The outcome of Gibson’s debate with himself about running for office was predictable. He believed that he had developed a
political program to connect the lines of power, by which a benefi-
cent white patriarch could rejuvenate the Hawaiian race and lead
it to glory, that very connection he had felt seventeen years earlier
on taking command of the Mormon community on Lanai. And yet,
despite his bold support of the king and his attacks against Ameri-
can imperialism in Hawaii, he had not been entrusted with any
position of authority, and he had had no indication that Kalakaua
would ever call upon him. Gibson would soon be fifty-six. It was
time to take a new course, if ever he was to direct affairs in the
little kingdom in this wide ocean, if ever he was to come into the
heritage of his long-lost uncle. The way to power was through the
Legislative Assembly.

Gibson filed for the election of 1878, a contest that generated
little excitement during the economic boom then in progress.
Polling took place on February 6, and Gibson (Kipikona to most
of his constituents) was readily elected, along with another haole
from Maui, Richard Bickerton, to serve a two-year term in the
assembly, the lower house of the bicameral legislature.

Thus began a decade of conspicuous public service during
which Walter Murray Gibson rose to dominate the government of
the Hawaiian Kingdom, thereby goading the haole oligarchy to
revolution and the imposition of what was to be called the Bayo-
net Constitution of 1887.
Gratifying
the Longings of
an Ardent Heart

There was gratification in taking public office, to join at last the
Inside that received petitions from the Outside, where Gibson
had so long dwelled. Sharing in the uncertain power of a legisla-
ture in a Lilliputian monarchy was not the shining glory he had
envisioned long ago in the forests of Carolina or glimpsed in the
sunrise off Sumatra, but it was an entry into the central core of
this insular community. Some levers of government authority were
within grasp.

As he awaited the convening in April of the 1878 legislative
session, Gibson considered his prospects for attaining leadership
and public recognition. He was one of four haoles elected to
the twenty-seven-member Legislative Assembly (which at this pe-
riod frequently met in joint session with the appointive House of
Nobles) and the only one of the four able to speak fluently in
Hawaiian to the native legislators. This was no mean advantage,
even though formal debate was in English. He had long estab-
lished his concern for the Hawaiian race and the preservation of
their monarchy. Just that year Gibson had delivered a long address
in Hawaiian at a celebration in Lahaina, Maui, of the centennial
anniversary of Captain Cook’s landing on Hawaii. In his oration
Kipikona had lauded Kamehameha I, founder of the monarchy, as
one who stood “among the great warriors and organizers of the
earth,” a wise leader who had brought peace and potential great-
ness to his people.¹

Writing for the Nuhou had sharpened Gibson’s arguments for
what he saw as the essential agenda for the kingdom: preserva-
tion of the Hawaiian race by improving its health and by inter-
marriage with stock from other Pacific islands; preservation of Hawaii’s political autonomy by inculcating pride in the monarchy and by holding off the Americanizers who sought annexation to the United States. Expected allies were the Hawaiian members who comprised a majority in the assembly. Opposed to him would be other haole assemblymen, a majority in the House of Nobles (which consisted of haoles and landed Hawaiian chiefs, some of whom perceived that they shared common economic interests), and the four ministers who comprised the cabinet. If the king were to accept Gibson’s agenda and was resolute in acting on it, Kipikona would rise to the top. It was to Kalakaua, therefore, that he had to address himself, although his forum would be the legislature.

Kalakaua’s speech opening the 1878 legislature hit at one of the problems Gibson had long been writing about—the urgency of safeguarding Hawaiians against introduced diseases that were destroying the native population. The assembly appointed Gibson to a special committee to draft a reply to the throne and made him a member of the standing committee on sanitation. Most satisfactorily, as the assembly organized he acquired the strategic post of chairman of the Finance Committee. The first levers were in hand.

With characteristic enterprise, Gibson took his sanitation committee to see the place that most fearsomely displayed the physical destruction of the Hawaiian race. To the astonishment of the lepers, almost all natives, concentrated in exile at the settlement at Kalawao on the island of Molokai, they were visited by frock-coated members of the legislature.

Upon their return to Honolulu, Gibson presented to the assembly a detailed report that described conditions at Kalawao, noted the improvements made by Father Damien since his arrival there in 1873, and specified what else must be done to make the settlement endurable to severely afflicted human beings. Chairman Gibson proposed a resolution calling for the preparation of a book on health and hygiene for the guidance of Hawaiians, appropriating $1,500 for the project. Further, he introduced legislation to increase the appropriation for the leper settlement by $75,000, including funds for new posts of physician and superintendent, thus relieving Father Damien of much of the burden he had been carrying almost single-handedly. The measures went to a receptive
Finance Committee (also chaired by Walter Murray Gibson), were reported out favorably, and were promptly passed by the legislature.

The Finance Committee chairmanship was proving to be most useful. The head of the money committee could command the full attention of any minister brought in to defend his budget, and Gibson summoned them all—foreign affairs, interior, finance, and the attorney general—for close examination. The minister of finance allowed that there were some discrepancies in the accounts of his department but objected that they were too small to warrant such a fuss. To which Chairman Gibson replied that it reminded him of the story of the unmarried mother who applied for a situation with a respectable family. When the lady of the house asked her if it was true that she had had a baby, the girl said yes, but it was a small one. “Now the size is not a question, neither in the case of the baby or the deficiency; if it was, we might doubt about the Minister’s baby being such a little one; for who knows, as all is not yet revealed, but that it is a big boy of corruption.”

Adoption by the legislature of Gibson’s report admonishing the government for loose handling of public funds encouraged him to strike again, and harder, at a cabinet critically flawed by its inability to provide the leadership needed to sustain the Hawaiian Kingdom—and by its failure to include Walter Murray Gibson. In June, toward the close of the 1878 biennial session, Gibson introduced a resolution of no confidence in the ministry, stating that consideration of the appropriation bill would be postponed until a cabinet merit- ing the confidence of the legislature was appointed by the king. The gauntlet had been flung at the feet of the haole-dominated ministry.

For three days at the joint meeting of the assembly and nobles the motion was debated with rising passion. Gibson castigat- ed Attorney General Alfred Hartwell for depositing, without authorization, public funds with his banker, Charles Bishop. (Since Bishop & Co. then operated the only commercial bank in the kingdom, it is not clear what alternative Hartwell had.) Minister of Foreign Affairs H. A. Peirce was excused by Gibson for his inaction, since he was perhaps suffering from the infirmities of old age. Minister of the Interior John Mott Smith, Gibson’s recent lobbying partner in Washington, in his turn was heavily sarcastic about the varied career of the Shepherd Saint, as the opposition
press liked to call Gibson. In return, the minister got the rougher edge of the chairman’s tongue.

It is true, Mr. President, that I am a shepherd ... and on the Lanai hills have watched my flocks for lo these many years—till weary with the longings of an ardent heart, I came forth from the obscurity of years, and left my sheep in the wilderness, to look after my other flock here. But His Excellency assured you, that he was not a sheep, nor one of my flock.

No, sir, he is not; he is of another stock. I do not deal in animals of his kind. He belongs to that other stock, which shall be separated from the sheep; if not today, yet at some future day of political judgment in the Kingdom of Hawaii.⁴

A central charge by supporters of the no-confidence motion was fiscal mismanagement, and yet Gibson had only polite words, even faint praise, for the minister of finance. That officer was John M. Kapena, the sole Hawaiian in the cabinet. For the others, Gibson had only scorn. A haole legislator, W. O. Smith, was prompted to make a rebuttal in the local vernacular, calling Gibson’s rotund oratory “lapuwale” (foolishness) and “makani wale no” (all gas). He was censored by a motion, offered by Gibson, for using language “derogatory to the dignity of the Assembly and contrary to Rule 29.”⁵

Resuming his attack, Gibson reminded the body that the ministers (except Kapena) had advocated ceding Pearl Harbor to the United States in exchange for the reciprocity treaty needed by the sugar planters. Their ultimate goal, he again warned, was the annexation of the kingdom by America.

They talk of decline, because their hope is that way. But my hope, and the hope of the influence that I partly represent, is that the Hawaiian nation will live; and our purpose is to care more for the life of the people than for material progress alone.... And now we face each other: they who have not hope in their hearts for the future of this nation, and we who will hope and strive even against despair. And you, Hawaiians, must choose in whom you will place your confidence. Will any of you sell the hope of his race for some paltry gain or hope of office, then let him forever have the malediction of his countrymen.⁶

Thus presented, the vote on a motion to table the no-confidence resolution became a division by racial interests—foreigners
aye, Hawaiians nay. The motion to table passed, 26 to 19. Except for Gibson and one other haole (Bickerton of East Maui), all the nay votes were cast by Hawaiian members. Political war had been joined and the first skirmish won by the Americans.

Their triumph, however, was short-lived. Even as the cabinet officers were congratulating themselves, another interloper, more powerful by far at that time than Gibson, had come upon the scene. He was Claus Spreckels, soon to be known as the Sugar King from California, attracted to Hawaii by the new reciprocity treaty under which Hawaiian cane competed on even terms with mainland beet and cane sugar.

At fifty, Spreckels was six years Gibson’s junior, still in his prime as an aggressive capitalist. His sugar empire already spanned the continent from California to Philadelphia, and his ambition was to extend it to Hawaii, which had become the chief source of supply for his California Sugar Refinery. Decades of free-swinging competition had taught him various ways, seldom subtle, of dealing with governmental authorities as well as with commercial rivals.

Spreckels had first come to Hawaii in 1876, arriving on the steamer that carried the news from California that President Grant had signed the long-awaited reciprocity treaty. The Sugar King hastened to buy up most of the cane crop before its price rose. He met Kalakaua, then at the beginning of his reign, and noted how open—and frequently empty—was his purse.

The 1876 visit was a reconnaissance. Now Spreckels had returned for action. Earlier in that year of 1878 he had bought an interest in 16,000 acres in central Maui, leased another 24,000 acres of government lands there, and set about to develop the virgin but arid plantation thus created. Here was the “corporation” whose capital was necessary, as Gibson had realized in surveying the water potential of Lanai eighteen years before, for tapping the copious ground water of the island mountains for a dependable irrigation system. With the resources of his California Sugar Refinery behind him, Spreckels had that capital, but first he needed rights to the water in the central massif of Maui. Without those rights he had no water, and without irrigation his land was useless for growing sugarcane. On June 24, 1878, Spreckels petitioned the king and his ministers for the water rights he
wanted, at a rent of $500 per year. Kalakaua was ready to accommodate his new friend, but his ministers wanted to hold the petition for later consideration. That same day, Gibson’s motion of no confidence in the ministry was defeated.

The king of sugar already had an understanding with the king of Hawaii, and on the night of July 1 they met with a few others at a hotel near Iolani Palace. About two in the morning, the royal ministers were routed out of their beds by a royal messenger who brought their dismissal papers. A new cabinet, consisting of two Hawaiians (J. M. Kapena, shifted to foreign affairs, and S. K. Kaai, to replace him at finance) and two Americans (S. G. Wilder as interior minister and Edward Preston as attorney general), within a week of taking office approved the requested thirty-year water lease. And on that same day, July 8, 1878, Spreckels loaned Kalakaua $40,000 on notes secured by the income from Crown lands reserved for the support of the monarchs of Hawaii.

Gibson, well practiced, concealed his disappointment at again being passed over for a cabinet appointment. His first legislative session had not gone badly at all. He had got in a few good licks at the annexationists. He had shaken the ministry, though he could not take credit for its fall. He had exposed the terrible needs of the Hawaiians, not only those cursed with leprosy and other killing diseases but all those suffering from bad housing, primitive hygiene, and poor diet, and he had pushed through the legislature appropriations to address their problems.

And he had used his advantage as finance committee chairman to get other allocations of public funds that showed his concern for the national pride of Hawaiians: $500 to Henry Berger, leader of the Royal Hawaiian Band, for setting to music the words of Kalakaua as “Hawaii Pono’ī,” the new national anthem; $10,000 to commission a bronze statue of Kamehameha I; and $50,000 to begin construction of a new Iolani Palace, more regally to house Kalakaua, his consort Queen Kapiolani, and all their successors. Kipikona had secured his place as leader of the Hawaii-for-Hawaiians majority in the Legislative Assembly and recognition as the most prominent member of the legislative branch of the government.

The legislature having adjourned until 1880, Gibson had leisure for another excursion to the great cities of America that
always fascinated him—San Francisco, New York, and Boston. As on his last trip a decade earlier, he kept the public in Hawaii informed of his experiences by dispatches to the Pacific Commercial Advertiser, beginning in October 1878. The long railroad journey across the continent gave refreshing glimpses of the autumn, the season most missed by Northerners living in Hawaii, and some good conversation in the parlor car. From Omaha to New York City Gibson chatted frequently with Thomas A. Edison (“What wonders this beardless youth is producing!”) and in New York the inventor demonstrated to his new acquaintance from Hawaii how his phonograph worked. Gibson tested the device with “some philippics in Hawaiian of an opposition speech in our Hawaiian legislature” and found the reproduction startlingly faithful. He was also impressed by the electric lights beginning to illuminate the city, the “soft effulgent balls of starry radiance.” Nevertheless, when Edison spoke of more progress to come, Gibson mused (for benefit of his readers back home):

Famous head of man, I said, what wonders it is unfolding; but what progress is there for our human heart? If mankind won’t love one another any more, nor as much with the lightning speed and the lightning blaze, then better the slow coach and the smoking midnight oil, and love therewith.9

In New York he spoke also with Cyrus W. Field, promoter of the first successful trans-Atlantic cable, about Field’s proposal to link America with Asia via Hawaii. Gibson was more enthusiastic about this form of technological progress, which would be “the crowning act of our Archipelago’s prosperity.”10

His human heart responded more, however, to a series of conversations in Boston. He had gone there as chairman of a legislative committee chosen to oversee the design and erection of the statue of Kamehameha I. T. R. Gould, a prominent sculptor, had been recommended to Gibson, and after meeting the artist he was satisfied that Gould had the imagination and skill that the monument to Hawaiian nationalism demanded. Gibson commissioned him to draw up a design and to make plans for its execution.

After the rich satisfaction of envisioning with the sculptor how the past and future glory of the kingdom could be symbolized, Gibson turned his concerns to the dismal present, when
hundreds of native Hawaiians were suffering the lingering death of leprosy. He met Dr. N. B. Emerson, a Hawaii-born physician, who was about to return to the islands to serve at the Kalawao settlement, assuming one of the positions created by Gibson’s Finance Committee. Gibson was much impressed with the young doctor and felt satisfaction in having secured an unprecedentedly large appropriation for the leper colony.

He then headed south for another visit with his in-laws and old acquaintances in Georgia and South Carolina. Again, he mulled over the idea of recruiting hands from the rice fields and sugarcane plantations of the old Confederacy—not, this time, their white former masters—to serve on the plantations of Hawaii. When he returned to Hawaii toward the end of 1878, Gibson once more offered that suggestion, but nothing came of it. He was no longer interested in extending his own agricultural pursuits, content with his sheep ranch on Lanai, still under the capable management of Talula and Fred. He was settled in the capital, up to his neck in the life of politics.

Assemblyman Gibson had shown himself to be the staunchest supporter of Kalakaua, most zealous for the honor and prerogatives of the throne, and most ambitious for the kingdom; but still the king did not draw him into the inner circle that caroused and conferred with him. Like other holders of power in Hawaii, Kalakaua was cautious in embracing this volatile man. Gibson’s place as an outsider at the palace was clearly shown by the Moreno affair, which briefly monopolized the political stage in Hawaii.

In November 1879, the Chinese steamer Ho-Chung arrived in Honolulu. Among its passengers was an exceptional man, Celso Caesar Moreno, a naturalized American of Italian birth, about Gibson’s age, equally tall and well-spoken, also a master of languages and the art of persuasion. Although educated as an engineer, he too had bought a ship and sailed to Sumatra, where he courted (he said) the daughter of a sultan and also had gotten into trouble with the Dutch colonial administration.

Gibson watched in astonishment and with envy as his doppelgänger charmed his way into the poker parties and confidence of the king. Moreno was soon in direct competition, advocating the importation of more Chinese (on the ships of the Chinese Merchants’ Steam Navigation Company, which he represented) and
the installation of a Pacific cable by a group he headed, instead of by the Cyrus Field company, which Gibson favored. The U.S. minister in Hawaii, James Comly, reported to Washington in April 1880 that Moreno was "the inspiration under which His Majesty’s statemanship is developing," that "he has gained more influence with the King than his constitutional advisors." Alarmed, the Hawaii cabinet checked Moreno’s credentials in Washington and were able to demonstrate that the 1876 Congressional act that had given Moreno and others the right to land a trans-Pacific cable had expired and that President-elect Garfield disavowed the friendship claimed by Moreno.

Nevertheless, Kalakaua continued to smile on the rogue, and as the legislature of 1880 convened he ordered his supporters to back proposals put forth by his new favorite. If Moreno had only stayed in China, or gone back to Italy, or anywhere, Gibson would have thoroughly enjoyed the legislative session. Again, he was up front and at the center—writing the response to the king’s address, chairing the Finance Committee, sitting on the Health and Judiciary committees. At every opportunity he used his offices, and his informal but recognized leadership of the Hawaiian majority in the assembly, to exalt the monarchy. The Finance Committee voted additional funds for the Kamehameha statue, now being cast by Gould in Paris, and for the construction of the new Iolani Palace.

Gibson found Kalakaua quite receptive to the idea of staging a coronation ceremony at the palace on its completion. For his sovereign’s more immediate needs he successfully moved that the public treasury should pay off the $30,000 that Kalakaua owed to Spreckels. For the king’s future glory, another resolution, presented by Gibson and adopted over the opposition of most non-Hawaiian members, provided for the appointment of a Royal Hawaiian Commissioner to the States and People of Polynesia. A dream of empire—or as Gibson put it, of a “Primacy in the family of Polynesian States”—was planted in the receptive mind of the king. It would flourish with time.

Gibson’s unending supply of visions, notions, and proposals continued to attract and anger his fellow legislators. Who in favor of progress could say nay to his bills to improve the newly discovered artesian water supply of Honolulu, to develop newly desig-
nated Kapiolani Park in Waikiki, or to construct a marine railway to serve the growing number of merchant ships calling at Honolulu? But what sane man could support his proposal to tax the estates of wealthy decedents? The very idea offended puritans’ creed of social justice and threatened the capital accumulations they held vital to the nation’s prosperity—as well as their own. Fortunately, that bill was killed, though the others were enacted into law.\textsuperscript{12}

Having affronted all members of means, in hand or prospective, Gibson took direct aim at the rising young capitalist who presided over the assembly, Finance Minister Charles Reed Bishop. As Finance Committee chairman, Gibson presented a report criticizing Bishop for having loaned $250,000 in public funds to the Bank of Bishop & Co. without the authority of law. He now expanded the charge into a broad accusation: that the ministers and their political cronies among the missionary families and other established haole groups were a “ring” involved in conflicts of interest with their private businesses. A motion of no confidence in the government was introduced by Assemblyman John Kalua and was supported by Gibson.

As has been observed elsewhere, there is nothing more injurious to a country than the actions of a lot of people, who by priority of arrival try to preserve all the advantages from others, except to those who may toady to this special influence. The point and object of the resolution is directed against a certain ‘ring’ who continues to keep among themselves all these influences, positions, and emoluments.\textsuperscript{13}

Attorney General Preston replied in kind, calling Gibson a “political Ishmael,” who had opposed every cabinet since the death of Kamehameha V, whose pompous verbosity and exhibitionism was prolonging the legislative session to no purpose, and at a cost of at least $5,000. As in 1878, the no-confidence motion failed 32 to 10, and Gibson was no closer to attaining membership in the inner circle around the king. Or so it seemed.

Outside the legislature, Gibson basked in a wide popular approval that was exceptional for him. Not only did he, the familiar devil (in the opinion of downtown Honolulu), benefit by comparison with the outrageous Moreno, but he had finally written something in which everyone believed. This was the small book,
Sanitary Instructions for Hawaiians, that had been commissioned by the 1878 legislature. Even Whitney, the usually hostile editor of the Hawaiian Gazette, praised the work (though from force of habit he criticized the author for including irrelevant references to Malaysia and for having romantic notions of how well the benighted natives of Hawaii had lived before the Americans came). “The natives will find it eminently readable,” he wrote, “and we have no doubt that it will attract great and permanent interest. The author manifests an intimate acquaintance with the habits and peculiarities of Hawaiians, and knows how to reach their minds.”

Gibson’s work, printed in Hawaiian and English editions, was indeed a remarkable piece of writing, especially for one untrained in medicine. It was a lively compendium of social analysis, telling how the Hawaiians, in losing their culture, had also lost the diet, regimen, folk medicine, and relationship to nature that had formerly sustained them in vigorous health; it was also a practical handbook for the Hawaiians on how to survive in an environment radically changed beyond their control.

In clear, economical prose, utterly unlike the poesy of The Prison of Weltevreden or the bombast of his newspaper columns, Gibson described the germ theory of disease and the defense mechanisms of the body and gave straightforward instructions on how to avoid the major and minor plagues afflicting the Hawaiian population, from constipation to syphilis. The need for personal and communal cleanliness was emphasized and particularized. The body must be washed every day, including the private parts, which, he said, had become especially vulnerable to contagion when the missionaries halted the ancient Hawaiian practice of male circumcision, replacing it with “the gentler purification of the waters of baptism.” Houses must be kept clean, free of animals and vermin. Men must sleep apart from single women and in loose, cool, nightshirts, not in chafing malos or loincloths. Instructions for building and maintaining outdoor privies were detailed.

Women particularly were to be protected from disease. The imposition of voluminous, germ-gathering Western clothes, the sexual demands made of them because of the numerical excess of males, the substitution in many cases of indolence for the beneficial outdoor work of the old feudal society, all conspired to
make them vulnerable to disease. If the watchword of Kalakaua’s reign — “Ho‘oūlu Lāhui” (Increase the Nation)—was to be fulfilled, “every conception of every Hawaiian’s womb [must have] its complete development ... [and] every infant born of a Hawaiian mother ... due care and nourishment.” The nutritional superiority of taro, poi, seaweed, and other traditional foods over Western substitutes was praised, as Gibson drew upon his own experience with the healthful natural foods he was given in the prisons of Java.

The Sanitary Instructions were down-to-earth but not limited to material things alone. Young women, the potential mothers on whom the future of their race depended, were to be sustained in spirit as well as in body if they were to have the strength needed for clean marriage instead of contaminating licentiousness. Maidens must have their own sleeping room, apart from males.

Furthermore, the room that is set apart ... should be provided with many conveniences and comforts suited to the tastes of the female sex. There should be a small dressing table, and a mirror, with brush and comb, and even articles of ointment and perfumery, so that your daughter can take pleasure in arranging her toilet; because owing to the privacy, and these tasteful appliances, she will care for and respect her own person, and will make others respect her also.... O, Hawaiians, you must take care of your young women if you want your nation to live!15

Was all this too costly for the kanaka, as some haole readers might think? Nonsense! Forgoing tobacco, ‘ōkolehao and other spiritous liquors, eating their own poi and fruit instead of white bread and imported preserved foods, would save them enough to purchase these “tasteful appliances” as well as the soap, zinc wash pans, and other sanitary requirements he prescribed. Not much need be spent for Western medicines, given the ready availability of Hawaiian medicinal herbs, many of which Gibson listed, with instructions for their use.

Praise for the book would have been sweet reward for all the nights spent in writing it, but there came also sour disappointment to swallow. As legislative action continued in 1880, Gibson was again upstaged by the accursed Moreno, who persuaded Kalakaua to arrange for the introduction of bills favorable
to the adventurer. One would have granted a million-dollar bonus to Moreno’s company when it had a cable to Hawaii in operation. Others legalized the importation of opium for Chinese residents—an act regarded as a means for opening Honolulu as a world drug entrepôt—and authorized paying a subsidy to the Chinese company Moreno represented, whose ships would have carried the opium shipments. The cabinet opposed the measures, prompting Gibson to vote for them, though he was more vigorous in attacking the ministers than in supporting the bills.

The English-language press in Honolulu fulminated against the Moreno bills and decried the “open and wholesale bribery” by which support had been bought. All the suspect measures except the cable bill were passed by the legislature but, following an even louder public outcry, Kalakaua vetoed the opium bills, although he did sign another that somewhat eased restrictions on importing the drug.

Observers who thought that this time even the Merry Monarch would say “enough” and rid himself of the foreign schemer were again disappointed. On August 14, 1880, Kalakaua without notice dismissed his cabinet, prorogued the legislature, and installed a new set of ministers, headed by Celso Caesar Moreno, who had just been naturalized.

Gibson took to the sidelines and watched the storm gather. It was not for him to lead a protest against having a tall, bearded, grandiloquent, European-born sea captain, and veteran of Sumatra serve as the prime minister of Hawaii.

Mass meetings were hurriedly called to protest the appointment of a cabinet that U.S. Minister Comly described as being “grotesque in unfitness.” A gathering at Kaumakapili Church in Honolulu adopted a motion (offered by Sanford B. Dole, who was to become the first president of the Republic of Hawaii) holding that the appointment of Moreno, “a stranger and a foreign adventurer,” violated the principles of the constitution under which Kalakaua reigned. Another meeting, at the Bethel Church in Honolulu served by the Reverend Samuel C. Damon, was assembled on August 18. Before its motion of protest could be formulated, an announcement from the king was read to loud applause: “of his own volition” Kalakaua had dismissed Moreno and his cabinet. After remaining a few days to pack and regain his dignity, Moreno
sailed for the United States and then Europe. With him and under his tutelage went three Hawaiian boys of high-born families, to be educated in Italy as provided by an act of the legislature.  

Within several days of Moreno’s departure, Gibson finally was embraced for his devotion to the throne and its occupant. Kalakaua appointed him to the five-man Privy Council, which advised the king, and also to the Board of Health. Sanford Dole wrote to his brother on Kauai: “Gibson is put into everything; now that Moreno is away, Gibson’s persevering and humble bootlicking is producing fruit.... Kalakaua seems to be entirely given over to the devil.”

Gibson’s appointment to the Board of Health was considered to be a reward, not only for his unfailing support of the king but for his exposé in legislative reports of gross inadequacies of the department, hitherto administered solely by physicians. However, revelation of a conflict of interest removed Gibson from his place on the board almost as soon as he sat down. With glee, the Hawaiian Gazette reported that the sanctimonious Good Shepherd of Lanai had received advance payment for selling two thousand sheep to the board’s leper settlement, when everyone knew that the natives much preferred beef to mutton. Samuel Wilder, former minister of the interior and now serving on the Board of Health, while critical of the contract as less advantageous to the board than the one he previously had to supply beef, volunteered that the mutton sale was perfectly legal. Nevertheless, making no protest, Gibson resigned from the board.

The uproar over the mutton contract brought home to him how much he missed his own rostrum as a newspaper editor. He seized on an opportunity to buy control of the Pacific Commercial Advertiser under a deal with John Bush, new minister of the interior. In return for Gibson’s undertaking to “support the Hawaiian Government and its policy, and pursue a line of discussion in said newspaper best calculated to carry out the measures of His Majesty’s Government,” as well as to print its official notices and documents, Bush loaned Gibson $5,000 of public funds, one-third of the amount needed to purchase the Advertiser. In the same month of October 1880, Gibson also began publishing a small newspaper printed in Hawaiian, Ka Elele Poakolu (The Wednesday Messenger), this time with a Hawaiian editor. He now had two out-
lets for publicizing his ideas and himself. It was time to prepare for the next election of the legislature.

Early in 1881 Honolulu buzzed with talk about the king’s announcement that he was about to make a world tour. Since one ostensible purpose of the trip was to promote immigration agreements with Japan, British India, and certain governments of Southeast Asia, Gibson had reason to hope that he, the foremost advocate of such immigration, would be included in the royal party. It was decided, however, that Kalakaua would be accompanied by only two officials—his chamberlain, Charles Judd, and Attorney General William Armstrong, with the latter serving as commissioner of immigration during the journey. The consolation prize for Gibson was an award—the decoration of a Knight Companion in the Royal Order of Kalakaua. The list of awards, posted just before the January 20 sailing, also promoted Judd and Armstrong to superior ranks in the king’s honorary company. The badges of recognition were nicely graduated: Gibson was in, but just barely.

Undaunted, Editor Gibson continued to adjure his readers to unaltering support of their king and to supply them with enthusiastic accounts of the royal progress to Asia, Europe, and then the United States. Politically, Gibson limited his activities to attendance, in his role as privy councillor, at state ceremonials and balls to which he was invited by the regent, Princess Liliuokalani, the sister of Kalakaua. He gave no speeches. Rival editors were pleased: “The enlightener ... has evidently passed into eclipse.”

Eclipse, perhaps, but scarcely total. His Advertiser featured articles on public health, including Gibson’s reports on the smallpox epidemic of 1881, and carried installments of Sanitary Instructions for Hawaiians, by then in its second edition, to which Gibson had added a chapter on smallpox. His newspaper editorials continued to preach the need for caution in dealing with the United States: No cession of harbors or territory should be made to secure an extension of the reciprocity treaty. Rather than relying solely on the protection of America, Hawaii should seek from all the major powers a joint guarantee of the “perpetual neutrality” of the kingdom. To ensure its internal strength, the government should promote economic growth, as through the trans-Pacific cable link, and, above all, it must “promote the high, holy and patriotic purpose of the King—the increase of the people.”
During the political doldrums created by the long absence of Kalakaua, Gibson retreated to his home and family at Lahaina. There he polished for publication a short biography of Kamehameha I (“The Conqueror”)—written in English for the Advertiser, in Hawaiian for the Elele Poakolu—and a long, curious yarn “Lajos,” subtitled an “Original Story of Hungary and the Hawaiian Islands,” which required eleven installments in the Advertiser.

To enliven the times, and coincidentally to stimulate circulation and restore the advertising that had fallen off after he bought the Advertiser, Gibson started a new column in each of his newspapers. The Elele carried “Lies of the Week,” in which the editor responded to invidious gossip, real or invented, circulating about him, such as the story that Spreckels had financed his newspaper acquisitions. Greater response was provoked by his column in the Advertiser, “Street Talk.” Its gruesome columns pretended to be a series of reports by a fictitious doctor on the postmortem examinations he had just performed on prominent Honoluluians, usually persons still living, and the account of the “body-snatcher” was seldom flattering. Ribald comment, toward which the column sometimes veered, was especially repugnant to the taste of such persons as Sanford Dole, who complained that “no paper in Honolulu has ever been guilty of such a contemptible outrage,” and announced that he had cancelled his subscription to the Advertiser. Editor Gibson replied that Dole had not paid for his subscription anyway, and proceeded to blacken the pot.

And for lawyer Dole’s indignation—Well, he has been a candidate for one thing or another for several years past, and usually at the tail end of a canvass. Now he is getting ready to try again for a billet, and tries to play off this card of indignation.... Let him simmer down.23

When King Kalakaua and his party returned to Hawaii late in 1881, Gibson put aside his antic journalism and resumed his usual dignified mien. Solemnity was appropriate for his sudden role as defendant in the law courts. Within a week of his return with the king, Attorney General Armstrong arrested Gibson and charged him with libel for a statement in the Advertiser, printed during his absence. Gibson had written that it was “treason” for Armstrong, acting as the royal commissioner of immigration, to have told officials of nations visited by Kalakaua that the only immigrants Hawaii needed were plantation field hands, with no men-
tion of the independent farmers and artisans who Gibson deemed were needed to invigorate both the Hawaiian race and also the political economy of the kingdom. 24

While Armstrong’s complaint was still pending (ultimately he withdrew it after the editor apologized), Gibson was threatened by another legal action. H. A. P. Carter, the new minister of the interior, sought to recover the government funds advanced by his predecessor John Bush to Gibson for buying the Advertiser. During the past year the newspaper had partially fulfilled its contract by printing government documents to the value of $2,000, but Carter demanded repayment of the $3,000 balance. Attorney General Armstrong, reportedly of a mind to press criminal charges for “corrupt bargaining,” 25 finally accepted a cash payment to close the case, despite strong urging from the opposition newspapers to put the rascal in jail and not let him take refuge from the law behind the person of the king.

Undeterred, Gibson prepared for the legislative elections of 1882, seeking a third term in the assembly. He moved back to Honolulu and had his name placed on each of the fifteen electoral tickets being circulated on Oahu. Formal political parties did not yet exist, but one ticket was generally understood to have the backing of the king. It consisted of three Hawaiian candidates and Gibson. Another ticket included the only other haole running from Honolulu, Joseph O. Carter, elder brother of Gibson’s political opponent H. A. P. Carter. The contest of the two haoles—Gibson, widely regarded by the Americans as a renegade from his people and class, versus Carter, a representative of the plantationbusiness community—dominated the election.

During the campaign, Gibson used his English and Hawaiian newspapers to attack the ministry for its incompetence and for its failure to advance the national imperatives enunciated by Kalakaua (or by Gibson on his behalf). The imperatives were the political independence of the kingdom and Ho’o‘ulu Lāhui, the increase of the nation. Gibson reminded the voters of Honolulu, not nearly as strongly Hawaiian in composition as his constituency on Maui but still with a majority of native voters, how long he had labored for them with love, to improve their health, to assure their survival as a race, and to safeguard the dignity of their king.

His antagonists saw in the election campaign their great
opportunity to unmask this charlatan, this master of humbug, this demagogue before the natives. A rising publicist, Thomas G. Thrum, was commissioned to pull together the evidence that would on election day blow Gibson out of the water. Thrum collated all that he could gather of the man’s dubious past: gun-running on the Flirt, imprisonment on Java, fiddling in Washington with the papers in his claim against the Dutch, entering Hawaii as a covert Mormon, land-grabbing as a High Priest of Melchizedek, yoking Hawaiians to the plow, being excommunicated by the Church of the Latter-Day Saints but keeping their Lanai lands, and promulgating dangerous thoughts on Hawaii’s political primacy in the Pacific. The intended bombshell was distributed under the title, heavy in irony, The Shepherd Saint of Lanai. Hundreds of copies of the pamphlet were circulated, and on election day in January 1882 the numerous political enemies of Gibson looked to see how high he had been blown by the bomb.

But it never went off, for they had neglected to have the booklet translated into Hawaiian, and so it went almost unread by the electorate it was intended to inflame. Drawing on his fifteen tickets, Gibson received 1,153 out of 1,451 votes legally cast—four times the number going to Carter—placing him at the top of the election poll. Throughout the kingdom, three haoles were elected to the assembly, and Gibson was the only one from the capital. The election results were clear: the Hawaiian contingent had triumphed, and Gibson was its leader. He was the man of the hour. How much longer could Kalakaua continue to hold him at arm’s length?

Gratifying the Longings of an Ardent Heart

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Gibson could anticipate with pleasure the legislative meeting of 1882. The wily old fox, as the opposition newspapers were now calling him (as well as evil genius, king’s evil angel, Machiavelli of Hawaii, royal political manipulator, and so on and on) had consolidated his base in the capital. His electoral triumph at the head of the majority Hawaiian faction, his adroitness in parliamentary maneuver, his steadfast record as loyal supporter of the Crown, all gave him a paramount claim to leadership within the government. And the king needed him. By 1882 Kalakaua had been on the throne long enough to cast off the restraints that factional opposition to his election, especially by the partisans of Queen Emma, had initially imposed upon him. His recent world travels had whetted his appetite for proper kingship. The new Iolani Palace was nearing completion and his approaching coronation was to be resplendent, but the Merry Monarch was daily reminded of the tininess of his realm and of his limited powers within it.

The recent elections had also shown the narrow political base of the merchant-planter group that held economic ascendancy. The all-haole ministry Kalakaua had felt obliged to appoint in September 1880—nominally led by an English businessman, William L. Green, but dominated by Gibson’s antagonist H. A. P. Carter, then minister of the interior—was vulnerable. Many Hawaiian voters blamed it for failure to check a virulent smallpox epidemic in 1881, which speeded the continuing decline of the native population. The planters were unhappy about the government’s failure to effect a more adequate program to bring in plantation laborers. Merchants and other big taxpayers were dis-
appointed by the inability of a conservative cabinet to hold down government expenditures, especially the scandalously large sums being spent for the new palace, all tending in their view to feed the vanity and disquieting ambition of a self-indulgent king, a merely ceremonial figure in their view of the political order.

Shortly before the Legislature of 1882 convened, Gibson addressed the congregation of a new church in Manoa Valley, Honolulu, most of them native Hawaiians, to congratulate them on their political acumen.

The Hawaiian has decided political aptitudes and among the recreations he has acquired as a civilized man, there is none dearer than a political discussion; a talk pili aupuni; about government affairs.²

This tone of address was quite different from one he had adopted a few years earlier, prior to his first election, when after assuring his Hawaiian audience of his love for them, Gibson went on to say:

... if you were to thrust upon me the duties of a representative, one of my first acts would be to urge a doubling of a tax upon your worthless dogs and horses which you prize so much, even more than the life of your race.³

Thus he spoke to his Hawaiian constituents, sometimes with love and admiration, sometimes as a stern preacher, but always with emotion and strong ethical and racial appeals. None of his political rivals among the haole population, even those few who could match Gibson’s ability to speak Hawaiian, were able to orate so persuasively.⁴

When the Legislative Assembly met at the end of April 1882, Gibson resumed his chairmanship of the Finance Committee and his place on the committee dealing with sanitation and public health problems. He presented the legislature’s reply to the message from the throne, adding to the bland, formal response a hope that the journey then being undertaken to Portugal by H. A. P. Carter to negotiate an agreement for the emigration of more workers for Hawaii’s fields would prove to be worth its considerable expense to the government. Immigration of races “cognate” to the Hawaiian, he again reminded the Assemblymen and Nobles, was in the greater interest of the kingdom.⁵
Gibson steered through his committee an array of appropriations calculated to please Kalakaua and to extract howls of anger from the opposition press: $148,000 for support of the royal family (including payment of bills from the royal world tour); $47,500 for completing and furnishing Iolani Palace; $15,000 for the royal stables; $72,300 to equip the King’s Guard and the Royal Hawaiian Band, as well as $20,000 for their arms, instruments, and accoutrements; and $30,000 for the coronation. To salt the wounds of bleeding haole taxpayers, Gibson recommended that $10,000 be appropriated for a Board of Genealogy of Hawaiian Chiefs, $1,200 for a feather cloak, and $200 for portraits of the late King Lunalilo and his mother, Kekauluohi. The last three items Gibson had purchased for those sums at public auction in order to keep them from going the way of other Hawaiian artifacts being acquired by museums in Berlin and London.

Such expenditures were picayune, however, in the concerns of the sugar planters. Their attention was firmly fixed on the reciprocity treaty under which they were prospering and which soon would have to be extended by the American government. With growing apprehension they watched the ineffectiveness of the Green ministry in lining up votes of the U.S. Senate in Washington or even in gaining dependable support from the assembly in Honolulu, where fears of annexation were again being raised-most loudly by Gibson. Their mutual concerns moved the planters and the sugar factors to organize the Planters’ Labor and Supply Company to represent their common interests. Several of its trustees gathered to discuss the weakness of the Green cabinet, given the protracted absence in Europe of H. A. P. Carter, its most effective member. They resolved to advise the king that a new ministry must be appointed. Green wrote to Carter:

Things have got a little mixed.... I understand that the Planters’ Association ... don’t feel satisfied the way things are going and considered that it was incumbent upon them to arrange a new ministry as the present one was not American enough and not prepared to yield to such demands of the Americans as they might require in negotiating a new Reciprocity Treaty.6

To make their preference more acceptable to Kalakaua, and to assure support of the treaty by the Legislative Assembly, the
planters risked a gamble. They approached Gibson to ascertain if he would serve in the cabinet—under certain conditions never made public but presumably including his promise to cease inflating the political ambitions of the king—along with “three highly respectable American-born gentlemen” known to support reciprocity. Gibson, who had recently refused Green’s offer to buy him off with an appointment as the salaried head of the Board of Health, realized how strong his political advantage was and said no. Before the planters could put their slate in order, Green, finding himself opposed by “the strongest organization ever yet formed amongst the foreign community,” confounded them by resigning with his cabinet.

The following day, May 20, 1882, before the rumor mills of Honolulu could begin to grind, Kalakaua appointed a new government. It was headed by Walter Murray Gibson as prime minister and minister for foreign affairs and included Simon K. Kaai as interior minister, John Bush (part-Hawaiian) as finance minister, and Edward Preston (an experienced trial lawyer from Australia) as attorney general. Except for Gibson, all had served in previous cabinets. In varying degrees all were committed to Hawaiian nationalism, that is, support of the monarch against “foreign” influence, and expansion of Hawaii’s political sphere in the Pacific.

The planters’ gamble in bringing down the conservative Green ministry had failed disastrously. By giving Kalakaua an opening to select a cabinet of his own liking, they had inadvertently hastened a showdown in Hawaii’s politics, one that would ultimately lead to revolution, overthrow of the monarchy, and annexation of the islands by the United States. The immediate result of their botched attempt at cabinet-making was to bring to power the one man they most feared and hated, that sly old renegade, that wily old fox, Gibson.

Busy with moving into his new offices and picking up the ministerial reins, Gibson had to postpone any immediate expression of the satisfaction that had welled up when Kalakaua told him of his elevation to the pinnacle of authority under the king. But that night a torchlight parade of well-wishers created a setting in which to rejoice. Starting at Engine House No. 2 on Union Street, scores of torch bearers, accompanied by the Royal Hawaiian Band, set off for the old palace, gathering marchers as the music echoed
through the streets of downtown Honolulu. At the palace the growing throng paused to give three cheers for Kalakaua, then marched across King Street to Halaaniani (waving pandanus), the new Gibson residence next to the Music Hall, conveniently located across the plaza from the new Iolani Palace. More cheers brought the prime minister out on the lanai of his home to greet his supporters, predominantly Hawaiians, and to view the banners they carried: “Ka Aha Kuhina Kuokoa” (The Independent Ministry); “Na Hookele Pomaikai o Hawaii” (The Advisors Who Will Benefit Hawaii); “Equal Rights at Last.” Kipikona thanked them:

It is now 21 years ago since I arrived in this Kingdom, and this is the proudest and happiest day in all that lengthened period, when I receive such a congratulation from the people on my elevation to a great trust. Your torches that now illuminate my premises, lighten up and brighten a pathway of promise before me.... I come before you, my friends, with my heart in my politics, and I feel that you have given me yours. I shall faithfully strive to continue to deserve your trust.8

Addresses by Bush and Kaai, first in Hawaiian and then in English, concluded the serenade. Champagne and other refreshments were enjoyed, after which the crowd departed, led by the band playing “Sweet Leilehua.” Gibson thanked his new colleagues and then retired to celebrate privately with Talula and Fred Hay-selden, who also had business to discuss with his father-in-law. Gibson was relinquishing direction of the Pacific Commercial Advertiser, and Fred was to assume part of the managerial duties.

When the legislature reconvened, Gibson appeared in it as a member of the House of Nobles, ex-officio, as prime minister. His opening statement blended assurances of continuity of policy with disquieting indications of change. The “great importance of our Treaty of Reciprocity with the United States” was recognized (general applause), but the nation must in all prudence prepare for “the contingency of its abrogation” (silence from the opposition). Immigration to repopulate the kingdom must be sought (loud applause), but by families of races “who we may hope will assimilate with the chief population of this Archipelago” (diminuendo). Liberal expenditures for postal service, highways, harbors, cable communication and ocean steamship service would be
The question of a massive loan had threatened the quiet repose of the kingdom’s business community since the last election, when many of the Hawaiian faction—though not including Gibson—had promised to vote for a $10 million loan to pay for all the wharves, piers, roads, bridges, water systems, public markets, and other improvements they had promised to their constituents. As Finance Committee chairman, Gibson had kept the issue out of sight, but as premier he boldly put it on the table. The amount of the proposed borrowing was reduced from ten to two million, but even that was double what the government collected in a year as its entire revenue. Outraged the fiscal conservatives might have been, but they were also outvoted. On that issue, on every issue—including all the appropriations for glorifying the monarchy, the repeal of the statute prohibiting the purchase of liquor by native Hawaiians, and a wide range of public improvements—Gibson gained legislative approval. His command over the machinery of government was established.

Resolutions condemning the government’s fiscal irresponsibility were introduced daily; the opposition press fulminated over the extravagance of what Sanford Dole called a “turkey cabinet” for its gobbling up of public funds. Concerns of the planters and their commercial agencies over budget deficits were overwhelmed, however, by the disquieting revelation that Gibson was about to use his parliamentary authority on behalf of their arch-rival, Claus Spreckels, head of the California sugar trust—with the complicity and probably on the instruction of Kalakaua. The Gibson government proposed to grant Spreckels a large area of land on Maui, providing him with the base he had been seeking for the expansion in Hawaii of his already formidable sugar empire.

Since obtaining water rights from the government in 1878, Spreckels had been giving considerable attention and funds to his sugar enterprise on Maui. He had brought in engineers to supervise construction of a costly irrigation system, carrying the waters from the lower slopes of Haleakala to the dry plains of central Maui. Spreckelsville, a modern sugar-mill town, was under construction, to be fitted with the most efficient milling equipment and illuminated, years before Iolani Palace, with electricity, gener-
ated by burning the dried residue of the cane stalks. Millions of dollars produced by Spreckels’ Hawaiian Commercial and Sugar Company (home office in San Francisco) would be spent to make the Maui lands the most productive cane fields in the world.\(^{10}\)

First, however, Spreckels had to secure his hold on the land. He had purchased a half-interest in 16,000 acres of the semi-arid Wailuku Commons in central Maui to round out the larger spread of government lands he had leased there in 1878. But a leasehold was insufficient to assure to Spreckels the rising stream of profits he expected from the Maui plantation. Ownership in fee simple, allowed by Hawaii law since the Great Mahele of 1848, was the only way of making certain his hold on his land base.

The workings of the Mahele gave an alert manipulator a way of getting the necessary land title at a low cost. When the American advisers of Kamehameha III designed the Mahele, whereby the Anglo-American system of private ownership of land displaced the traditional feudal tenure of the Hawaiians, they had counseled the king to retain for the Crown an estate of approximately one-quarter of the four million acres in the Hawaiian islands. Both Kamehameha III and Kamehameha IV had dealt with these Crown lands, as they later came to be called, as though the monarch owned them personally, but the Hawaii Supreme Court in 1864 decided that these lands were held in trust for the support of the continuing line of Hawaiian kings and thus were inalienable.\(^{11}\)

Nevertheless, Princess Ruth Keelikolani, a high chieffess, claimed that as a half-sister of both Kamehameha III and Kamehameha IV she held a half-interest in all Crown lands, estimated then to have a value of about $1,500,000. In 1880 the princess, who spoke little English and cared less for the ways of the haole—and who had pressing debts—sold her claim on the title to the Crown lands to Claus Spreckels for $10,000. Although the decision of the Hawaii Supreme Court seemed to negate any claim Princess Ruth might have had to a vendable title, Spreckels obtained legal opinions to the contrary from three private attorneys in Honolulu, including that of Edward Preston, written a few months before he was sworn in as attorney general. Preston reasoned that by 1864 the right of the princess to a half-interest in the Crown lands had already vested and that “the decision of the Supreme Court and the law [an 1865 statute confirming that decision] declaring these
lands inalienable are inoperative and void against Mr. Spreckels’ grantor.” If Preston as attorney general could successfully defend his opinion as private counsel, Spreckels’ $10,000 investment would be worth some $750,000.

It was not the intention of the sugar king, however, to seek enforcement of the deed he held. Aside from any concerns about the unconscionableness of this transaction with Princess Ruth, which would not have much troubled him, Spreckels needed to gain title to his Maui lands quickly if he were to protect his multimillion-dollar investment there. Litigation could stretch out for years, and even an attorney general could be wrong on how the law would be decided.

Instead, Spreckels used his $10,000 deed to persuade his old friend Kalakaua and his new prime minister Gibson to use their authority on his behalf. He was, after all, in the process of creating the largest sugar plantation in Hawaii, a major addition to the islands’ economy. And he did have legal opinions—not only from Preston but also from W. R. Castle and A. S. Hart well, former attorneys-general both and men politically allied with the planters’ group—that the deed gave Spreckels a half-interest in all Crown lands, the patrimony of the sovereigns. Gibson, said the opposition press, was newly obligated to Spreckels for a loan of $37,000 at low interest needed by Gibson to pay off the mortgage on his Lanai sheep ranch.

On July 11, 1882, Prime Minister Gibson gave notice to the legislature that the government would introduce a bill to authorize the conveyance to Spreckels of a certain tract in satisfaction of all claims he may have on the Crown lands. The following week the measure was advanced by Attorney General Preston. He stressed the difficulty of establishing that the deed held by Spreckels was invalid and the reasonableness of compromising the claim. Under the bill, he revealed, the California capitalist would be granted in fee simple the *ahupua’a* (major land division) of Wailuku, consisting of some 24,000 acres in central Maui, the very area he had under lease and which the Spreckels irrigation ditch and the Spreckelsville mill could best serve. Minister of the Interior Kaai moved that the bill be put first in the legislature’s order of business.

Opposition members rose to protest. Assemblyman George
Washington Pilipo, the “Lion of North Kona,” staunch partisan of Queen Emma, moved for indefinite postponement of the proposed statute.

This is not a matter that will please the Hawaiian people. It really has no business before this Assembly. It should be considered in the courts.... Who is the cause of this? The person who is agent [Interior Minister Kaai] for a high chiefess of this kingdom. What are we to think of such a native Hawaiian, the same color as myself, whose duty is to watch over and protect the interests of the country? ... and [Gibson] the Minister of Foreign Affairs, ... a man whose mouth is full of aloha for Hawaiians, but whose actions are not? We must consider what a man does, and not what he says. This measure, of which rumors have been heard, has now assumed a definite shape. I hope that it will be indefinitely postponed. I think that taking crown lands away from the crown and giving them to another person is a step toward destroying the independence of the country....

The Minister [Gibson] knocks at the door of the Members of this House and asks them to join him at lunch at his home. I am informed that he said to those present that a conciliatory policy was best, that it is better to give this small tract of crown land to prevent trouble. Where will this trouble come from? Do not our Courts give just decisions?

The Ministers are frightened.... Where is the danger? Is it from Great Britain, from Germany or the United States? No! It is from one man—a merchant.... Perhaps one or two, or three or more of the Ministry are in the clutches of this man. Perhaps he holds their papers. If this bill pass, it will relieve them.... It may be that the Ministry are doing what they are told to do by a higher power. Is it the King? What is the matter with the King? Is he in the power of the same man?15

Debate continued for the rest of the day in a similarly uninhibited manner. The bill became a test of confidence in the new Gibson ministry, and in the king. Both factions within the legislature—the “palace party” headed by Gibson and the opposition—were divided on the measure. Hawaiian members besides Pilipo were angered by the alienation of Crown lands, but others loyally supported the king in making the deal he favored. Opponents of Gibson, who on other issues would gladly have voted his cabinet down and out, had other considerations in casting
their votes. One was the influence of Spreckels in Washington, thought to be significant. The extension of the reciprocity treaty was soon to be considered by the U.S. Senate and a Spreckels with a large stake in Hawaiian sugar was more likely to lobby for its ratification than a Spreckels rebuffed by the legislature. Further, establishing the alienability of Crown lands was a first step toward placing all those lands—or at any rate the valuable portions thereof—in private ownership, where they could generate profits and tax revenues.

A motion to postpone indefinitely consideration of the land bill lost, 30 to 8, and the measure then passed. All who voted “nay” on final passage were Hawaiians. The next day, July 21, Kalakaua signed the bill into law and then appointed Gibson and Preston to vacancies in the commission that supervised the Crown lands and that was now to execute transfer of the Maui acreage to Spreckels.

If the haole legislators who voted for the land deal were satisfied with the outcome, the Honolulu newspapers that usually supported them were not. The Gazette lamented that “the representatives were captured with feeding and with offices; 24,000 acres of crown land were given away by the treacherous legislature.” As the assembly adjourned, the paper summed up its record: “The only thing that the legislature of 1882 maybe handed down ... to history is a voracious appetite; it attended about a dozen luaus besides other forms of free amusement.... Adieu, Legislature of Many Luaus!”

The hostility of the planters and their political allies toward Gibson and his nationalist ministry was soon orchestrated into public protest. In mid-October the trustees of the recently organized Planters’ Labor and Supply Company met in Honolulu to rehearse their grievances against the Gibson government: legalizing the sale of liquor to natives; failure to bring more laborers from Portugal; hostility toward themselves, “the representatives of the greatest if not the only source of revenue”; and the encouragement of an “irresponsible course on the part of the King” in assuming autocratic powers. A plenary meeting of the company, held October 16, 1882, appointed a Committee of Nine, including heads of the largest sugar enterprises, to impress upon the king the urgency of replacing his ministers with men in whom
“the monied classes” had confidence. They urged Kalakaua to give “the views and wishes of the planters ... careful consideration ... which is due the large interest of those whom we represent.”

The following week the planters arranged for a general protest, intended to demonstrate how widespread among the adult male population was the opposition to Gibson and his government. G. W. Pilipo was brought from his home on the island of Hawaii to address a well-advertised public meeting at the large Kawaiahao Church on King Street, whose minister, the Reverend Henry H. Parker, was an outspoken critic of the prime minister. Accounts of the size and enthusiasm of the meeting differ, but they agree that the Lion of Kona led a denunciation of the Gibson government that culminated in the adoption of two resolutions: that the alienation of Crown lands, extravagance of spending, and contempt for the judiciary had caused “all classes of his Majesty’s subjects” to lose confidence in the government; that the king was requested to dismiss Gibson and his associates. The resolutions were presented to Kalakaua by a Committee of Thirteen. The ten persons who signed the protests included Pilipo and four other Hawaiians and an equal number of Americans, including three who were later to help topple the monarchy.

Kalakaua referred both the protest of the Planters’ Committee of Nine and the resolutions of the Kawaiahao Committee of Thirteen to his prime minister. Gibson, not one to miss an opportunity to twit the opposition, wrote to the Committee of Thirteen in Hawaiian, a flourish he well knew would anger most of its haole members. To the sugar barons on the Committee of Nine he responded in the most formal English. In each case the reply was firmly dismissive. The legislation complained about, he said, was the product of the Legislative Assembly and the House of Nobles, not of the cabinet. The constitution provided the protesters with a proper means of changing government policy (that is, through the election process), but it did not give any group, however great their interest, the privilege of selecting advisers to the king.

That ended the planters’ protest movement, but it was only the beginning of their implacable opposition to Gibson and to a new alignment of power in the kingdom. The stinging insult to them and to their adherents went deep and was never forgotten. Gibson had made enemies to last him the rest of his life.

The Maui land deal clearly showed the formation of a potent
triumvirate: Kalakaua, Spreckels, and Gibson. Each had a different vision—the Hawaiian king to be a splendid monarch in his new palace, the sugar king to develop his Hawaii economic base to gratifying levels of profits, the prime minister to find glory and the undying love of his “red-skinned” brothers by leading them to a splendid renaissance and to power in the Pacific Ocean. Within this triumvirate, which was to dominate the political economy of Hawaii for five more years, Kalakaua gave monarchical legitimacy, Spreckels provided the lubricating finances, and Gibson supplied the political genius of leadership and manipulation.

It was now time to enhance the prestige of the king. With gusto, Kipikona, as chairman of the Privy Council’s committee charged with arranging for the coronation of King Kalakaua and Queen Kapiolani, took up the task of creating the proper theatrical effects. To provide a stage for the investiture, he ordered the construction of a pavilion before newly completed Iolani Palace, to be linked by a long wooden passageway to its spacious lanai. Surrounding the pavilion was a covered grandstand to provide seating for several thousand guests, invited to represent other kingdoms and republics throughout the world, as well as each major island in the Hawaiian Kingdom. The statue of Kamehameha the Great, handsome in bronze and gold, was placed on its pedestal across King Street from the palace and readied for the unveiling. Orders were given to the King’s Guard and to the Royal Hawaiian Band. Luaus, balls, receptions, dinners, fireworks, and horse races were arranged. Thousands of invitations were sent out.

Their Majesties were crowned on February 12, 1883, the ninth anniversary of Kalakaua’s ascension to the throne. Gibson had selected with care his seat for the ceremony—close enough on the lanai of the palace for an unimpeded view of the pavilion where the ceremony was to be held, not so close as to seem intrusive on the royal pageantry he had arranged. He sat erect in black court costume, on his breast the Order of Kalakaua, Knight Commander. Next to him sat Talula Hayselden, clad in a rich silver brocade court gown. As they awaited the entrance of the royal couple, Gibson could savor the occasion, his triumph as well as the king’s. Their position in the first rank measured the social distance through which they had come, father and daughter, since the disgrace of their expulsion by the Mormons, since their struggle to wrest a living from the arid lands of Lanai. How sweet
it was to survey the notables about them, in less-favored seats! The prime minister was amused to observe that those who had been most vehement in protesting the cost and childishness of this celebration—legislators, planters, newspaper editors, substantial businessmen—had not been able to stay away. The resplendent spectacle was too good to be missed.

It began before noon, when the royal party emerged from Iolani Palace and walked into the pavilion as a choir sang “Almighty Father, Hear! The Isles Do Wait on Thee.” The royal marshall then recited the genealogy, titles, and style of Kalakaua, and declared his accession. Then the king was invested with the many emblems, both European and Polynesian, of his exalted office. From the Princess Poomaikelani he received a kapu stick, an ornamental whale’s tooth suspended from a necklace of human hair; and a kahili, a tall feathered standard, the ancient insigne of chiefs. After the chancellor, Chief Justice A. F. Judd, administered the oath to the king, he placed in his hands the sword of state, “Ensign of Justice and Mercy.” Then Princess Kekaulike brought forward a magnificent feather cloak, handed down from Kamehameha I, and placed it on the king’s shoulders as the “Ensign of Knowledge and Wisdom.” Next, the chancellor placed a jeweled ring, “Ensign of Kingly Dignity,” on the fourth finger of the monarch’s right hand, into which was then placed the scepter, “Ensign of Kingly Power and Justice.”

The climax of the Euro-Polynesian ceremony came as Prince David Kawanananakoa stepped forward bearing the royal crowns, while the choir sang “Almighty Father! We Do Bring Gold and Gems for the King.” Godfrey Rhodes, president of the Legislative Assembly, took the king’s crown, raised it high before the audience and handed it to the chancellor, who gave it over to the king, saying “Receive this Crown of pure gold to adorn the high station wherein thou hast been placed.” The king held up the crown, then placed it on his own head. The second crown was given to Kalakaua, who set it on Kapiolani’s brow, saying, “I place this Crown upon your head, to share the honors of my throne.” Both knelt while the household chaplain, the Reverend Alexander Mackintosh, offered up a prayer. As the choir sang the anthem “Cry Out O Isles with Joy!,” the shore battery fired a salvo, answered by salutes from the American, French, and British men-of-war in Honolulu Harbor.26 Watching the company slowly dis-

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perse, Gibson could be content that the spectacle he had created had gone off uncommonly well.

Two days later the prime minister made a long and eloquent oration at the unveiling of the Kamehameha I statue.\textsuperscript{27} He spoke in praise of the Conqueror of the Islands, the giver of the Law of the Splintered Paddle, which protected the helpless from the unauthorized violence of the strong. He held up the Napoleon of the Pacific as an inspiration to his people. “May the race of the great hero be preserved. May the Hawaiians be roused to a devotion to the nationality founded by the Conqueror.”\textsuperscript{28}

Despite the journalistic abuse that had been heaped upon the idea of preserving the image of an old “barbarian chief,” the unveiling went off without difficulty. So did the formal luncheon that followed—until Minister Kaai, “preferring gin and poi to the champagne and salad [provided], became so noisy over his disappointment that the company thought it advisable to adjourn.”\textsuperscript{29} The next day Kaai was replaced in the cabinet by another Hawaiian, John Kapena, recently ambassador to Japan. Kapena had proposed the toast (in champagne) to Kalakaua at the luncheon.

The quality, as well as the cost, of the elaborate coronation calendar offended those antimonarchists who valued a dollar and abhorred old pagan ways. Charles Bishop considered that the coronation would not advance but would diminish the dignity of the king and the credit of the nation. The \textit{Gazette}, blaming the “pliant tongue” and unflagging persistence of Gibson for the “absurd scheme,” was expecting, even after the theatrical triumph of the coronation, to hear a “ripple of laughter” from more sophisticated capitals across the seas.\textsuperscript{30} A new journal of the Planters’ Company asserted that “the so-called Coronation of the King, with the attendant follies and extravagances, has been directly damaging to the property interests and the welfare of the country.”\textsuperscript{31}

Squandering of tax money aside, what most affronted many descendants of the missionaries were the hula dances exhibited to guests at coronation luaus. Kalakaua, the Merry Monarch, had personally encouraged the revival of the old dances, thought to be banished forever under the missionaries’ threat of hellfire and brimstone. For the king’s pleasure (and the equally pleasurable discomfiture of any puritans present) Gibson had arranged for nightly displays on the palace grounds of the hula, dances he respected as expressions of an Hawaiian culture

\textit{In Phaethon’s Chariot}
threatened with extirpation. An elaborate hula program was presented before some five thousand persons attending the final coronation luau. Soon after the guests had dispersed, action was brought in the Police Court of Honolulu against Robert Grieve and William Auld for having printed obscene material—the souvenir program from the luau that described the hula, illustrated with sketches of well-clad dancers. Both men were found guilty, despite their plea that they had merely fulfilled a government printing contract, the bill to be sent to Walter Murray Gibson, chairman of the Coronation Committee. Each was fined $15. On appeal, an intermediary court dismissed the charge against Grieve. Auld’s fine was paid by W. R. Castle of the Planters’ Company, and he did not appeal.32

The two-week-long coronation party was over and the battle lines were clearly drawn. On the attack was the palace faction, ceremonially headed by Kalakaua Rex, used by Spreckels, and directed by Gibson. Behind them was the majority of Hawaiian voters and their representatives in the government, plus a small number of haoles supporting them for a variety of reasons, such as economic linkage to the government or to Spreckels, romantic attachment to the kingdom, and dislike of the planters and the missionaries. The palace faction had the votes and, in the person of Gibson, adroitness in using the political process. Spreckels’ money could help, when its crude use was not an embarrassment to the government.

The defense was made up of planters, commercial managers, missionary “cousins,” loyal adherents of the passed-over Queen Emma, and some of the old chiefly families that were linked by intermarriage or had made common political cause with the ascendant haoles. This side had the money—not individually as much as Spreckels but more collectively, and all concentrated in Hawaii. It had H. A. P. Carter, Samuel Wilder, and a few other effective, experienced political leaders, as well as a few smart young lawyers, notably Sanford Dole, Lorrin Thurston, and Clarence Ashford, who were improving their political skills. And they in the opposition party were beginning to harden their determination to regain control over the constitutional monarch, a firming of will that more nearly matched the determination of Gibson that the king, as represented by his prime minister, would truly rule.
THE summer of 1883 gave Gibson the opportunity to try his hand at directing the affairs of virtually every department in the Hawaiian government. As premier, he served as minister of foreign affairs. After the resignation of Edward Preston in mid-year, Gibson, who had experienced the law only as a defendant, substituted as attorney general. When, soon thereafter, John Bush was ousted from the cabinet for “flagrant irregularities” in awarding public works contracts, Gibson temporarily took over the Department of the Interior as well. That left only John Kapena, the minister of finance, to serve in the cabinet with Gibson. “Pooh Bah,” “Minister of Everything,” the newspaper editors were later to call him, after the new Gilbert and Sullivan role.

Between meetings of the Privy Council, of the House of Nobles, the Commission on Crown Lands, and the Board of Immigration, the protean prime minister might be found visiting schools or hospitals in his added capacity as president of the Board of Education and Board of Health. His indefatigable performance compelled respect even from some who expected, and wished, his government to fall.

In this vein, Thomas Rain Walker, British consul in Honolulu, wrote to Sanford Dole at the end of September 1883: “It is months since we thought that each tomorrow would see our friend Gibson tumble from the premiership of the Pacific; and now really the octopus-like manner in which he hangs on to his various appointments is beginning to inspire me with admiration; he is a remarkable man.”

An action early in Gibson’s ministry demonstrated to the planters and to the diplomatic corps that he would use the authority
of his many offices. Under preceding administrations (despite the public objections of Editor Whitney and others in the haole community) those engaged in bringing in field hands for the sugar and rice plantations had become accustomed to importing their human cargo in such numbers and in such manner as they pleased. During a span of six weeks during mid-1883, seven steamers discharged in Honolulu some 3,400 Chinese males from Hong Kong. One vessel, the British merchantman *Madras*, had smallpox victims aboard, threatening Hawaii with yet another outbreak of the scourge experienced only two years earlier. As president of the Board of Health, Gibson ordered guard ships out to the *Madras*, anchored off port, to ensure that no one went ashore before being examined. When the *Madras* moved into the inner harbor without permission and after an inspection of her log showed that the desperate passengers had attempted to throw two sick persons overboard the day before reaching Honolulu, the guard was doubled.\(^3\)

For a month the *Madras* lay off shore, while the British consular officers demanded that the passengers be allowed to land, even if under quarantine. Gibson, with no adequate hospital facilities available anywhere (and determined to show that the government was assuming charge of immigrant labor), refused to grant permission. At length the *Madras* departed, taking her passengers but leaving a bond to ensure payment of port charges levied against her. Gibson went to the Hawaii Supreme Court, this time as plaintiff, demanding damages of several thousand dollars to reimburse the Health Board for the expense of guarding the vessel. The court, while reducing the amount awarded to $1,742 (covering one week’s surveillance), agreed that Gibson’s action had been necessary to safeguard the public health of the kingdom.\(^4\)

For the time being the importation of Chinese laborers from Hong Kong was stopped, though several hundred came in from San Francisco. When the Planters’ Labor and Supply Company protested that they required a larger influx of field workers, Gibson replied that immigration could no longer be left to their private arrangements with overseas agents but must be controlled by the government.

More excitement over the *Madras* case was raised by accusations, reportedly made by local merchants arranging some of the immigration from Hong Kong and eagerly passed on by the
Honolulu Daily Bulletin, that a toll of $5 per Chinese passenger had been illegally collected by agents of the Board of Health. The newspaper pointed the accusation at Gibson’s son-in-law, Fred Hayselden, who was serving as secretary to the board. He and Gibson indignantly denied the allegations, personally and through the columns of the Advertiser. No formal charges were ever made, and after a fortnight the scandalous story was dropped by the press but filed away for future use against the prime minister and his family.

A heavy price had to be paid for being Kalakaua’s prime minister, besides the long hours and incessant improvising for a government longer on plans than on funds. The needs, always exigent, of the king’s accommodating financier Claus Spreckels had to be given close attention. The sugar king had his Maui lands. Now his desire turned to money, not merely profits, but the hard coin itself. It was Gibson’s responsibility to see that the interests of the capitalist from California and those of the Hawaii government coincided as nearly as could be contrived.

One sovereign symbol offered assurance to Americans living in Hawaii during the political turbulence of the late nineteenth century. That was the currency of the islands. Out of the jumble of foreign moneys the whalers, merchants, and traders had brought to the crossroads of the Pacific, American coins had become the standard of exchange. They alone were legal tender at face value, all others being acceptable only at rates fixed by the government from time to time. Only U.S. currency was issued from the Hawaii treasury and from Bishop & Co., sole bank in the kingdom in 1883.

The economic growth that had followed the expansion of sugar exports to America under the reciprocity treaty with the United States gradually created a local shortage of coin. Kalakaua, on returning from his world tour in 1881, had been pictured on some commemorative 5-cent pieces struck in his honor, but they had gone out of circulation, favored by collectors but not by Hawaiians because of a misspelling in the motto of the kingdom on the obverse side. Otherwise, an 1880 statute authorizing the issuance of coins had remained unused by the conservative Green cabinet, which heeded the confusing debate over gold, bimetallism, and paper currency then reported from Washington.
Premier Gibson, however, no more conservative in monetary matters than in other areas of public policy, saw a fascinating opportunity for combining the authority given to his government by the 1880 Coinage Act with powers newly given by the National Loan Act of 1882. That statute had authorized the government to borrow up to $2 million to cover the budget deficit, but at an interest rate not to exceed 6 percent. The modest rate, while in keeping with Gibson’s old editorial strictures against the extortions imposed by the commercial “ring” of downtown Honolulu when they loaned money, was too low to market the risky bonds of a tiny kingdom. Most of them remained unsold as the government’s deficit mounted to a point where it blocked expenditures that had been budgeted for roads, bridges, schools, and hospitals. The right combination of actions, simultaneously creating new money and new public debt, might bring Spreckels to the rescue, especially if he could be attracted by the prospect of breaking the banking monopoly of Bishop & Co.

Complexities imposed by the law had to be unsnarled. Besides the unrealistic 6 percent limit placed on the bonds, there was a kind of gold standard in Hawaii. A Legal Tender Act passed in 1876, two years before Gibson joined the legislature, set American gold coins as the monetary standard and as legal tender for public and private debts of any amount. Up to $50 in American silver coins could also be used, but no others. Finally, to discourage the rival use of silver coins, the act imposed a duty of 10 percent on their import. All these requirements of Hawaiian law had to be taken into account in solving the money-debt problem. Flattery of the king and profits for Spreckels could be joined to provide the solution.

Gibson put his stratagem in motion in September 1882, after the legislature had adjourned. He obtained the pro forma consent of his cabinet to a resolution authorizing him “to enter into an agreement with Claus Spreckels or other parties” for coining a sum of gold or silver not to exceed $150,000. Already the premier had worked out a deal with Spreckels, not merely for $150,000 but for a round million dollars. The California capitalist agreed to buy that amount of Hawaii’s 6 percent bonds for an equal sum—all at face value—of new Hawaii silver coins, whose minting by the U.S. government he would arrange. Gibson ascer-
tained from H. A. P. Carter and J. Mott Smith, both stationed in Washington, that the federal mint would indeed do business with a private party acting on behalf of a foreign government and that the profit to be made from putting less than 90 cents worth of silver into a dollar coin (as was then the standard at the mint) ran to 10 percent or more.

In March 1883 Gibson had his cabinet council authorize him and Finance Minister Kapena to “conclude a negotiation” with Spreckels for the coinage of Hawaiian money, in unstated amounts, “to be exchanged for Government six percent bonds, as indicated by the Premier.”9 Two months later Kapena commissioned Spreckels to contract with the U.S. Mint for the coining of dollars, half-dollars, quarters, and 12½ cent pieces, the old Spanish real, or “bit,” still favored on the outer islands of Hawaii, in the amount of $1 million (commonplace dimes were actually delivered).

By Christmas 1883 the first Kalakaua silver pieces were circulating in Hawaii, showing the bearded profile of the monarch, above which arched the inscription, “Kalakaua I King of Hawaii.” The job was done. Kalakaua had been honored, Spreckels put in the way of a handsome profit, and the premier was satisfied to have some cash in the government till. Furthermore, he calculated, Spreckels was more firmly bound to support the Hawaii treasury, for if it ran dry, what price the million dollar bonds he had just acquired?

Downtown Honolulu did not cheer Gibson’s deal in silver. Local commercial companies feared the intrusion of Spreckels, just as had the sugar planters a few years earlier. They were troubled at the prospect of having a politician like Gibson asserting authority over their monetary system. They were piqued that the government’s bond issue, confidently declared dead for lack of takers, had been brought off by such fiscal legerdemain. They were most disturbed to see coins bearing the silver likeness of an upstart tinhorn king displace the American eagle and the face of Liberty. A riotous coronation and a gingerbread palace were bad enough, but there was no end of mischief that Gibson and company could do if allowed to play around with money itself.

Immediately after the first supply of Kalakaua coins arrived in Honolulu, Sanford Dole, William R. Castle, and William O.
Smith, all lawyers conspicuous in opposing Gibson and Spreckels, filed in the Hawaii Supreme Court a petition for a writ of mandamus. They sought to compel Finance Minister Kapena to limit the issue of government bonds for any consideration other than U.S. gold coin, or its equivalent, thus blocking their issue to Spreckels in exchange for the new silver coinage. Chief Justice A. F. Judd granted a temporary writ, noting that the government should consider whether it had any authority to pay with bonds for new money issues, rather than by first purchasing bullion or gold coins with money in its treasury, as the Coinage Act provided.

Gibson reacted quickly to bolster his defenses. The day after Dole and associates had filed their suit, the king appointed lawyer Paul Neumann, experienced in practice though new to the islands, as attorney general, a post Gibson had been holding ad interim since the resignation of Edward Preston seven months earlier. The new attorney general had just arrived from San Francisco, where he had worked for Spreckels and so was well briefed on the silver coinage deal. He and Samuel Parker (a part-Hawaiian businessman and landowner, a poker-table crony of Kalakaua and Spreckels) were appointed to the Privy Council, which was then urgently convened. With the king presiding, the council adopted a resolution offered by Gibson to make Hawaiian silver legal tender to the same extent as American silver pieces, that is, up to $50 in value. Neumann might have advised his new colleagues that the action scarcely met the requirement of the National Loan Act that bonds be issued only for gold.

On appeal, the full Supreme Court dismissed the temporary mandamus writ on a technical ground: the proper relief was an injunction. Whereupon Dole, Castle, and Smith petitioned for a permanent injunction against the bond sale. Replying to the suit, Finance Minister Kapena flatly denied that he had issued, or was about to issue, any bonds for silver or “for any other moneys than is prescribed by law, to wit: ‘not below par’ and for gold coin of the United States or its equivalent.”

The petitioners asked that Kapena be directed to produce in court the agreement with Spreckels, but this request was refused. The high court then denied the injunction, holding that Kapena’s disavowal was “at least credible,” taking it as a promise that bonds would be issued only in exchange for American gold coin or
equivalent monetary value. Some weeks later the Hawaiian government quickly issued to Spreckels bonds with a face value of $500,000, probably in exchange for a like amount of Kalakaua silver coins. For much or all of the remaining half-million dollars of coin contracted for, Spreckels received silver certificates printed for the Hawaii treasury.\textsuperscript{11}

Antagonists had no doubt that the Spreckels-Gibson deal had violated the monetary laws and the trust of the court. H. A. P. Carter, who continued to serve in Washington as the outside man of the Hawaii government, though sometimes with obvious distaste, wrote to Dole:

The most damaging thing now in our currency is that a Government can, as a favor to a private individual, permit him without legal sanction to flood us with whatever he pleases and make it legal tender; and make $150,000 out of it. What limit is there to such proceedings? There is not a shadow of warrant for it in the coinage act. Probably the next move will be to declare photographs of Mr. Spreckels legal tender to any amount.\textsuperscript{12}

The Honolulu Chamber of Commerce voiced the concerns of the business community about the new silver money, which totaled a million dollars by mid-1884. In a letter to Finance Minister Kapena, the chamber argued that the introduction of such a large amount of silver had put the island economy in the uncertain clutch of bimetallism and that silver coins would drive the more valuable gold pieces out of circulation. It recommended that no more silver be imported and that all foreign silver coins (except American) be withdrawn—at the expense of the treasury. Gibson instructed Kapena to send a polite reply to the letter and then to forget about it.

However, attacks on the Kalakaua coinage deal resumed when the legislature convened in April 1884. A resolution called on Kapena to explain when and how Hawaiian silver coins became legal tender. He replied that the Privy Council had so ordered but could not remember when. Assemblyman Sanford Dole introduced a bill putting a duty of 10 percent on the new coinage, in accordance with the requirement of the Legal Tender Act that such tax be levied on all foreign silver imports. The measure was tabled. Then W. O. Smith moved that the premier be required to
produce all government papers relating to the transaction with
Spreckels. Gibson enthusiastically seconded the motion, saying
that it would be his great pleasure to “give all information in his
power.” Every few days thereafter, Dole, Smith, or other mem-
ers of the opposition asked for the papers or at least for a report
of what Spreckels had gained on the transaction. Gibson tempor-
ized, tongue in bearded cheek. The records were being searched;
the papers were being prepared; he had them in his pocket the
day before, but no member had asked to see them.... The legisla-
tive session drew on. No records were ever forthcoming.

The 1884 legislature did, however, produce a document on
the silver deal that was embarrassing to the Gibson ministry. This
was a well-researched report from Gibson’s old Committee on Fi-
nance. The report charged the minister of finance with violating
the Coinage Act. Instead of purchasing gold bullion for coinage
with treasury funds, as required by law, he had exchanged bonds
for the Kalakaua silver. It found that the intrinsic value of the new
silver dollar was only 81½ cents in U.S. money, and two half-dol-
ars were worth only 79 cents—considerably less than Gibson’s
estimate of 87.4 cents per silver dollar.14

Using the evidence of the committee report, and fired by anti-
Gibson resolutions adopted at a mass meeting at the Honolulu
Lyceum, before adjournment of the legislature Dole introduced a
formal motion of no confidence in the government. After angry de-
bate the motion lost, by a vote of 25 to 21. The Gibson cabinet was
saved only by the legislative rule that allowed him and his minis-
terial colleagues to vote on the motion.

The business community did, however, force passage of legisla-
tion to limit further inroads on the gold standard. Spreckels saw the
need to appease at least some of the men he had to do business with
and at his own request came to address the Chamber of Commerce
on the money question. A hard-hitting debate persuaded the inter-
laping capitalist to promise that, though he remained unconvinced
that a tight gold standard was good for Hawaii, he would not op-
pose measures to enforce it. If he would not, neither would Gibson,
who had attained his goals of replenishing the treasury and putting
the image of Kalakaua into daily circulation.

Consequently, the Gold Law of 1884 passed the legislature
without serious opposition. It made Hawaiian and U.S. silver coin
legal tender, but only up to $10. For payment of larger debts American gold coins were made exclusive legal tender and the monetary standard for the kingdom. The statutes under which the Kalakaua coins had been introduced were repealed. Gibson smiled.

By the beginning of 1885 the economic recession that had exacerbated worries over the monetary system began to lift as sugar prices recovered. Soon the gold-versus-silver controversy in Hawaii, in miniature foreshadowing debate in the American presidential campaign that pitted William Jennings Bryan against William McKinley in 1896, died away. Kalakaua coins remained in circulation through the remaining years of the kingdom, and even into the next century, without any question as to their worth in the marketplace.15

Meanwhile, the fight over money had shifted to banking. Expansion of the Hawaii economy had shown the business community, including admirers of Charles Bishop, that there was room for a second bank in the kingdom. Even the merchants who were somewhat uncomfortable with the competitive intrusion of Claus Spreckels welcomed the opening of the bank of Spreckels and Company in Honolulu early in 1884. However, ranks closed against the enterprise when Spreckels sought to form in Hawaii a national bank with power to issue bank notes. A bill to charter the Hawaiian National Bank was introduced before the legislature and was immediately opposed by the Chamber of Commerce. An overflow crowd came to the Honolulu Lyceum to hear the bill castigated as a sell-out to Spreckels. It authorized banks not only to print money but to carry on many nonbanking activities, all virtually tax exempt. Most vehement in attacking the bill was Clarence Ashford, a young Canadian attorney who had recently moved his law practice from California to Hawaii. Gibson was to encounter Clarence and his elder brother, Volney, under increasingly tense circumstances during the few years left to him.

Petitions were circulated around town calling for the dismissal of Gibson and his cabinet. The motion of no confidence in the government was again introduced before the legislature and again failed when the ministers voted in their own defense. However, the clamor had raised enough doubts about the national bank bill to kill it. Instead, the opposition offered a general banking law
that excluded all elements objectionable to the Chamber of Commerce. Additional banks could be incorporated, but none could issue currency or enter into nonbanking enterprises. When Gibson learned that Spreckels had worked with local businessmen in drawing up the new bill, government support swung in its favor and the bill readily passed and gained Kalakaua’s signature to become law.

After all the legislative commotion, Spreckels opened his Honolulu bank in 1884, but not under the new law for incorporation. Instead, with his local associate William Irwin he formed the bank of Spreckels and Company as a partnership. Gibson sighed with relief that the sugar king was finally satisfied in his money game and hoped now to have time for matters of greater interest to him and the king.

But first he had to extricate himself from the bind in which another Spreckels operation had caught him. The irrepressible enterpriser had formed the Oceanic Steamship Company to serve the Hawaii-California trade, seeking to carry not only sugar and merchandise but also tourists, hoping to “make Hawaii a pleasure resort more frequented by San Franciscans” by introducing the first steamers to serve that route exclusively. Oceanic then applied to the obliging Hawaiian government for permission to bring Chinese immigrants to its shores, a privilege already given to the rival Pacific Mail Steamship Company. Spreckels at the same time asked to share in the subsidy paid by Hawaii to Pacific Mail for postal service to California.

Protests by Pacific Mail went both to Honolulu and to Washington, where the ever-imperiled reciprocity treaty was still before the Senate. H. A. P. Carter, Hawaii’s minister at the capital, telegraphed Gibson to inform him that Pacific Mail was making a great fuss at the State Department, lobbying against the treaty. Gibson replied that when “a Hawaiian line, which is also an American line” offered to bring in Chinese immigrants “it becomes a patriotic duty” to accept. Predictably, the Chamber of Commerce and most Honolulu newspapers thought the switch of preference to Spreckels’ line was not the act of a patriot but of a scoundrel.

Once again, Spreckels quietly made peace with the other side, leaving Gibson to defend an abandoned salient. The man from
San Francisco made an agreement with Pacific Mail: they would drop their freight and passenger service between Hawaii and California; he would not enter the business of transporting Chinese workers to the islands. That division of the market settled the matter, except for bickering over the government’s ship subsidies, which settled into place among the perennial items on the legislative agenda.

Gibson’s cabinet was rounded out in the last half of 1883 with stable replacements: Charles T. Gulick, an engineer, as minister of the interior, as well as Paul Neumann as attorney general. They, together with John Kapena, the finance minister, were to remain colleagues as long as Premier Gibson held office and were to survive the political whirlwind he raised.

Two Gibsonian actions, one characteristically theatrical, the other characteristically tender, at that same time shaped the course of the years remaining to him in Hawaii. The first determined the fate of his ministry and the second melted his heart.

Word came to Honolulu of agitation in the Australian colonies for annexation by Britain of New Guinea and other Pacific island groups. Gibson, seeking an opportunity to assert Hawaii’s influence over other Polynesian islands, had his cabinet approve what came to be called the Hawaii Protest of 1883. It appealed to “great and enlightened States, that they will recognize the inalienable rights of the several native communities of Polynesia to enjoy opportunities for progress and self-government.” Hawaii, made “prosperous and happy” by her independence, was obliged to “lift up a voice among the Nations” to declare that no foreign power had the right to impose its authority over the “sister islands” of Polynesia.18

Copies of the Protest went to the governments of twenty-six countries. Of the powers then competing for dominion in the Pacific, only the United States deigned to reply. Through H. A. P. Carter, the secretary of state sent an avuncular reproach to the impudent prime minister, whose dossier was still active in State Department files. America, Secretary Frelinghuysen wrote, was “always in favor of good self-government by the independent communities of the world.” However, the islands in question, New Guinea, the New Hebrides, the Solomons, and adjacent groups, were “geographically allied to Australasia and not Polynesia.” Fur-
thermore, he chided, it was unfortunate that Hawaii’s pronouncement had taken the form of a protest. An appeal to the great powers by the tiny kingdom would have been more appropriate.\textsuperscript{19}

Unabashed by the diplomatic snubs the Protest received, Gibson continued to spin his old dreams of island power and to make fantasy plans for establishing Hawaii’s eminence in the Pacific. He deluded himself into believing that Kalakaua’s sun was in the ascendency. Soon it would shine far out over the mighty ocean that his uncle had pointed to as the realm where glory was to be found, as Gibson had written long ago. He, too, would rise with that sun.

A personal encounter that was to shake profoundly the romantic politician occurred during a public ceremony. On November 8, 1883, in his dual roles as prime minister and president of the Board of Health, Gibson boarded Spreckels’ new steamer, the \textit{Mariposa}, just arrived in Honolulu Harbor from San Francisco. He went to greet a small company of Franciscan sisters who, in response to Gibson’s plea for assistance from the Catholic Church, had volunteered to nurse the lepers of Hawaii. At their head was Mother Marianne Cope. She was introduced to the premier, who bent to kiss her hand, and then that of each nun. A word-portrait, drawn near that time by an observant visitor, sketched the man who smiled with such pleasure upon the Mother Superior.

Walter Murray Gibson is a tall, thin old gentleman of sixty, with white hair and beard, a mild, cold blue eye, a fine patrician nose, and a tolerably port-wine complexion, which probably once was fair. The general effect is that of a portrait of the Duke of Wellington at later life. ... The Premier’s voice is soft and low, and confidential to a rare extent. He is an unquestionably eminent-looking veteran, of smooth address, silky manners, and a somewhat fascinating mode of speech, in the estimation of the susceptible and sympathetic—a fine old fellow, I should say; wise as a serpent, but hardly as harmless as a dove.\textsuperscript{20}

Mother Marianne could later have added to the portrait. The prime minister was attentive to his friends, as well as to his official duties. He was generous. His blue eyes were not at all cold when looking at his favorites. He had a mischievous humor and could be distressingly romantic. He had a sense of destiny and fatalism. He was not in robust health.
Walter Murray Gibson, straightening from his bow of salute, looked down upon a handsome woman in her mid-forties, of middle height, probably slender, though the voluminous habit she wore made it difficult to say. The white coronet and collar, dazzling in the tropical sun, and the black veil of a Franciscan nun framed a most attractive face: black eyebrows, dark eyes, a strong and shapely nose, a wide, firm mouth, and lips made more red by contrast with her pallor. Such was his first impression of Mother Marianne. Gibson would find her to be beautiful in spirit as well as in person, zealous in duty, strong in her work and faith, a sympathetic confidante, altogether a remarkable and fascinating woman.
“How Noble and How Good; How Much I Love Her”

Strangely, it was leprosy that brought romance—belatedly, awkwardly, hopelessly—to inflame the heart of the aging politician. Leprosy, the terrible scourge of the East, had come to Hawaii sometime before mid-century, presumably brought ashore by a sailor or an immigrant off some passing ship. For reasons now forgotten, the Hawaiians called it ma’i pākē, the Chinese sickness. It was the Hawaiians themselves, however, having no immunity to the disease, who increasingly became its victims. Since 1865 lepers, most of them natives, had been segregated at a settlement established by the Board of Health at Kalawao, on isolated Kalawapapa Peninsula jutting out from the north shore of the island of Molokai. In 1883, about six hundred of the afflicted were committed there, expelled from society until they were cured—and there was no cure. Hundreds more were hidden by their families throughout the kingdom, evading the exile from which no one ever returned.

No problem more deeply troubled Gibson. Leprosy was not only destroying the bodies and families of the Hawaiian people, it was their badge of shame. The Americans and Europeans in the kingdom, relatively immune to the disease and seldom exposed to the “rotting sickness,” generally considered it to be the fourth stage of syphilis and therefore a fitting punishment for the sexual immorality of the Polynesians. Ma’i pākē was a curse of God, and the accursed unclean must be cast out, just as was written in the Good Book.

Gibson, avid reader of news about the medical arts, had heard about the achievement of Dr. G. Armauer Hansen in Norway, a
decade earlier, in isolating the bacillus associated with leprosy and believed to be its cause. Hansen’s discovery confirmed Gibson in his intuitive belief that isolation of sufferers was necessary, as he had argued in the columns of *Ka Nuhou* in 1873. Sadly, well knowing how unpopular the segregation policy was among his Hawaiian constituents, he spoke out for it again and again. In the *Sanitary Instructions for Hawaiians* he had written when still new to the Legislative Assembly, he stressed the need for good hygiene, including avoidance of sources of contagion. He scorned the idea that leprosy was one of the wages of sin but realized that until the disease was checked it would continue to be taken as evidence, by natives as well as by race-proud haoles, of the inferiority of Hawaiians. If he was to lead them away from destruction and on to a glorious future in the Pacific, something must be done to relieve and then to eradicate the terrible sickness.

In the legislature Gibson had used his authority as chairman of the Finance Committee to extract from an economizing government funds to improve the leper settlement on Molokai, to employ a physician and a supervisor there, and then to construct a branch hospital in Honolulu, where persons suspected of having contracted leprosy could be examined and diagnosed before being sent to Kalawao. But only after gaining power as prime minister was he able to take the initiative in seeking new ways to fight the disease and to lessen the suffering of its victims. Among all the posts he assumed in his tightly held ministry, Gibson gave most sustained attention to his responsibilities as president of the Board of Health. And among those responsibilities, the problem of leprosy came first. Control of the disease would not be possible until its cause was known, and he read the reports of Dr. Hansen’s achievement with excited interest. A stroke of luck promised to bring to Hawaii a young practitioner of the new science of bacteriology who could determine if lepers in the kingdom were infected with Hansen’s bacillus. Dr. Eduard Christian Arning, an English physician studying at the renowned Dermatological Institute in Breslau, Germany, requested permission to study leprosy in Hawaii. Gibson quickly responded in February 1883, offering Dr. Arning use of the facilities of the Board of Health, either at the settlement on Molokai or at the Kakaako Branch Hospital in Honolulu, “for the purpose of studying the natural history of the
contagium of leprosy ... an investigation ... I have long desired to see taken in hand.”

To supplement Arning’s research grant from the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences, the Hawaii Board of Health would pay him a monthly stipend of $150.

In the meantime, there was the problem of caring for the lepers and suspected lepers who were being forced into Hawaii’s few hospitals every week. More than two hundred persons, of all ages and conditions, were held in the Branch Hospital, haphazardly erected in Honolulu on the shore near Fisherman’s Point, about a half-mile in the Diamond Head direction from the entrance into Honolulu Harbor. This place on the waterfront was almost a desert bleached by the sun, a stretch of beach land that earlier generations of Hawaiians had used for evaporating sea water to make salt. In a group of cottages often flooded by high water during spells of strong southerly winds, the lepers, suspected lepers, and those relatives or friends who had come to care for them, were shut up together in a stinking lazaretto, attended only as they would have been in a prison—which in effect the Branch Hospital was. Gibson was among the few untainted haoles to visit the holding pen, and his heart ached for the misery he saw. Under the negligent custody of a small staff of Board of Health employees, the aged and the young, those far gone in their sickness and some appearing to be in the bloom of health sat awaiting the verdict of the examining physician. If the doctor found them to be suffering from tuberculosis, scabies, ringworm, syphilis, or other ailments that merely resembled leprosy, they were turned loose to seek their salvation elsewhere. If found to be leprous, they were required by law to be shipped off to Kalawao on Molokai. Opportunities for bribing the attendants, with money or flesh, were abundant. Sometimes, the still vigorous detainees or their families fought in protest against the guards they held responsible for the horrible conditions or among themselves. Mostly there was heavy despondency, despair, relieved for the night by contraband liquor, opium, or sex.

Gibson pondered how these Augean stables his Board of Health had created could be cleansed. It was no use going to the legislature for more funds; it was difficult enough to get appropriations to pay the doctor, buy food and supplies, and provide an unskilled staff. Nurses were needed, but the wage offered was next to nothing. Who would possibly volunteer for such a task?
He thought then of the Catholic nuns who had nursed the sick, among them his young brothers, in cholera-stricken Montreal so many years ago. Perhaps members of a nursing order could be found willing to minister to the lepers of Hawaii. The possibility was worth pursuing.

Donning his top hat and most persuasive manner, Gibson went to call on the Right Reverend Hermann Koeckemann, Bishop of Olba, the ranking Catholic prelate in the kingdom, to discuss the pitiful conditions at Kakaako. In his quiet voice he made the bishop see the degradation, imperiling soul as well as body, forced upon the miserable inmates, almost all of them Christians, some of them Catholics. Would it not be possible, he asked, for the church to find “Sisters of Charity” to tend these unfortunates? He could assure the bishop that Their Majesties, though not of Catholic faith, would be most grateful, as of course would be the government. Protestant nursing orders, he mused aloud, were not nearly as numerous, but the Board of Health might appeal to them also, if necessary. Funds were scarce, but the government was prepared to pay all costs of transportation and maintenance for the nuns and would provide suitable housing, as well as a chapel for their use.²

The Bishop, no stranger to the eloquent minister, considered the man and the proposition before him. He knew Gibson to be a conniving politician, one so deficient in religious belief that even the Mormons had thrown him out. On the other hand, he had not shown himself to be an enemy of the Catholic Church. To the contrary, some years back, when he was owner-editor of the Pacific Commercial Advertiser, he had been very supportive, giving far more favorable coverage to the happenings of the church in Hawaii than had any other newspaper. And, for all his smooth talk and cunning ways, there was no doubt about the sincerity of his concern for the lepers and for the dying Hawaiian race. Remember his excellent handbook, Sanitary Instructions for Hawaiians. Recall his editorial plea, a decade ago, for a “noble Christian priest, preacher or sister” to care for the lepers at Kalawao,³ a call that had been answered by Father Damien de Veuster.

Foremost, there was the position of the church in Hawaii to consider. Roman Catholicism was well established in the kingdom but was not yet as influential as the bishop would have liked.
Its missionaries had first come to Hawaii in 1827, only seven years after the Congregationalists had arrived from Boston. But whereas the Calvinists had come as families, now in their third generation of ascendancy in the ever more Americanized society of Hawaii, the celibate priests of the Congregation of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary had been expelled by the Hawaiian chiefs in 1831. Even after the Catholic mission was reestablished six years later and even though it had since gained thousands of converts, it remained outside the ring of political influence. The Episcopal Church, in Hawaii only since 1862, was much smaller in number of communicants but seemed to be on more solid ground politically, given the membership of King Kalakaua and Queen Kapiolani. Even the late-coming Mormons, resurgent in the islands after the disorder accompanying the excommunication of Gibson as its high priest, offered a vigorous rivalry.

The Catholic Church in Hawaii, however, had provided an example of faith and courageous devotion that was exciting admiration around the world and helping to gain converts among the natives—and in the very area of service for which Gibson now sought help. Father Damien, who for a decade had been ministering to the lepers of Kalawao, most dramatically showed the love of the church for the suffering people of the islands. A company of nursing sisters could do the same, at once serving the most wretched in Hawaii and their own succoring church.

The prime minister emphasized how strong was the support the royal family gave to his proposal, implying that it might originally have been the inspiration of Queen Kapiolani herself. If the bishop were willing to consider the idea of inviting nursing nuns to undertake the mission, he could discuss it further with Their Majesties. Bishop Koeckemann agreed to talk, and the discussions went on for several weeks, sometimes at the palace with the king, the queen, or both but more often with Gibson alone in the chancery attached to the cathedral on Fort Street. Provisionally, the bishop said yes, subject to working out satisfactory arrangements for the support of the sisters and reaching an agreement as to their authority at the Kakaako Branch Hospital.

Gibson formally presented the proposal in a letter addressed to the Lord Bishop of Olba, stating that he was authorized by the Board of Health to invite eight or more Sisters of Charity “to come
to the rescue of our sick people.” The government would pay for their transportation, first class, and would provide “comfortable lodgement and subsistence” for the nuns in Hawaii. His letter, which made no explicit mention of leprosy, although it had been the subject of their many conversations, concluded:

Now, my lord, as I am aware that eminent institutions of Charity such as I have referred to, and this country needs, abound in the Catholic Church, and as I feel assured that your representation of our needs would be all-influential, I make an appeal, and offer an invitation through your Lordship, to Sisters of Charity of the Catholic Church to come to the help of the sick of this country, and I doubt not I may proffer to them in advance the profound obligation and gracious recognition of Their Majesties, the thanks of his Majesty’s Government, and the blessings of the Hawaiian People.4

The Bishop accepted the appeal. He dispatched his vice provincial, French-born Father Leonor Fouesnel, to search for volunteers among the nursing orders in the United States. Gibson provided the priest with funds and, remembering his own experience as emissary of the Mormon Church, with an official commission, in Hawaiian for greater dramatic effect, signed and sealed by Kalakaua Rex, ruler of the Kingdom of Hawaii. In April 1883, Father Leonor made his way to Dayton, Ohio, from where he addressed scores of letters to hospitals, convents, and other Catholic communities around the United States. Without benefit of a single promise of help, he began a long round of visits in the hope of being more persuasive face-to-face. During two months he visited more than fifty religious communities but without success. Finally, in Syracuse, New York, he found the volunteer he was seeking. She was Mother Marianne (Cope), provincial of the Franciscan community there, a woman experienced in running a hospital and yet still young enough to undertake the rigors of the mission to Hawaii.

Sister Marianne, born Barbara Koob in Germany (in 1838, the year Gibson married Rachel Lewis), had been brought as an infant by her family to central New York State.5 While the widower Gibson was busy making money in Manhattan and preparing for his adventures on the high seas, Barbara was attending grade school in Utica. After leaving school, she worked in a factory there for
nine years, before family circumstances at last allowed her to enter the Order of the Sisters of St. Francis in Syracuse. That was in 1862, when she was twenty-four—and Gibson aged forty, was serving as the Mormons’ High Priest of Melchizedek on Lanai. Devotion and intelligence brought her recognition and increasing authority within the order. When Father Leonor went to Syracuse in July 1883, she was chief nurse and administrator of St. Joseph’s, a hospital of fifty beds. She had arranged with the medical college of Syracuse University for St. Joseph’s to serve as a teaching hospital and with the doctors had pioneered in applying new techniques of antisepsis then being introduced from Europe. Her hospital was obviously well run. Even if Father Leonor had the choice of any nurse-sister in America, he might well have preferred Mother Marianne. As it was, she was the only volunteer and he was relieved and gratified when, on that vote of her convent and with the permission of her superior, she and six other nuns from Syracuse agreed to serve in the Sandwich Islands for whatever short period was necessary to set up the mission to the lepers there. Then they would return to the motherhouse in Syracuse. None of them actually did.

The party of volunteers—Mother Marianne, Sister Mary Bona-vventure Caraher, M. Crescentia Eilers, M. Renata Nash, M. Rosalia McLaughlin, M. Ludovica Gibbons, and M. Antonella Murphy—reached San Francisco toward the end of October 1883, and on November 1 they sailed for Honolulu aboard the Mariposa, one of Spreckels’ new steamships. Also aboard traveling first-class was Dr. Eduard C. Arning, like them answering Gibson’s call for help.

A week later the Mariposa anchored in Honolulu Harbor and the party was greeted with expressions of gratitude and aloha. As the nuns were escorted ashore, it was evident that the sea voyage had left Mother Marianne weak and unsteady. Gibson was most sympathetic when he learned that she, like himself, suffered from seasickness. For a few days, the newcomers were sheltered in the convent that adjoined the Cathedral of Our Lady of Peace, where they had been welcomed and blessed by Bishop Hermann. Then Gibson had them moved to a large house on King Street near the center of town, which he had rented for them at the expense of the Board of Health.
Opposition legislators hooted when they discovered that the nuns were staying at a residence owned by Gibson’s daughter, Talula, but the prime minister replied that he had had to find suitable housing for the sisters, and a rent of $225 for two months was not excessive. Nor would he accept criticism for charging the Board of Health for the hire of a carriage to take them to mass each morning at the Cathedral. The Pacific Commercial Advertiser, ever supportive, reported his reply to the Legislative Assembly:

These self-sacrificing Sisters of Charity, who came here voluntarily to nurse and attend to the wants of the lepers, desired to pay their daily visits to their house of worship, and in order to do so, it was necessary that some conveyance should be provided for them, as they could not walk the distance; this has been done an expense of $4 per day, amounting in all to an expense of $245.75. Was that too much, he asked for the services they were rendering? (Loud and continuing applause).6

No gentleman who had ever walked the streets of Honolulu—dusty or muddy, depending on the weather—could cavil over the carriage. The solution to the housing problem was the completion of a convent for the nuns at the Kakaako Branch Hospital. They moved in soon after New Year’s Day, 1884. A simple two-story structure provided them with a chapel and living quarters, including a parlor in which to receive visitors. Gibson was to be their most frequent caller from the town.

Installed at last, the sisters set about their work. At the outset, the prudent mother superior asked Gibson for a written statement of what the government expected of her band and what authority was given to her at the hospital. While Gibson equivocated, she and her companion sisters rolled up their sleeves and started to work.

They found the Branch Hospital to be a pesthouse beyond their worst fears. The inmates lay around, many in rags, most unwashed, in squalor and filth. The bathing rooms and water closets stank. Flies, roaches, and rats multiplied in the cottages used as kitchen and mess hall. Even the medical supply room was a shambles. Morals reflected the physical conditions, as the strong—superintendent, wardens, and inmates alike—preyed on the vulnerable. At night, young and still wholesome-looking girls
were exposed to seduction or rape in the sleeping areas used in common by the inmates.

First the sisters got rid of the filth. On hands and knees they cleaned the hospital buildings, gaining a few helpers from the staff, who were astonished to see these haole ladies doing the work of the lowest servants. Out went the greasy rags, blankets, and mats soiled beyond salvaging, the garbage and droppings of vermin. In came the cleanliness and order of a proper hospital, not yet what they had left in Syracuse but a passable approach toward that model. They learned how to treat leprous sores, to wash away the scabs and pus and cut away the dead flesh, to apply a soothing ointment and cover the lesions with clean bandages. They segregated the sleeping areas of males and females. The Franciscan mission in Honolulu was in operation.  

Mother Marianne applied the administrative skills she had mastered in Syracuse and acquired new ones. Still without a written statement of authority, she worked around Dr. G. L. Fitch, the physician and nominal director at Kakaako, who tended to minimize his contacts with the terrible place and its horrendous patients. She found a hut in the compound where Dr. Arning could pursue his research on the disease, without conflict with Fitch. Her chief obstacle was the superintendent, Henry Van Giesen, a brutal and brutalizing man, no fit overseer for the sick but one who enjoyed good connections with the palace and hence with Gibson. After weeks of patient efforts to have Van Giesen dismissed, the gentle nun issued her ultimatum: if he were not removed from Kakaako immediately, she and her sisters would be forced to return home. The prime minister, loath to offend a protégé of Their Majesties, but even more unwilling to lose this company of nuns and their admirable leader, capitulated. Van Giesen was sent to the leper settlement on Molokai, where Father Damien was warned against him. Mother Marianne was given full authority over the Branch Hospital.

The disorder caused by Van Giesen and the assumption of management by the mother superior brought Gibson to Kakaako more and more frequently. The president of the Board of Health was impressed by the mother superior; the aging man was captivated by the younger woman. Even after the hospital had settled into a new and gentler routine under the sisters, Gibson increasingly found reason to call at the hospital or at the convent. Did
the new tubs for the treatment of the lepers need locating? The president was on hand to place them. Were new inmates incorrigible? The president came down to deal with them himself. Would a simple conservatory not add a touch of floral relief to the desert place? The president saw to its construction and stocking in person. He brought King Kalakaua and Queen Kapiolani to call, and his daughter Talula came to meet and know the good sisters.

Gibson’s romantic chivalry readily extended to the entire party of nuns. He was their protector (now that the villainous Van Giesen was gone) and would be as a father to these brave and generous young women. As he came to know them better, seeing them at their work in the hospital, over tea in the convent parlor, he learned more about them as individuals and made friends of them all. He found pleasure in sending or bringing from his kitchen delicacies to spice their plain fare—fruit, a brace of fowl, a cake, a bottle of wine. He sent his carriage to take them shopping or for a brief outing to Waikiki as occasional respite from their normal sixteen-hour work day.

He loved them all, the patriarchal premier. But it was increasingly evident to him, though he tried to hide it from others, that most of all he loved Marianne.

Since coming to Hawaii more than twenty years earlier, Gibson had lived without the companionship of any woman, except his daughter Talula, and she had been married for a decade. The social fishbowl in which he lived, under the constant scrutiny of his critics, thus far yielded no hint that the old widower had pursued any woman. Those eager defamers who regularly denounced the “old devil” as a fraud, swindler, liar, and libertine (for countenancing the return of the hula to decent society), made no indictment of him as a womanizer. When Thomas Thrum had scraped the trash cans of Honolulu for items of denigration to include in his election pamphlet, The Shepherd Saint of Lanai, he could find not even an innuendo concerning Gibson’s sex life. Nor could the newspaper wits who lampooned everything about the man, from his big nose to his love of fancy dress, who searched in his public and private business to find more reason to damn him; not even they had ever accused him of stepping outside the limits set by the Calvinists for an unmarried man in associating with the opposite sex.

There was a fund of tenderness in Gibson that demanded
expression and had little outlet. He had lavished that affection on Talula until her marriage and then extended it to his six grandchildren as they were born. Cabinet associations with Attorney General Neumann and Interior Minister Gulick gave a permitted scope of tea-time chats with their wives. As head of the Board of Education he carried on occasional correspondence with a few women teachers who shared his concerns for improving Hawaii’s public schools or his interests in ferns, Hawaiian lore, or the Portuguese poets. Sometimes they came to call, suitably escorted. Until his chronic chest congestion worsened, he had enjoyed the dancing that state balls at the palace provided.

All this was fine, in a way, but so thin. He craved an intimate association with a woman, someone he could tell about his past adventures and his grand dreams for the future of Hawaii. Someone he could complain to about the puny-spirited penny pinchers who always tried to thwart him, about the financial incontinence of the king and the nuisance of serving the money-mad Spreckels. A woman who would enjoy being courted by him, who could appreciate a well-phrased compliment and return one. No one in this provincial place, divided between strait-laced puritans and unlaced Hawaiians—whom he loved in a way but not in this way—answered his need.

Until, he realized she had appeared in the unlikely guise of a holy sister in the Catholic Church! Little by little, he added a personal regard and a private glance to his business dealings with the overworked but always gentle mother superior. He was a subtle man, and she was in no position to attribute an inappropriate interest to the president of the Board of Health when he called, more and more frequently, to ask about the hospital and the nuns. Nor, after he amusingly explained about the Hawaiian customs of ceremonial gift-giving as a sign of respect (ho’okupu), could she readily refuse the delicacies he brought from his home, offered not only to her but to all the members of the mission. He then persuaded political associates to make their own contributions to the comfort of the sisters, which Gibson delivered in their names. Even Claus Spreckels, increasingly out of temper with the government because of its expenditures that did not benefit his investments, anted up a buggy and harness.⁹

The old man became more inventive in finding ways and times to see the chaste lady. Not an active member of any church, he
took to coming to the cathedral of a Sunday morning, where he was certain to see her and perhaps seize a moment for talk. At Kakaako, he had plans to discuss for the further improvement of the hospital on Maui, which she had prepared for opening and which was now staffed by two of her Franciscan sisters. The written charter for her management of the Branch Hospital, not yet forthcoming, needed consideration on this point and on that. He would bring the sisters’ mail when a ship arrived—no trouble, since he was coming over anyway. He brought over the Royal Hawaiian Band to play for the lepers and the nuns. He brought a photographer to take their pictures, himself standing at a discreet distance behind them or to the side. In some weeks he was there every day, sometimes twice in the day.

During these visits, the engaging premier sometimes succeeded in gaining an almost private tête-à-tête with Mother Marianne. As opportunity afforded, he turned their talk to personal matters, including the sister who necessarily accompanied her but whenever possible directing his attention to Marianne herself. He would do most of the talking, of course, but was pleased when he elicited some response from the quiet woman. Their companion would have had to listen closely, for Gibson in private conversation and Mother Marianne habitually spoke in low tones—she most musically, it is said.

They had much in common: European birth, a childhood in New York State, a Catholic education, a knowledge of hard times, a love of flowers, and now a compassion for the outcast lepers of Hawaii. To their mutual distress, they discovered that each suffered from a weakness of the lungs (consumption, had they known) though the aging man was more often and more severely racked with coughing than was the woman as yet. Each fought against any self-indulgence in sickness, but Gibson cherished her expressions of concern when an attack of illness prevented him from visiting the convent.

He relied on courtliness, tales of his adventures, and their shared interests rather than pity in trying to gain the attachment he sought. More intensely than he had ever played to audiences from the lecture platform, he now sought to astonish the reclusive nun with his tales of derring-do as sea captain, gun runner, innocent prisoner of the Dutch, adjunct foreign service officer in The Hague and Paris, linguist, author, misguided priest of the
Mormon Church, rancher, newspaper editor, legislative strategist, confidant of the king. The lecturer extraordinaire had found an ideal, if sometimes captive, audience of one—or rather two, counting her silent sister in attendance.

To set the conversation on more intimate courses, he spoke of matters closer to the heart, of his boyhood marriage and the early death of his wife, four decades ago. She, in return, told him of her childhood in an immigrant family from Heppenheim, Germany, of the early deaths of two brothers that made her factory wages essential to her family for nine long years until she was able to apply for admission to the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, as she had longed to do since she was fifteen. Gibson learned, and recorded in his diary, that her birthday was January 23, just a week after his.

By 1886 Gibson’s diaries fully reveal what he had to, and did, keep from the world. He was in love with Mother Marianne and miserable with the realization that she could never return that love, or acknowledge it if she did. The dignified graybeard, laden with the cares and honors of state, compiled a secret record of attention to his love that, if it had been known then, would have brought tears to all eyes in Honolulu—tears of laughter for most but tears of compassion for those of romantic heart who could be touched by the fate of a Don Quixote. “Too sentimental for my years,” he wrote, but persevered in the hopeless courtship. As crises arose and broke around his always-threatened government, as he dealt with demands of the king, with legislative motions of no confidence and official scandals, and as he prepared to take on the world’s great powers to establish Hawaii’s primacy in the central Pacific, Gibson obsessively recorded his visits with Marianne or his failure to see her, of the “great pleasure,” “happy hour,” or “disappointment” in the meeting.

What satisfaction was there for Cyrano in being the greatest swordsman in the kingdom if there was no Roxanne to visit, though she dwelt in a convent?

The diaries show the course of his infatuation. As he recalled the day’s happenings before making his journal entry, thoughts of Marianne crowded out the world. Often the Minister for Everything penned for a day only a line or two: “A visit with M. this afternoon,” “A happy hour this a.m. at Kakaako,” or even the sole entry for the twenty-four hours past, “Did not get to K.
“How Noble and How Good; How Much I Love Her”

day.” Nothing, those days, about the king, Spreckels, warships in port, the growth of the privately organized Honolulu Rifles, about foreign dispatches, or even his own family. He visited Mother Marianne whenever he could. After he had a telephone installed at the Branch Hospital (one of the first such instruments in Hawaii), he often phoned her there or sent messages asking her to phone him.

His attentions must often have vexed the mother superior. She had so much to do, so few helpers, and this man kept inventing reasons to talk, and at such length! And yet, and yet.... He was the champion of her mission, a powerful friend in this little kingdom. Moreover, he was to be pitied, and to a gentle heart, an offer of love, however unacceptable, is not to be rejected with scorn or derision. Finally, he was old and, with her, always gentle, not a man to fear as a threat to her honor or virtue. But he must be dissuaded from acting the gallant. That would be too embarrassing for them both and to the sisters as well, even to her mission.

So the poor one-sided game of love was played out. He kept seeking from her a more intimate companionship, a sign that she returned his devotion. She sought ways to express her friendship, her gratitude, her concern for his health and immortal soul. She admired his court costume (when he came, as he did whenever possible, on his way to or from a palace occasion), his family when he brought them to visit her, his town house and his beach home in Waikiki, the speeches he delivered, and his skill in getting resources for Kakaako. She and the other nuns nursed him when he came, as he did with increasing frequency, with a sore throat, inflamed ear, or headache. She would be his sister but not his beloved, except in a sexless, unromantic way that could not satisfy him.

His diary traced the misery of his chagrin d’amour, annotated by rational comment on his own condition.

An improved tone of health—yet a certain spirit of melancholia. Too sentimental for my years.\(^1\)

Lunch at Convent. Happy yet restless and left early. An unsatisfied and painful yearning—“A lonely old man.”\(^2\)

Great joy and delight at K.... unexpected happiness.\(^3\)

At Br.H. this morning. A pleasant hour—but must study contentment.\(^4\)
At Kakaako this p.m. M. the same tender friend as ever, who received me affectionately—yet I need a companionship she cannot give me. But what a strong and constant love binds me to her. What a pure, true and noble character!  

At Kakaako this forenoon. How I love this noble woman.  

At K. I lose hope of any close loving companionship. Will be appreciated only as a useful old friend.  

At K.—very kind and nice—but my basket is not full.  

Gibson remembered anniversaries. He sent small gifts to honor Marianne’s birthday, the anniversary of her arrival in Hawaii, the delivery—at last—of the government’s charter for her mission. These offerings of the heart were not embarrassing to the mother superior: flowers for the altar, delicacies to be shared with her sisters, silver for the dining room. However, in March 1887 Gibson, grown desperate to force a romantic connection or mistaking cordiality for something deeper, went too far. Two years before, the self-deluded old man had starred March 12 as the day he and Marianne had experienced their first “cherry,” meaning, according to her biographers, “an occasion both entertaining and delightful.” Whatever that occasion was in fact or whatever it might have meant to the nun, to Gibson, as silly in love as any schoolboy, it meant something so important (some sign of the marriage of hearts he obsessively yearned for?) that it required an open pledge of their union.  

On March 12, 1887, he came to the convent with a personal gift for Marianne. As she took it from the small box Gibson presented and then held it to the light for examination, the mother superior must have silently prayed for strength to suffer this mad romantic. He had given her a gold ring. It was engraved, on both outer and inner surfaces, in large letters. “Ruth 1–16, 17,” read the inner surface.* On the outer surface, “W. M. March 12–1885.” His diary entry for that day concluded: “Fond commemoration of the day. So happy in this pure and exalted friendship.”  

Such happiness was ephemeral. He was easily hurt by an apparent slight, as happened five days later.  

* Ruth 1:16, 17: “Entreat me not to leave thee, or return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, also, if aught but death part thee and me.”
Ordered a pound cake ... tastefully ornamented with “St. Patrick”; a ☠ and “Sr. R” in sugared letters on the icing. Sent a compliment to Sr. Rosalia [an Irish sister]—with a tender note to M. Messenger went at 3 P.M.—no answer—no return message not even by telephone. I was disappointed. About 9 P.M., M. telephoned to me about a supply of fish for the sick tomorrow. Was at prayers when my messenger came. Had not thought to send a message afterwards. More disappointed after the explanation. Did not go to Kakaako.

Like any unsatisfied lover, he readily found cause for jealousy. When Father Damien came from Molokai to try the Goto treatment for leprosy in the new hot tubs, he annoyed Gibson by his attentions to the sisters, especially to their mother superior. “He talks too much,” Gibson complained to his diary, “I begin to doubt the genuineness of his religious devotion.”

There was some reassurance from Sister Marianne. “S.M. told me she was completely wearied out with Father Damien’s talk.”

The mail, too, brought grounds for jealous suspicion. “Carried letters this P.M. to Convent. One from Rev. J. Tuohy—name outside. Anxious to hear about him. M. did not wish to communicate particulars of his letters. Regret this. Had reason to believe there was a peculiar interest between the two.” And two days later: “At Kakaako. M. very quiet and reserved. The Tuohy letter has unsettled my mind somewhat—I wish it was explained.” What Mother Marianne withheld from Gibson, as none of his business, was that Father Tuohey (as church records identify him) was one of the alcoholic priests whom she had treated and befriended at St. Joseph’s, back in Syracuse.

It was no comfort when Mother Marianne, hoping to direct his romantic interest to a more appropriate recipient, suggested that he pick up an old acquaintanceship. “S.M. recommended to write to M. in London. I did not like it.” And later: “Letter to Mary Tanner to go per Mararoa ... Tender reminiscences of Paris—but nothing like [‘Kakaako’ erased, then scrawled over].” He sent more letters to the Tanner woman to remind her of their meeting, thirty-five years before. Even if she were still alive and even if the letter reached her, there was to be not enough time for him to resume that connection.

Diversion of a sort came in Honolulu, in the comely person of a young widow, Mrs. Flora Howard St. Clair. Mrs. St. Clair, aged twenty-seven, had come to Hawaii from California in 1886.
to work as a book agent under the name Flora Howard. (Agents selling French books, she later explained in court, often used their maiden names in business.) In April she called on Gibson to show him her stock of art books. He did not buy any, but she testified, “He treated me in a very gentlemanly and courteous manner ... told me he was a Southerner ... seemed to take a great interest in me.” Some weeks later, she said, she again called and he ordered a French art book. More visits led to a proposal of marriage, she said, on the day after Christmas, 1886.26

Gibson made no record of a proposal or even of these house calls, but he did note in his diary other visits from her in 1886 and, early the next year, several visits he made at her lodgings, where she was living with her sister, Alice Caldwell. Miss Caldwell also sold books, under the name of Alice Waite.

Whatever diversion the young widow may have provided for the old, now frequently ill, cavalier soon turned to annoyance and persecution. Stories passed around town, gleefully spread by the Honolulu press, that Gibson was going to marry the itinerant book vendor. “Old nose big and the Widow Woman” was the kind of headline that sold papers.

Mrs. St. Clair presented herself, first at Gibson’s home and then at his office, seeking from him an acknowledgment that they were engaged to be married. He put her off, then sent his son-in-law Fred Hayselden to talk with the attorneys Volney and Clarence Ashford, whom the lady had retained. “Told Fred to mention casually to V. Ashford that I wanted to consult him about Canadian affairs.”27 Ashford, Fred reported, was pleased that his familiarity with his native country was appreciated but unrelenting in demanding full satisfaction for his client. Gibson now understood that he had fallen into a trap.

A breach-of.promise suit threatened, one that could only embarrass the prime minister and perhaps cost him money, which he did not have in great supply. The Ashfords offered an amicable settlement, if he would “in writing acknowledge to her that you made her an offer of marriage which she accepted.” Gibson’s lawyer replied: “Mr. Gibson declines to make the acknowledgement, not having made any proposal of marriage to the lady in question.”28 That same day, May 21, 1887, he was served with a summons to appear as defendant in a suit claiming damages for a broken heart.

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Two days later, Gibson called at the Franciscan convent with some trepidation, wondering if Mother Marianne had heard the news. Would she despise him? Was their connection to be cut off by this rising scandal? An interview gave him assurance that although the “noble woman” had heard of the breach-of-promise suit, she would not dismiss him. Indeed, that day he found her “a little more earnest and affectionate.”

However, with the lawsuit by Mrs. St. Clair, the fever of Gibson’s infatuation with Mother Marianne broke. After a few days’ abstention, he resumed his visits to the convent, but now they were less frequent and he came away more satisfied with the nun’s expression of sympathy. “M. a true daughter,” he wrote in his diary after “a nice lunch at the Convent.” With more time, the old man might have settled into a comfortable paternal relationship with the Mother Superior. But he was not fated to have much more time. The chariot was careening and about to fall.
BEMUSED with his fantasy of love, oppressed by frequent illness, Gibson was still reaching out, feebly, clumsily now, to achieve in some way his old dream of gathering in his hands lines of power across the Pacific. During the years in tiny Hawaii, the shimmering vision his ghostly uncle once pointed to had dwindled and faded, but it was always there, behind the letters, files, memoranda, dispatches, speeches, and editorials that cluttered the desk of the Minister of Everything. Now, beguiling nights made sleepless by the spasms of coughing that more and more often racked his thin chest, the vision of those lines of power converging on Honolulu—as they once seemed to converge on Lanai—brightened again.

The dream of a Pacific empire governed from Hawaii was not Gibson’s invention. In the 1850s, the decade before Gibson came to the islands, his friend Robert Crichton Wyllie had been intrigued by the proposal that a Polynesian confederation be created, with Hawaii as “the guide, the guardian, and the natural leader.” The proposal came to Foreign Minister Wyllie from a visionary named Charles St. Julian, an Australian journalist who offered his services, gratis, as the official representative of the Hawaiian government in its Pacific outreach. At that price St. Julian was appointed “His Majesty’s Chargé d’Affaires and Consul General to the Kings and Ruling Chiefs of the Independent States and Tribes in Polynesia South of the Equator.” However, the idea of asserting Hawaii’s primacy in the Pacific, as the notion came to be known, aroused no enthusiasm in the successive regimes preceding that of Kalakaua. The proposal lay on the table until picked up and presented to the Merry Monarch, most grandilo-
quenty, first by Celso Caesar Moreno during the few heady days of his premiership and then by the arch-dreamer Gibson.

With money provided by Gibson from his chairmanship of the legislative Finance Committee, in 1881 Kalakaua had become the first reigning monarch to sail around the world. Kalakaua’s interest in the long voyage, announced as a means to promote immigration, was to make other nations aware of Hawaii and to observe their style and practices. In Tokyo he had proposed to the Meiji emperor that they two should initiate a “Union and Federation of Asiatic Nations and Sovereigns,” the two island kingdoms to be allied through the marriage of Princess Ka’iulani to Prince Komatsu. The Japanese court gracefully declined the honor, pointing to earlier pledges of hand and association.

The construction of Iolani Palace, the raising of the statue of Kamehameha the Great, the selection of a national anthem, the fitting out in gorgeous uniforms of the Royal Hawaiian Military Band and King’s Guard, the minting of Kalakaua coins, the elaborate ceremonies of the coronation in 1883 were all theatrical effects arranged by Gibson to glorify his monarch and to prepare him for an expanded dominion. Under the king, the lines of power would be held by his prime minister, and along those lines beneficent forces would flow, helping to raise the prostrate race of Polynesia. Literally, at that time there remained independent only three divisions of the race, in Samoa, Tonga, and Hawaii. Gibson, however, no narrow constructionist, used “Polynesia” to encompass all Oceania, his prophecied domain.

Thus, when the Gilbert chain in Micronesia gave him his first chance as chief minister to assert Hawaii’s claim to primacy in the Pacific, Gibson did not hesitate to grasp the opportunity. Soon after he assumed office in May 1882, requests came from the chiefs of three islands in the Gilberts asking Hawaii to annex, or protect, their atolls. Gibson sent gifts and an invitation to the chiefs to attend the forthcoming coronation, expenses paid, at which time they could discuss the matter. The chiefs did not come, but in mid-1883 Gibson appointed Alfred N. Tripp, captain of the schooner Julia, to be Hawaii’s special commissioner for central and western Polynesia, empowered to promote “kindly relations between his Majesty’s Government and the various Chiefs of the Islands” he visited in the central Pacific. Since Captain Tripp’s reg-
ular trade was recruiting laborers—“blackbirding” it was called when recruitment took the shape of abduction—Gibson’s choice was not a happy one. Nor were the consequences. On his first voyage out as special commissioner, Tripp wrecked the Julia on one of the Gilberts and the Hawaiian government felt obliged to pay part of the costs of bringing the crew back to Honolulu. Gibson had to face a chorus of jeers for his “stupid scheme.”

About the same time, Gibson had his government speak out against the power play of Western nations in the Pacific, specifically Australia’s annexation on behalf of Great Britain of southeastern New Guinea (Papua). In April 1883 the Hawaiian cabinet issued its “Monroe Doctrine of the Pacific.” It solemnly protested the plans of “certain Sovereign and Colonial States” to annex Polynesian islands, and it appealed to them to recognize the “inalienable rights of the several native communities of Polynesia to enjoy opportunities for progress and self-government.” Hawaii, enjoying such rights, was “prosperous and happy” and “incited” to “lift up a voice among the Nations in behalf of sister islands and groups in Polynesia.”

Only the United States, it will be recalled, deigned to reply in earnest and that was to chide the Hawaii government for calling its message a protest rather than an appeal, a style more appropriate for a little kingdom that had no gunboats. A similar protest issued by Gibson two years later also went unheeded—except by the derisive opposition press.

Toward the close of 1885 Gibson sent H. A. P. Carter, Hawaii’s veteran minister in Washington, to seek the backing of England or of Germany, the rising force in the Pacific, for a Polynesian federation to be led by Hawaii. Carter tried to persuade Gibson to soften his diplomatic initiative to a more appropriately modest tone but was directed to proceed with his mission. He dutifully made the rounds of the foreign ministries but had to report failure. Hawaii had no place at the council tables of the great powers.

Never one to accept a snub, Gibson sought more direct means of dealing himself into the game of empire. He readily convinced Kalakaua that Hawaii should take part in the political competition then going on in Samoa, where rival chieftains vied for the support of the United States, Great Britain, and Germany. John E. Bush, a part-Hawaiian who had earlier served in and been re-
moved from Gibson’s first cabinet, was sent to Samoa toward the close of 1886 to serve as Kalakaua’s “Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary near His Majesty the King of Samoa,” whoever that turned out to be. He was to sound out Chief Malietoa, the claimant backed by the United States and Britain, about joining a confederation with Hawaii. If that went well, Tonga and the Cook Islands could be approached next. Bush, equally experienced in governmental negotiation and drinking, on his arrival in Apia began a round of partying. It first produced an agreement with Malietoa and then a drying-out period, imposed by the chief, a temperate and religious man, for the salvation of the Hawaiian emissary.

Back in Honolulu, Gibson persuaded a divided Legislative Assembly to approve an appropriation for a naval vessel. It was needed, he said, to carry Bush and his party among the islands of southern Polynesia and for similar peaceful purposes. To Bush, Gibson wrote that the ship, when ready, would be commissioned as a man-of-war. (To his diary, the romantic confided that he would take charge of the ship as the secretary of the navy, “an empty title—but I will push this matter, our Polynesian confederation.” His ghostly uncle smiled.)

Erratic though the mail service between Samoa and Hawaii was, Gibson began receiving disquieting reports of Bush’s conduct, which was undoing his success in obtaining the alliance with Malietoa. From Washington came warnings that the German government was greatly disturbed by Hawaii’s intervention in the competition for Samoa. Gibson decided to recall Bush and in early June 1887 sent a dispatch ordering him home.

By that time, his own removal was being plotted. The old wizard, in failing health and still engrossed with thoughts of Mother Marianne, had become vulnerable. The 1886 elections, though continuing his majority in the legislature, had brought in “Independent” members determined to bring down his government and put close restraints on Kalakaua’s extravagances. The opposition was led by Sanford B. Dole, now serving his second term, and Lorrin A. Thurston, newly elected to the assembly. Both lawyers from missionary families, their antagonism to Gibson and his ministry ran deep and bitter. Thurston especially, even in a time when partisan attack was extravagantly personal, was conspicuous in
his readiness to strike out at the aging prime minister, his works and his associates—including the king.

Early in the 1886 session, a bill to control the sale of liquor, a legislative perennial, was introduced. It proposed to prohibit sales to habitual drunkards. John Kapena, minister of finance, rose to object that no one could tell who was a habitual drunkard. Thurston replied that he could—he could see one at that very moment—and proposed an amendment to include in the bill all ministers of the crown. Ordered to apologize, Thurston said it would be in order to have the sergeant-at-arms eject the intoxicated member. “If a man can lead a dissolute life, to the neglect of his duties, and at the same time occupy one of the highest offices ...” (Gibson shouted for him to stop: “Mr. President, this is too bad! Disgraceful!” but Thurston overrode the objections and continued) “... he becomes a moral plague spot and a debauching influence on the whole civil service and the entire community.”6 Thurston’s outburst of offended virtue, and Gibson’s inability to stop the tirade in a chamber where he had so long had the last word, showed how the tide was turning.

Soon after this shouting match, Thurston introduced a resolution calling for an investigation of complaints that voters on Lanai (where he had successfully stood for election in a district that also included the island of Molokai) had been coerced by Gibson and his son Henry into voting for legislative candidates supporting the government. Gibson, noting that he had not set foot on Lanai for seven years, seconded the motion and suggested that his son-in-law Fred Hayselden, who had been elected to the assembly from Honolulu, be named to the special investigating committee, since he “understood the whole situation on the island of Lanai.”7 Hayselden was appointed, along with one other Gibson partisan and three opposition legislators. Sanford Dole joined the debate to cast lawyerly doubt on Gibson’s having relinquished control over the Lanai ranch and on his seeming candor in welcoming the investigation.

The committee split in a predictable way: the three opposition members found Gibson to be “guilty” of the offense charged, while the two governmental party members found to the contrary. The entire legislature, by a similarly predictable vote, adopted the minority report exonerating Gibson.8 So Gibson won in the Legis-
lative Assembly, but the opposition press kept at him with the findings of the committee report that pronounced him guilty of subverting the election.

In and out of the legislature there were continual complaints about government extravagance and about how the plantation owners and other men of wealth, denied fair representation in the cabinet, were being taxed to death. Extravagance in public spending is ever a matter of values. The opposition did not object to spending for immigration of field hands, for harbor and road development, or, up to a point, for education or for public health. However, they bitterly resented having their tax dollars wasted on fripperies at Iolani Palace and gunboat idiocies for Gibson’s “Empire of the Calabash.” Actually, during Gibson’s administration tax collections had increased only modestly. Nor were the imposts of the kingdom (which relied on poll taxes as well as the property taxes felt by the planters and businessmen) especially heavy on the Caucasian population, though the newspapers and opposition spokesmen screamed otherwise. Prosperity of the growing sugar industry between 1884 and 1887 under the reciprocity treaty with the United States boosted profits, but no credit for that went to the government.

The opposition did in fact have a cause of concern in the rising public debt of the kingdom. Despite a pro forma message from the king urging the legislature “to take every step towards retrenchment of public expenditures,” the 1886 budget was in the red by $2 million—as much as all tax revenues for the biennium. Spreckels, who held much of the Hawaii debt since the Kalakaua coinage deal in 1884, grew worried about his investment. Gibson never was a close crony of Claus Spreckels, though he did perform the rites of friendship, to the point of encouraging Talula to name her fourth son Henry Claus (number three having been named after David Kalakaua). Henry Claus Hayselden died in his second year and by then his grandfather had often heard the rough side of the Sugar King’s tongue. Gibson complained to his diary: “He is as ruthless as he is shrewd ... an irascible old millionaire who addresses one in a most insulting manner.”

The old millionaire had strong language for Kalakaua as well. He publicly rebuked him for his extravagance and in mid-1886 forced him and Gibson to replace two of the four cabinet ministers
with his own henchmen, hastily granted denization by Kalakaua to make them eligible for office. John Dare, who had been Spreckels’ lawyer in San Francisco, was named attorney general. Robert Creighton, who had recently come from California at the command of Spreckels to edit the Pacific Commercial Advertiser, was made foreign minister under Gibson, who temporarily shifted over to the interior ministry. Grilled by Thurston and other opposition legislators as to why the champion of native Hawaiian leaders would take as associates two politically inexperienced haole newcomers, Gibson could only reply that it was the wish of His Majesty. Thurston asked if he meant His Majesty Kalakaua or His Majesty Spreckels. Another round to Thurston.

Spreckels’ heavy-handed interference was intended to restrain his catspaws in Honolulu. As a major taxpayer and holder of more than half of the $1,300,000 in government bonds then outstanding, he did not countenance the dissipation of funds on such romantic nonsense as the Polynesian Federation. He became furious when he discovered that at Kalakaua’s instruction Gibson had been in touch with London financiers. The object: to see if Lombard Street would underwrite a $2 million bond issue, reluctantly authorized by the legislature on September 1, 1886, and approved by the king four hours after final passage.

Spreckels demanded to be included in any syndicate formed to market the bond issue and insisted that the bonds he already held be given priority in any payment of interest or principal. A conference hastily called in San Francisco drafted an amendment to the new loan act in order to satisfy him. Spreckels took the first ship to Honolulu, to watch from the legislature’s gallery as the amendment was urgently introduced and debated. He correctly surmised that the vote on the amendment would test the strength of his control over the Hawaiian government.

Gibson was once more caught in the middle. His pride and that of his king had again been publicly offended by the crude dictation of the capitalist watching from the gallery. The amendment required by Spreckels gave more ammunition to the opposition, since it offered a generous commission to the marketing syndicate that would make the real cost of borrowing far greater than the 6 percent interest the bonds were to carry on their face. However, Spreckels held a $35,000 mortgage on the Lanai sheep ranch and
would be ruthless in foreclosure should payment lag, and Gibson seldom had a comfortable bank balance.

Consequently, as the sharp debate over the Spreckels amendment proceeded, Gibson let new Attorney General Dare defend the measure. It was voted down, 23 to 14, as several members of the government party voted with the opposition. Spreckels sailed back to San Francisco with no aloha from Kalakaua, no serenade by the Royal Hawaiian Band, and no thanks to Gibson. The triumvirate that had shaped the state policy of Hawaii for four years was finished.

And so was Gibson’s cabinet. Creighton and Dare resigned and once again Gibson presented to his king a ministry formed of three Hawaiians and himself, again as minister of foreign affairs. It was to be his last government.

The old man’s health was worsening. A party in January 1887 to mark his sixty-fifth birthday (the sixty-third according to the newspapers) was attended by more than a thousand guests, including the heir apparent, Princess Liliuokalani. She wrote in her diary that day: “63 years old, but he looks all of 78. Poor Gibson, why should they put all the blame on him only?”

He had grown thin and his erect figure was beginning to stoop. More and more often, catarrh and a racking cough kept him at home, unable even to visit Mother Marianne at the Branch Hospital.

Gibson gathered his failing strength and political force for one more sortie for glory. Remembering again his uncle’s promise that a splendor awaited him in the islands of Oceania, recalling the international excitement caused by one small ship, the Flirt, he sought more urgently the vessel promised to Bush to support his mission to Samoa. It would serve as the nucleus of the Hawaiian navy, even as the Flirt, with better luck, might have served Guatemala and the Republic of Central American States. Not many ships were available for the amount of money available in the ill-stocked treasury. At a purchase price of $20,000 he found the Explorer, a British steamer of 171 tons, veteran of the copra and guano trade, then in Honolulu undergoing repairs. Refitted, armed with six small cannon and two Gatling guns, and commissioned the Kaimiloa (“far seeker” or “explorer”), the ship was put under the command of George E. F. Jackson, late of the British navy and now principal of the Honolulu reform school for boys.
With him, Jackson brought two dozen of his older charges to round out the crew as apprentice seamen. A detachment of the King’s Guard went aboard as marines.

The Kaimiloa was ordered by Secretary of the Navy Gibson to proceed at top speed—five knots, smoking furiously—to Samoa, where Jackson was to assist the Hawaii mission. Departure was delayed by a drunken brawl aboard ship in Honolulu Harbor, which resulted in the dismissal of three officers, leaving Captain Jackson with a larger share of the liquor stored away. Through the good luck that sometimes rescues drunken navigators, he (barely!) found Samoa and made port at Apia on June 15, 1887.

The initial impression made by the crew of the Kaimiloa was favorable. The reform-school boys had formed a band that gave concerts appreciated by the Samoans and foreigners gathered at Apia. The German government, however, was not pleased, and the corvette Adler was set to shadowing the Kaimiloa as it put in and out of Apia Harbor on errands for the Hawaii mission. The German consul, suspecting that the Hawaiians were in league with the United States to seize control of Samoa, called for an attack squadron to reinforce the Adler.12

The prospect of the German Empire engaging in an act of war with the Kingdom of Hawaii was dissolved by something equally ludicrous. Aboard the Kaimiloa, Captain Jackson fell sick and the crew, exemplary in their conduct until then, seized the liquor supply and began a brawl that threatened to become a mutiny. The attentive Adler came alongside and boarded the Hawaiian ship in time to prevent some of the drunks from setting fire to the powder magazine.

Before the last act in this naval farce was played, Gibson had sent a letter to Commissioner Bush, whose own bouts of drunkenness had been reported, recalling him to Honolulu and ordering the mission to Samoa closed. Bush was sufficiently sober to refuse passage on the Kaimiloa and stayed on for some months as private adviser to Malietoa. The brief fling at primacy for Hawaii was over. Only the dream and the grand rhetoric of Gibson remained, extolling Hawaii’s experience and position to serve as a bridge among the peoples of the Pacific. This idea was implanted, however, as the continuing international aspiration of Hawaii.13

The debacle of Gibson’s Samoan adventure sharpened the deter-
mination of his political enemies to get rid of the man and his pernicious influence on Kalakaua. The organization of a group of prominent Honolulu men, mostly haoles, had been secretly proceeding since late 1886, when Sanford Dole, Lorrin Thurston, and others had formed the Hawaiian League, a clandestine society dedicated to bringing down Gibson’s government and replacing it with one of their choosing. Members of the league were divided on the question of seeking annexation to the United States but strongly united in opposing actual rule by Kalakaua or by any premier beholden to him.

The Hawaiian League quickly acquired a military arm. It was the Honolulu Rifles, an existing voluntary militia, also mostly haole, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Volney V. Ashford (an attorney whose brother Clarence was then counseling Mrs. St. Clair in her breach-of-promise action against Gibson). Through the first half of 1887 both the league and the Honolulu Rifles energetically recruited sympathetic residents to their overlapping memberships and by June had enrolled some five hundred men. Colonel Ashford, breathing fire and frightening the decent lawyers, doctors, and businessmen of the league with talk about hanging Gibson and then executing Kalakaua, had more than two hundred men under arms and drilling regularly.

Gibson, increasingly possessed by the fevers of his disease, his impossible love for Mother Marianne, and his ambition for a Polynesian empire, began to lose touch with reality. He utterly neglected his first duty in protecting the king and his own government: to have more guns than the opposition. Most of the money appropriated for the ceremonial royal household guard had gone for uniforms and for the musical instruments of the Royal Hawaiian Military Band. While the guardsmen in Iolani Barracks polished their boots and brass buttons and the band practiced the new waltzes from Vienna, Colonel Ashford and his officers brought in Springfield rifles and carbines and drilled their recruits in the use of guns and bayonets.

The powder train leading to Iolani Palace was laid and it was Kalakaua himself who ignited the spark. A scandal implicating him personally gave Thurston, Dole, and associates occasion for the revolutionary action they were seeking. Legislation enacted in 1886 over the objections of the opposition members had estab-
lished a legal monopoly for opium sales throughout the kingdom. One applicant for the license, a rice planter named Tong Aki, swore in an affidavit that he had paid $71,000 to Kalakaua, only to be told later that the cabinet had awarded the monopoly to the merchant Chung Lung for $80,000. When Kalakaua refused to refund the $71,000, saying it was already spent, Aki went to the newspapers. The story, based on a dozen affidavits and run by the Hawaiian Gazette late in May 1887, angered many in the community, including some who had generally supported the king and his government. When, a few weeks later, stories of the travesty of Hawaii’s gunboat fiasco in Samoa were retailed by the newspapers, indignation against the regime heated up. The time was ripe and the Hawaiian League was ready for action.

In the last week of June 1887, notices were posted around Honolulu calling for a public protest meeting to be held at the armory of the Honolulu Rifles, one block from Iolani Palace. An informer planted by Gibson warned him of the rising storm but he, sick and bemused by his infatuation, took no effective steps to head off the revolt. The customshouse staff did seize a shipment of rifles, but the lawyers in the league readily got a court order for its release and more enemies of the regime were recruited, each issued a gun and five hundred or more cartridges. The fancy-dress King’s Guard was no match for the Honolulu Rifles, and everyone knew it.

Gibson was further distracted. He was served with a court summons by Mrs. St. Clair’s lawyer and he was being pressed by Kalakaua to repurchase a controlling interest in the Pacific Commercial Advertiser, so that the government would have one reliably friendly voice in town. (Chung Lung, licensee for the opium monopoly, helpfully advanced $3,000 toward the purchase price.) A new representative had to be sent to Samoa to clean up after Bush and the Kaimiloa. More than ever, Mother Marianne was on his mind. Who would protect her and the other sisters if the reformers came to power and threw him out of office?

On June 26, 1887, he wrote in his diary that there were “increasing rumors about public discontent, and that there is an armed league in opposition to the Government.” The next day the two Hawaiian members of his cabinet, Aholo and Kanoa, resigned without notice. A hurried visit to the palace showed that
Kalakaua, badly shaken, was prepared to give in to the demands of the radical opposition. Supreme Court Justice Richard Bickerton could offer no hope of legal protection against a coup d’etat.

The message was clear: Gibson was isolated. On June 28 he resigned for himself and his ministry. ("Hope that our resignations will quiet the public feeling" was his diary entry.) He then rode off to the convent at Kakaako to tell Mother Marianne and receive the sympathy he craved.

Far from quieting the public, the news that Gibson had fallen brought out a large and excited crowd to the June 30 mass meeting already called by the Hawaiian League. Kalakaua accepted Colonel Ashford’s information that he had ordered out the Honolulu Rifles to prevent any violence. As Sanford Dole later wrote: "While the troops were patrolling the streets under nominal orders of the government, they were actually under orders of the League."15

Without having to fire a shot, the revolutionists had won, but the dramatic forms of the revolution had to be acted out. Thurston, clad in the uniform of the Honolulu Rifles, came before the armory meeting to present resolutions calling for the instant dismissal of Walter M. Gibson "from each and every office held by him under the government" and for his replacement as prime minister by any of four men named in one of the resolutions—all members of the Hawaiian League.

As if rehearsed, Charles Bishop then came forward to read a letter, just received from Kalakaua. The king obediently named one of the four, merchant William L. Green, as Gibson’s successor. It was turnabout, since Gibson had replaced Green at the head of the government in 1882. Thurston then returned to the rostrum to entertain the crowd with a story that he was reminded of by Kalakaua’s capitulation: “I remember reading somewhere of a man who was going to shoot a coon, and the coon said: ‘Don’t shoot; I’ll come down.’ The King is the coon and this meeting is the gun.”16

While the speech-making was going on, Gibson had sent Fred, Talula, and their children to the comparative safety of his beach house in Waikiki. Then he hurried to the convent to get some expense vouchers signed and to bid goodbye to Mother Marianne. Sister Leopoldina Burns answered the door, surprised to see him standing there, “his bowed white head, drooping shoulders and
snow white beard…. I hurried away to call Mother and the Sisters. In a few minutes we were all gathered around him. We were grieved, he had been so kind and fatherly to us. His words were not many, but very kind. ‘You need not fear,’ he said, ‘they will not harm you, it is only me they are after.’”

Gibson returned to Aliiolani Hale, the government building, now a hubbub of confusion with office staff, militiamen, and curious onlookers milling around. He sent a note to Colonel Ashford, requesting protection from possible violence. Ashford sent a detachment of the Rifles to guard Gibson’s King Street residence, with the warning that if he attempted to leave it he would be shot instantly.

That evening a mob gathered around the house. Daniel Lyons, a newspaperman who had worked with Gibson on the Elele Poakolu and the Pacific Commercial Advertiser, braved the crowd to help the old man wait out the anxious night.

Next morning, July 1, Fred Hayselden returned to Gibson’s residence from the beach house. Gibson was talking with him in the parlor when Colonel Ashford entered and brusquely ordered them to take their hats and follow him. (Ashford, who could be “vicious” according to Thurston, was enraged by the arrival in Honolulu Harbor that morning of an Australian steamer carrying a large shipment of guns, said to be consigned to a friend of the fallen government.)

Outside, a detachment of Honolulu Rifles closed around the pair and marched them off to the Pacific Navigation Company warehouse on the wharf at the foot of Nuuanu Street. They were shut up in a stifling sail loft for several hours, while the Rifles awaited further orders. When Gibson saw ropes being readied for a lynching, he chewed and painfully swallowed a note from Mother Marianne, which he had been carrying in a pocket. Suddenly Talula was there, fiercely pushing her way through the astonished guard, to join her husband and her father.

By that time word had reached the less bloodthirsty Committee of Thirteen, directors of the Hawaiian League, that Colonel Ashford intended to hang Gibson and Hayselden from the yardarm of a ship in the harbor—to strike terror into the community, he said. The committee hastily ordered Ashford to return his two prisoners to Gibson’s residence. They remained there only briefly...
before being formally arrested on a charge of embezzling government funds while in office. Once more they were marched through the hot streets, this time to the police station for booking. Again they ran the gauntlet of jeering crowds on the way back to Gibson’s house, where they remained under heavy guard to ensure that there was no escape and no lynching.

There they stayed for three days and nights, while the Committee of Thirteen established its control over Honolulu and directed a search of government records and Gibson’s papers to find evidence of his alleged crimes against the state. A rumor that Gibson and Kalakaua were preparing a countercoup again excited the nervous revolutionaries, and on July 6 they ordered Gibson and Hayselden to be confined in Oahu jail. Their case was continued to Monday, July 11, 1887.

A diligent search unearthed no evidence to support the embezzlement charges or any other criminal wrong-doing, so in the evening of July 11, Clarence Ashford, now attorney general in the Green cabinet, presented a motion of nolle prosequi. Gibson and his son-in-law were freed.

Freedom meant that Gibson could choose where he would go. Except for his family and Mother Marianne, there was little to keep him in Hawaii. Kalakaua had cast him off, no group of Hawaiians had arisen to defend him. The distasteful breach-of-promise suit would soon come to trial. He was weak and dispirited, wanting a change of place and climate to recover from the harsh abuse and rejection he had suffered. A ship in Honolulu Harbor was about to sail for California. The Hawaiian League wanted him gone; he was willing.

The next morning, July 12, 1887, his dear ones came to say goodbye. Mother Marianne with Sister Crescentia called before breakfast bringing their gifts—a prayer book, a comforter, “and the assurances of faithful, pure affection,” as he wrote in his diary. Soon after came Talula, Fred, and their five children. Then there were Edith Turton, a long-time friend of Talula’s, and Fanny Bickerton, wife of the justice who was later to preside over Gibson’s breach-of-promise trial. No one else. No one came from the palace, the House of Nobles, or the Legislative Assembly. None of the many who had served with him in the successive ministries, no one from the Board of Education, the Board of Health, the diplo-
matic corps, the Royal Orders of Kamehameha or Kapiolani; not even a member of the press came to see him off. Oblivion had already begun to descend on the man of many hats, many tongues, and shining dreams who had so long held the center of the public stage.

After an early lunch, a carriage came to take Gibson to the wharf. He was accompanied only by Paul Neumann, once his attorney general, now his counsel in defense against Mrs. St. Clair’s suit, and by the loyal Dan Lyons. They went out to the ship. Fittingly, she was the barkentine *Spreckels*, bound for San Francisco and ready to sail. Gibson shook hands with the harbor pilot, was welcomed aboard by Captain Friis, and went below to his cabin as the anchor was hauled in.²² He had not the strength to watch the flags atop Iolani Palace, the whitewashed convent and hospital buildings at Kakaako, the palm trees shadowing his beach home at Waikiki, the receding coastline of Oahu as they slipped past, and with them all his dreams for glory in the shining islands under the blazing sun.
Death and Disappearance

The Spreckels, beating against strong trade winds, took twenty-five days to sail from Honolulu to San Francisco. Bundled against the fog and cold of the bay, Gibson stepped ashore on August 6, 1887, to find reporters waiting for him. He put them off until he had visited David McKinley, the Hawaiian consul general, to learn the news from Honolulu. After registering at the Occidental Hotel on Montgomery Street, he again returned to the “misera-bly cold” streets to call on financial agents to arrange for transferring funds from Hawaii. Gibson was again met by reporters. Frail as he was, the old man still provided good copy.

He had come to San Francisco, one reporter wrote, “for a vacation and the benefit of my health.” He intended to consult the best physicians about his old bronchial trouble. “I shall not remain here, however, but shall soon return to Honolulu in a few weeks ... when the recent difficulty has quieted down.”

Asked about the new constitution that the members of the Hawaiian League had pressed upon Kalakaua, greatly reducing the king’s authority and imposing a property qualification for voting, which effectively disenfranchised most native Hawaiians, Gibson replied that it was “undoubtedly beneficial,” though it might need some modifications. Asked to comment on the revolution and its causes, Gibson was equally detached and unbitter.

The revolution was brought about by the determination of the old families to have the control of the Government in their own hands. The principal element in the cause of dissension was foreigners against natives. A great outcry against extravagance was raised because the King spent $15,000 on his birthday jubilee.... But aside from his alleged extravagance, Kalakaua is a good ruler.... After all
the King has done [as in gaining a reciprocity treaty from the United States] the people could afford to be generous.”

His plans for the future? “I shall return to my private interests, but shall have nothing more to do with public affairs.”

A few days later, Gibson elaborated on the events of his expulsion from the kingdom, this time to the San Francisco Chronicle. His arrest by the revolutionaries had taken him by surprise, he said, but in any case he had long been wanting to travel in the United States, “both for pleasure and to recruit my health.” Just before his arrest, he added, Kalakaua had proposed to step down from the throne and appoint Gibson as his regent and to stand trial on the opium license charges. Gibson said he dissuaded the king from that dangerous course.

The cold weather, and perhaps too much talking, brought on hoarseness and severe coughing spasms, and on August 10, 1887, Gibson was persuaded to enter St. Mary’s Hospital on Rincon Street, overlooking San Francisco Bay. He was given a private room on the third floor with a fine view of the harbor. There he remained for two months. Removal of nasal polyps helped his breathing, but after the operation the doctors discovered a much more serious problem. It was no mere catarrh he suffered from. His left lung was riddled by tuberculosis. The persistent cough now had an ominous sound.

Nevertheless he was impatient to be about, and a greater ease of breathing after the operation allowed Gibson to leave his bed, first to attend mass in the hospital chapel. In Protestant Honolulu, not to embarrass Kalakaua and the government, Gibson had concealed his conversion to Catholicism the previous April. Here, in the care of the sisters of St. Mary’s Hospital (“what a glorious company of sweet, good women they are!”), he was free to enjoy the rites of the religion he had embraced. From the organ loft of the hospital chapel he watched two nuns taking their vows—“a most impressive ceremony.” He visited the Home of the Aged and Infirm Females and, with more evident enjoyment, to judge from his diary entries, the wing of the convent where the novices lived before taking their vows as nuns.

Once allowed out of the hospital, he explored San Francisco with his old enthusiasm for the sights of a cosmopolitan city. A
ride on the Market and Kearney streetcars was a joy after a long confinement. Buggy rides under sunny skies to the Presidio barracks, to Golden Gate Park, and out to the Cliff House were like a blessing from above. He visited downtown shops to buy religious pictures and a small vase of elegant design for the Novitiate and took pleasure from the praise of the novices when he presented it. To his granddaughters he sent gold bangles; to his grandsons a watch and a music box. For son Henry he bought a pair of riding boots and a fine pocket knife. It was also time to pay the bills that had been piling up, including one of $116 to Detective Curtins for investigating the history of Mrs. St. Clair in California before she came to sell art books in Honolulu.

Distasteful news came on the next ship from Honolulu, on November 17. The jury there had found for Mrs. St. Clair and awarded her heart balm of $10,000. Small wonder, he thought, after reading that the jury included several members of the Hawaiian League but not a single native Hawaiian. However, the next mail brought a letter from Paul Neumann, his attorney in the case, saying that he and Fred Hayselden had persuaded the other side to settle for $8,000, in return for their agreement not to appeal the verdict.

Better still, there was a letter from Mother Marianne in response to his. “Sweet, noble, inspiring,” he wrote in his diary; it made him very happy. Another envelope from her on November 29, only eleven days later! “How happy the letter ... has made me—a faithful loving soul.” Letters from Talula, Fred, and the grandchildren were dutifully noted, as well as one from John S. Walker, president of the 1886 Hawaii Legislature, whom Gibson had named as the executor of his will.

December brought bad weather and a return of his racking spells of coughing. Exposure to the cold wind on the night of the eleventh did him no good. About 7:00 P.M., a fire broke out in the chapel hospital and Gibson, with agonizing pain in his back, was forced out into the street with the other patients. It took hours for the firemen to bring water up from the bay to douse the flames before they could spread to the hospital proper. Gibson was fearful that the personal papers in his room might be burned. They probably included a history of Hawaii he had been writing and which a Mrs. Williams was copying “in a fair hand.” He had earlier
told reporters that his revelations about the 1887 revolution would drop “a large-sized bombshell into the camp of his enemies.” That night the papers escaped destruction, but ultimately they disappeared and his history was never printed.

From the night of the fire, Gibson took a chill that reversed his brief recovery. During most of December 1887 he was prostrate, oppressed by an unrelenting, painful tightness in his chest that often kept him sleepless. The alarm of the fire lingered, and somehow the remembered threat of the flames set him to reflecting on the repeated disasters of his life. Dreams and destruction. How each dream had ended in painful loss or frustration!

The earliest, a shimmering vision of fame and wealth in Oceania brought by his “uncle.” (Had that uncle really visited the family before they left England? Had he really made all those promises about how high he would climb in the fabulous islands of the East?) How close to fulfillment that promise had seemed on Sumatra, before the Dutch, those gross, money-grubbing poltroons—so like the Hawaii missionary sons with their gloomy God and smug assurance of superiority over the natives—had thrown him into the prison of Weltevreden. They too, like the missionaries, had wanted to put a rope around his neck, finally to choke off the speech that they could not answer.

The elegant little Flirt, crammed with guns for General Carrera in Guatemala, had promised a quick start in the pursuit of power and wealth, but some jealous informer had scuttled that plan. Who could it have been? That young passenger, Frank Whittlesey, who had later sued him because the Flirt made port in the Cape Verde Islands instead of South America?

How many accusations and how many trials! By the Dutch for inciting treason. By Whittlesey for damages on the Flirt. By the Mormons in excommunicating him. By William Armstrong for libel. By the owners of the Madras over the smallpox quarantine. By the Hawaiian League for embezzlement. And now, most disgusting, the breach-of-promise suit by that St. Clair woman. He should have read for the law, but what dry reading that would have been! No place for Camoens or the Hindu poets.

But back to the dreams. How charming was the dream of love with Rachel in the forests of Carolina! How bitter it was to lose her, so young! What was the verse of Camoens ...?
Gentle spirit mine, 
Thou who didst depart this earth 
Before thy time, 
May’st thou be given rest eternal 
With the bless’d, 
Though I still abide in anguish 
On this earth.?

No woman had ever again engaged his heart until the dear Mother Marianne answered his call. Mother Marianne ... more like a daughter but yet something of a mother to him, too. And how stupidly, how blindly, he had shocked her with that rashly engraved golden ring. Even should he return to Hawaii, their old ease of intimate talk could never be resumed.

It was all lost. Aside from his children and grandchildren, what would remain? What dream was not shattered? Who would keep alive that best vision, to teach and raise up the people of Hawaii, of all Polynesia and Oceania, of uniting them to resist the sons of missionaries and the men of business, who valued them not? He had devised for Kalakaua’s navy a banner with an ascending sun, his own emblem since childhood. That orb was now eclipsed before it could clear the horizon. The golden sun of the Pacific. How it had bedazzled and finally destroyed him, as it had Phaethon.

The doctors injected morphine to bring him sleep, and gentle nursing gradually brought back tolerable comfort, even a taste for food. Best of all, another “delightful” letter from Mother Marianne came with the mail before New Year’s. Gibson also received news that Kalakaua was expected to take a stand against the Reform Party, as the Hawaiian League was now called. “Doubtful,” he wrote in his diary.

Improvement in his health and the stimulus of the holiday season led Gibson to venture out again for short drives, though the weather had turned cold. At the end of the first week of 1888, he felt well enough to go to the photographer’s studio to have his portrait taken. En route, Gibson removed his overcoat and was chilled. He caught cold and his old pleurisy returned, agonizingly.

For a fortnight he endured the racking cough and chest pains. The doctors then told him he might not recover, for now it was pneumonia. Gibson immediately asked that a priest be sent,
made his confession, was anointed and received Holy Viaticum. Through the final seige he remained in full command of his wits and enlivened by his still active imagination.

Toward the end, Sister Mary Emmanuel applied a relic of the True Cross and, as soon as the spasm of pain had passed, Gibson had a true story to tell her. It seemed that through the bishop at Honolulu the sisters at the Kakaako leper hospital had received from the Vatican a gold cross, about an inch long, in which was set a sliver of the True Cross. Gibson said that though the nuns of course greatly valued the relic, on one occasion they lent it to him as a protection from danger, when he had to make a crossing among the islands in a small tugboat. True enough, he said, it did save him from drowning. A towering wave crashed over the boat and the sailors were sure he was lost. But they found him, safe in a coil of line on deck, wet to the skin—that is, all but the pocket in which he had put the gold cross. That pocket was perfectly dry!18

In the afternoon of January 21, 1888, five days past his sixty-sixth birthday, Gibson quietly died. The underlying cause of death was reported as consumption, the immediate causes being pneumonia and pleurisy. At his deathbed were George E. G. Jackson, briefly admiral of the Hawaiian navy, and F. L. Clarke, former resident of Honolulu, then lecturing in San Francisco. The last word they heard from Gibson’s lips was “Hawaii.”9

A requiem high mass for the soul of Walter Murray Gibson was sung at St. Mary’s Cathedral in San Francisco the next day, Sunday. His body was embalmed for return to Hawaii on the steamship Zealandia, sailing February 10.

The telegraph carried the news of Gibson’s death across the United States, and newspapers from Salt Lake City to New York and Savannah carried long biographical accounts, some embellished with storybook bravado that Gibson might have admired. Word did not reach Honolulu, however, until the Australia brought newspapers on February 8. The local press, which had been carrying scare stories of how the old fox was planning his return to the chicken coop, hastily adopted sober tones in announcing his death. Even so, the Daily Bulletin took editorial notice, with seeming satisfaction, that the news “did not cause a ripple on the surface of our city life. The hurry and push of business went on as usual, and only a few personal friends and newspaper reporters paid any attention.”10
The *Hawaii Gazette* reported the arrival of Gibson’s body with the special indelicacy it had customarily reserved for him in life.

It seems that the bones of the ex-Premier of Hawaii are not to be allowed to rest in peace. They return to Honolulu today by the Zealandia, being cleared at the Custom House with the following mark and significant appendages: “W. M. Gibson. One Corpse. No Value.”

The column went on to say that while Gibson had left only a small amount of cash in a California bank, his properties amounted to $10 million. The *Zealandia* arrived on Friday morning, February 21, to be met by a large crowd. Twelve native men carried the coffin, now covered with a Hawaiian flag, from the wharf to a waiting hearse. Some 150 members of the Ahahui Poola (Society of Stevedores) and of the Ahahui Opiopio (Youth Society) drew the hearse to Halaaniani, the Gibson residence, across from Iolani Palace. They placed the coffin, black and trimmed in gold, in the large reception room of the Hawaii Music Hall, next door to the Gibson home. The lid of the coffin was removed, so that the face and chest could be seen through a glass plate.

The body lay there in state the next day, Saturday. Native Hawaiians bearing *kahili*—the tall feather standards normally carried only for royalty and paramount chiefs—stood at each side of the bier. Elaborate floral pieces were placed at the head and foot. Mother Marianne and her sisters from the leper hospital at Kakaako stood vigil all day, while a long stream of mourners and others filed past the coffin. Hawaiians predominated. “Their manifestations of sorrow and grief were touching,” the *Daily Bulletin* reported.

Not all viewers were touched. As Sanford B. Dole was leaving the government building nearby on King Street, he said to his brother George and to Lorrin A. Thurston—all victors of the recent revolution—“Well, shall we go and see old Gibson?” They joined the crowd moving slowly past the windowed coffin and were shocked to see how the embalming had turned the skin very dark, strongly contrasting with the white hair and beard. Out on the street, Judge Dole asked: “What do you think of it?” His brother paused to consider. “Well, I think his complexion is approaching the color of his soul.”
The funeral on Sunday afternoon drew even larger crowds, again mostly Hawaiians. Long before the appointed time of 2:45 P.M., throngs had gathered at the Gibson house, at the Palace square nearby on King Street, and at the Catholic cathedral on Fort Street, some blocks away. Father Leonor, the priest who at Gibson’s request had arranged to bring Mother Marianne and her company of nuns to Hawaii, held a short service in the room where the body had lain in state. He then led a procession down King Street and up Fort Street to Our Lady of Peace Cathedral, which was already filled to overflowing.

Bishop Koeckemann and Father Sylvester met the funeral cortège at the cathedral entrance. Acolytes carrying candles and swinging censers followed the cross held aloft by a priest as the coffin was borne up the aisle. Seated nearest the coffin were the chief mourners: Talula and Fred Hayselden, their five children, son Henry Gibson, and Jesse Morehead, Gibson’s nephew from Carolina who had been working on the Lanai ranch. Nearby were Mother Marianne and the other Franciscan sisters.

Among the notables at the cathedral rites were John O. Dominis, governor of Oahu and husband to Princess Liliuokalani; Jonathan Austin, the Hawaii minister of foreign affairs; George Merrill, U.S. resident minister; James Wodehouse, the British commissioner; A. de Souza Canavarro, the Portuguese commissioner; William Irwin, the local partner of Claus Spreckels; banker Samuel M. Damon, son of Gibson’s old friend, the Reverend Samuel Damon; Colonel Volney Ashford of the Honolulu Rifles; and Curtis P. Iaukea, chamberlain to the king. Kalakaua was absent.

The bishop spoke briefly, first in English and then in Hawaiian. He said that Gibson had died a Catholic and was entitled to the rites of the church. The prelate concluded with the safest caution in the Scriptures: “Let him who is without fault among you cast the first stone.”

After the service, a long procession followed the coffin to the place of burial. It reversed the route to the cathedral: down King Street—passing Iolani Palace on the left side and on the right first the Gibson residence and then the government building where Gibson had so long been in office. At the crossing of Punchbowl Street, the cortège passed near the armory where the revolutionaries of 1887 had cried out for his arrest and banishment.
More than a hundred Hawaiians slowly drew the hearse toward its destination, following the beat of the muffled drums of the Royal Hawaiian Band at the head of the procession. Along the route, silent crowds watched, many of them falling in behind the long line of mourners trailing the hearse. At last, a mile or more from the cathedral, the cortege turned into the Catholic cemetery off King Street. At the graveside, Father Leonor performed the last rites. They were simple, since it was understood that the interment was only temporary, until a family tomb could be prepared on Lanai.

Gibson’s commentary on the belated adulation of Camoens when the poet was entombed are relevant for his own funeral services.

Oh, mockery of grief that is poured out upon a cold stone,—rather than on a warm loving breast. Pass by, and waste not your tardy tears upon the unresponsive dirt! ... away with your barren sympathy! The sun of love that shone only for you, has set.13

The Honolulu Daily Bulletin closed its editorial account on its old foe: “He had his friends and he had his enemies. Let us speak kindly of the dead if our profession of Christianity is anything more than a hollow pretense.”14

Mother Marianne wrote to her superior at Syracuse. “Indeed, our loss is great.... It seemed that nothing gave him pleasure but to serve and wait upon us. I have never in all my life met a man like him. We miss him. He had great plans laid out—what all he was going to do for us if God had spared his life. God only knows the why of all the great trials and mean persecution He allowed to come over this poor man, perhaps to purify his heart for Heaven—with a bleeding heart I must say God’s will be done in all things.”15
RECOVERED from the solemnity of Gibson’s funeral, members of the Hawaiian League and newspaper editors who had been frustrated at the failure to discover evidence of his embezzlement of government funds waited for it to show up when his estate was subjected to the scrutiny of probate. They confidently expected his hoard to be in the millions.

Talula and Fred Hayselden sailed to San Francisco to ascertain what Gibson had left there. In all, it was appraised at $3,946.15—$2,230.15 in cash, the rest being the value of his medals (Hawaiian, Japanese, Papal; from France, Persia, Siam, and even Holland), of his court uniform, his sword, and a flag of the Hawaiian Kingdom.

In Hawaii, his estate comprised the King Street residence and the Lanai ranch, both going to the Hayseldens. The home furnishings had already been auctioned off to pay the breach-of-promise settlement and other debts. Declared value of the ranch, net of the mortgage held by William G. Irwin, Spreckels’ partner in Honolulu, approximated $60,000. That was all.

(The Hayseldens later formed a company to raise sugarcane on the relatively moist windward side of the Lanai ranch. It failed in 1901 and the property passed into other hands.)
THE triumph of the Hawaiian League, first in throwing out Gibson in 1887 and then in overthrowing the monarchy six years later, completely expunged the name of Walter Murray Gibson from the list of those to be publicly recognized in Hawaii. In a community that has been unusually gracious in awarding at least a glint of immortality to a wide variety of men and women, he is not commemorated. Oahu streets bear the names of saloon keepers, a plumber, a bookkeeper, a jockey, the superintendent of a fertilizer plant—and his wife Doris—a streetcar conductor, a house painter, and of seaman Matzie, because he told good yarns. Even Presidents Harding and Coolidge have been so honored, and of course so has the family name of each of the men who imposed the Bayonet Constitution of 1887: Dole, Thurston, Bishop, Ashford, Green.¹

But no street, lane, or alley, no square, park, or public building bears the name of Gibson. There is no bronze tablet mentioning him in restored Iolani Palace, though he was instrumental in its construction. Neither of the statues of Kamehameha the Great—the one across from the Palace in Honolulu or the original casting facing the ocean in Kohala on the island of Hawaii—carries any indication that he was the driving force who caused them to be. No marker in the old government building on King Street, where Gibson served as legislative leader and Minister of Everything for a decade, shows his name. Nowhere is it displayed in the land where he had for so long been at the center of political action as well as controversy.

Even Claus Spreckels, hated in his time as an interloper and as the financial corrupter of Kalakaua, has his street, obscure as

¹
it is, in the Punahou district of Honolulu where he briefly lived. Kalakaua, of course, is the name of the main boulevard through Waikiki. But over the name of the third member of the triumvirate there lies the cover of oblivion, an indication of how deeply he had offended the victors in the struggle to hold power in what had been the Kingdom of Hawaii.

Some reasons for their disfavor are self-evident, based as they were on fundamental differences in political policy. Annexationists were angered by his strident campaign against the cession of Pearl Harbor as prelude to annexation of the entire kingdom. Gibson had attributed that purpose to them early and often—perhaps even before it was clear in their own minds. Even more vexatious to them was Gibson’s glorification of the Hawaiian throne and all its costly ornaments. Not only did it ruin the treasury but it seduced the king from his proper role as merely constitutional monarch with dangerous ambitions to play the autocrat.

Such conceits threatened the prosperity and good order of the islands. Internally, the Hawaiian-speaking and Hawaiian-prefering premier had pitted the native population against the haoles. He kept telling the natives of their ability to govern—not some time in the future, which was conceivable, but immediately, which in the opinion of the opposition leaders was a thought as revolutionary as it was preposterous. This proved him to be a demagogue and a renegade to his own race. If, they maintained, the native commoners would not work productively on the plantations and could not accumulate capital of their own, then they should not have the franchise to elect governments that would squander the taxes paid by hard-working men. (The constitution of 1887 set property qualifications for voting or serving in the legislature which most Hawaiians could not meet. Gibson’s old constituency was abolished.)

Externally, the Hawaii-for-Hawaiians policy of Gibson, and even more his mad dream of a Polynesian confederation, if continued would have threatened the good will of the United States. Leaders of the Hawaiian League, almost all from American families, saw their future and that of Hawai‘i as manifestly linked to the ascendant United States. Many of these leaders were already thinking of annexation as the ultimate goal of their conflict with the monarchy. It was to come within a decade.
Destroying Gibson put the torch to the schemes and constitutional heresies he had promulgated. There would be no acknowledgment of good intentions in the man because in the minds of the victors of 1887 his purposes were wrong, mistaken if not actually vicious.

It was a great relief to them to be rid of such a man. How galling it had been all those years to watch the posturing of this self-appointed champion of the Hawaiians. Dole, Thurston, and other descendants of missionaries were of mostly good conscience about the natives, confident that they well understood and were the true friends of the people of whom their forefathers had made Christians. Then came this religious changeling, first covert Mormon, then secret Catholic, to preach political sermons to them! Granted that what he wrote and some of what he had done to improve the health of the natives was beneficial, but who was to say if he did it because he loved them, or their votes?

His style, his manner set their teeth on edge. He could be so infernally sanctimonious—as about the lepers. All the while, probably, he was profiteering from his contract to supply the leper settlement. That was how the talk went on Merchant Street.

And he could be so superior: the man of the world in little Honolulu, showing off his language skills to European visitors, constantly writing and chatting about poets and new inventions, patronizing the native dances that their fathers had suppressed, forever acting the sophisticate isolated in a provincial town.

His pen and his tongue were sharp. They made men of good will, patriots, taxpayers, community pillars—such as themselves—out to be monopolists, usurers, bigots, and enemies of Hawaii. The barbs from his editorials and political speeches had stung, and many of the wounds still festered.

Must nothing but good be said about the dead? For Gibson, it was nothing.
THE body of Walter Murray Gibson disappeared along with his fame. Family memories hold that when Talula died in 1903, her father’s remains were taken from the Catholic cemetery in Honolulu and placed next to hers in the Episcopalian cemetery in Lahaina, Maui. On the death of Fred Hayselden, the urn containing Talula’s ashes was placed, with her husband’s, in a crypt at Oahu Cemetery in Honolulu. There they may be found today, along with urns bearing the names of the Hayselden children. Of Walter Murray Gibson there is no trace, not in Honolulu nor on Maui or Lanai. Like his favorite poet Camoens, his final resting place, if he has one, is unknown.
A Gibson Album
Gibson's account of his wayward voyage to the East Indies aboard the Flirt and his imprisonment there by the Dutch, given in his book The Prison of Weltevreden, brought him national attention. To the left is the book's dedication page; the drawings of the prison of Weltevreden (below) and a schooner that may be the Flirt (above) are also taken from the book. From his prison cell, Gibson sent a plea for clemency to the governor-general of the Netherlands East Indies. The letter (opposite) was the key document in deciding the outcome of Gibson's claim against the Dutch for false imprisonment and loss of the Flirt.
May it please Your Excellency,

I once more take the liberty of addressing you in relation to my case; and I now deem it necessary, without any feeling of attempt at defence, but rather to throw myself wholly upon Your Excellency's clemency; and that of your government. I am at the moment, at liberty; but expecting incarceration at any time, I must say that I feel this state of uncertainty to be a severe punishment. I know and assure most respectfully, that I have allowed my fancy and my vanity to get the better of my judgment; much of the time, during my stay within the jurisdiction of the British and Indian government. I remember to have indulged in bravadoes, that I would become a potentate in the East; and this to Europeans and Natives, who I cannot suppose attached any more importance to
After accepting Gibson into the Mormon church, Brigham Young (left) sent him on church missions, first to the east coast of the United States and then to the Pacific. In Hawaii, Gibson took over the leadership of the Saints, who were then attempting to create a viable community on the island of Lanai. Gibson's subsequent excommunication left the Lanai lands in his possession.
As newsmaker and editor, Gibson was in the thick of the free-wheeling Honolulu journalism. His paper Ka Nuhou, in Hawaiian and English, carried his own sharp political commentary—primarily to a Hawaiian readership. While he was owner of the Pacific Commercial Advertiser, Gibson's office was on Merchant Street (above center). Henry M. Whitney (left), the most influential newspaper editor in Hawaii at the time, was a constant critic of Gibson.
Kalakaua (above right), king of Hawaii, and Claus Spreckels (above left), king of sugar, were at once Gibson's masters during his premiership and the sources of the power and money he required to dominate political life in Hawaii between 1882 and 1887. Gibson is shown at right.
Gibson took the initiative to have Iolani Palace built and a statue of Kamehameha I erected as enduring monuments to the Hawaiian monarchy. He then staged an elaborate coronation to assert the power and majesty of the throne. The contemporary sketch of the coronation below is from the London Graphic.
The cornerstone of Gibson’s policy was to restore native Hawaiians to physical and political strength—under his leadership. His Sanitary Instructions for Hawaiians was intended to help stem the destruction of the race from disease. Lifting the missionaries’ ban on the hula was an avowal of the worth of Hawaiian culture and traditions. The photograph below shows dancers at Kalakaua’s coronation. Gibson successfully opposed the cession of Pearl Harbor (above) to the United States, angering American leaders in Hawaii who supported the transfer.
Gibson was opposed personally and politically by almost all of the leaders of the American business community in Honolulu, including (clockwise from bottom left) banker Charles R. Bishop; attorney Lorrin A. Thurston; and Sanford B. Dole, future president of the Republic of Hawaii. Henry A. P. Carter (lower right) had a more complex relationship with Gibson. Opposed to him on many issues, he nevertheless effectively represented the kingdom in Washington during Gibson’s premiership.
Gibson's favorite child, Talula (left, in court gown), married Fred H. Hayselden (right). The couple proved effective managers of the family enterprises when the patriarch devoted himself to political life. The Hayseldens, in older age, are shown below at the Lanai ranch.
Mother Marianne (left), head of the group of Franciscan nuns who responded to Gibson's plea for help in caring for lepers in Hawaii, inspired a deep response from the aging Minister of Everything. The sisters served at the Kakaako Branch Hospital for lepers (below), exposed to high water on the beach southeast of central Honolulu. Gibson is standing to the left of Mother Marianne above, in this photograph taken at the Kapiolani Home for Girls at Kakaako near the sisters' convent.
To carry the Hawaiian flag into the farther reaches of Polynesia, Gibson purchased an old cargo ship, the Kaimiloa (below), fitted her with guns, and sent her to Samoa, where his ambassador John Bush sought a treaty of confederation. The mission of the Kaimiloa (above in Honolulu Harbor with Kalakaua aboard) came to an inglorious end. So did that of Ambassador Bush (right, seated center, with Chief Malietoa and attendants).
The Honolulu Rifles (below), a private militia organized by the largely haole leaders who opposed the monarchy, its lavish expenditures, and Gibson, acquired more guns and gunners than could be mustered by the Royal Guard (above), pictured at its barracks near Iolani Palace. The photograph at right shows Col. Volney Ashford, commander of the Honolulu Rifles (seated right), with his staff.
Arrested by Col. Ashford and the Honolulu Rifles, Gibson and his son-in-law Fred Hayselden were threatened with hanging, then put in Oahu Prison (above). Released for lack of evidence of any wrongdoing, Gibson was sent into exile aboard the John Spreckels (left). After his death in San Francisco, Gibson’s body was returned to Honolulu for a funeral service held at Our Lady of Peace Cathedral (below) in Honolulu. Born into the Church of England, a convert to Mormonism, Gibson died a Catholic.
Honolulu ca. 1885
Notes

Abbreviations
AH Hawaii State Archives
FO Foreign Office, Kingdom of Hawaii
FO & Ex. Foreign Office and Executive File, Kingdom of Hawaii
LC Library of Congress
USDS United States Department of State Archives
UH University of Hawaii, Hamilton Library

Chapter 1

1. Gibson consistently claimed to have been born at sea, but the specifics varied. Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote that in 1854 Gibson told him he had been born on an American vessel off the coast of Gibraltar; see Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The English Notebooks*, p. 93, and *Our Old Home: A Series of English Sketches*, vol. 5, p. 36. In his affidavit before a committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, sworn to on August 2, 1856, Gibson simply affirmed that he was “born at sea” (House Report no. 307, 34th Cong., 1st sess., p. 151). Interviewed by a reporter in 1861, Gibson was quoted as saying he was born on a ship in the Bay of Biscay (*San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin*, March 13, 1861).


3. Bishop’s Transcripts, 1814-1823, parish of Stamfordham, Tindaleward, County of Northumberland. Since Walter was baptized in Stamfordham on March 9, 1822, it is most improbable that he had been born on January 16 of that year on a ship off the Spanish coast. The baptism ceremony required the presence of the infant and was not to be performed in absentia. It is highly unlikely that the Gibsons, once embarked for America, would have returned to their village for a baptism.


5. According to Samuel Lewis, in his *A Topographical Dictionary of England* (London, 1831) 2:473, the population of Kearsley numbered eleven. If that census was taken before the emigration of the Gibson family, its members comprised seven-elevenths of the township.


7. *Cahier des Externes*, 1834-1835 and 1835-1836, College of Montreal, sup-
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plied by the college archivist. The teaching staff of the college, comprised of the principal, four professors, and eight tutors, was described contemporaneously as "distinguished for eminence in literature, and skill and activity in the art of instruction" (Newton Bosworth, *Montreal* [1839], pp. 147–148).

8. Notary acts in the archival files of Montreal include one signed by John Gibson, farmer (dated 1831), and another, in the same handwriting, signed by John Gibson, grocer, of Montreal (dated 1836). In light of the fact that the elder Gibson took up the trade of confectioner when the family moved to the United States a few years later, the shift of occupation while in Canada is plausible. It is clear that in 1834 the father was still identified as a farmer, for he was so designated in the death certificates of his sons who died that year.


12. Ibid., pp. 86–87.


17. *Hartwell Sun* (Georgia), July 22, 1887.


19. *Pendleton Messenger* (South Carolina), July 20, 1838.


22. Ibid.


24. When Tallulah (or Talula as her name was later spelled) was baptized as a Mormon in 1860, her baptismal certificate showed her birthday to be Oct. 18, 1843.


27. Ibid., pp. 20–21.

28. Ibid., p. 25.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., p. 30.

31. Ibid.


Chapter 2

1. Few authoritative records remain from which to reconstruct Gibson’s life between the time he left Georgia and when he bought the *Flirt* (1844–1851). Most of the erroneous information that has been written about this period of his
life derives from his fanciful accounts given in interviews with California reporters (San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin, March 13, 1861; Stockton Argus [undated] copied in Honolulu Polynesian, July 13, 1861), while on a public lecture tour before he sailed to Hawaii. Gibson’s own account, which comprises an introductory section of The Prison of Weltevreden and a Glance at The East Indian Archipelago (pp. 18–33), appears essentially correct in what he revealed (except for the story of his birth), but he says nothing of his employment between 1844 and 1851 other than to record his reluctant entry into business (unspecified), his success (also unspecified), and his travels in Mexico (greatly detailed). Writing to the Dutch authorities from Weltevreden prison in 1852, Gibson listed this “Slight outline of early history”: “Removal to New York in 1844; Engaged in mixed manufacturing and commission business; California speculations in 1849; Increase of means, and Mexican travels; Spanish connections, Central America; Chevalier Gomez—acquaintanceship, and consularship for Guatemala; Bought ‘Flirt’ to sell to General Carrera” (extract of letter, dated February 18, 1852, printed in U.S. House of Representatives Report no. 307, 34th Cong., 1st Sess., [1856] p. 154). There is nothing here about his commanding the first steamship to sail the southern coast of the United States. A check of the lists of steamboat captains active in that area reveals no Walter Gibson. Kathleen D. Meilen had access to the early diaries of Gibson, before they were destroyed by his granddaughter, and relied on them in writing An Island Kingdom Passes, an account of the closing decades of the Hawaiian monarchy, in which Gibson figures as a hero. This book is the source of Gibson’s description of his elegant office on Broadway and also of how women pursued him, a rich, young widower: “Amelia, the proud, the magnificent, is now most proudly mine. But mine I would have her be only so far as she is now. I cannot marry her. She does not fit into the pattern of my life. ... I am not free to choose. I must follow my preordained destiny” (p. 56). Meilen also cites the early diaries as the source of Gibson’s ruminations on his estrangement from his parents and brothers, his “pathetically lonely childhood” (p. 52). The destruction of these diaries obliterated all recordings of how Gibson thought of, and referred to, his parental family. There is no reference to them in the diaries of his last two years, nor in the diaries written on the island of Lanai, the only ones to survive. See p. 230, n. 10, and Jacob Adler and Gwynn Barrett, eds. The Diaries of Walter Murray Gibson, 1886, 1887, pp. vii and viii.

5. Gibson, Prison of Weltevreden, p. 32.
8. Ibid., p. 37.
9. Ibid., pp. 37–38. Such was Gibson’s version of how Williams was subdued. According to a deposition of Henry Jones, another of the Flirt’s crew, he “forbade” Gibson from putting hands on Williams, and the owner’s action was limited to ordering Luigi to assist the other crewmen in shackling Williams. U.S. House Report 307, p. 88.
10. See the lengthy deposition of Henry Jones, seaman aboard the Flirt (ibid., pp. 60–97). Jones’ testimony was recorded in preparation for a suit filed in 1851 by Whittlesey in the Superior Court of New York City. On March 13, 1853, Whittlesey wrote to W. L. March of the State Department to complain that Gibson had “robbed and swindled” him of his share of the one-quarter of the value of the
Flirt, which share he put at "about thirty-five hundred dollars," a property interest he said had been noted on a bill of sale executed to him but not registered (Miscellaneous letters of Department of State, roll 137, Letter E, U.S. National Archives, Washington). The suit against Gibson never went to trial.

12. Ibid., p. 58.
13. Ibid., p. 60.
15. Ibid., pp. 124-125.
16. Ibid., p. 183.
17. Ibid., p. 204.
19. Ibid., p. 2.
20. Ibid., p. 281.
22. Ibid., p. 329.
23. Ibid., p. 400.

Chapter 3

1. The autobiographical passages in *The Prison of Weltevreden* record several bouts of poor health during Gibson’s fifteen months of incarceration. His subsequent tuberculosis may be traceable to his long prison stay.

2. While still in prison, Gibson claimed damages of $100 per day covering his personal losses, those of his crew, and the damages attributable to the seizure of the Flirt. Letter to Commander Aulick, dated Nov. 11, 1852, Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, National Archives, Record Group no. 233 (Washington, 1969), p. 105.


5. Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, p. 56.

10. Marcy to Mason, December 2, 1854, ibid., pp. 131-133.

13. Ibid.
22. As reproduced in the “Message from the President of the United States, Transmitting A Report from the Secretary of State in the Case of Walter M. Gibson,” Executive Document no. 40, 33rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1855.
23. Ibid.
25. Katz, August Belmont, p. 47.

Chapter 4

1. New York Times, June 25, 1858, Washington dateline June 22, 1858, letter signed A.M.C. It is clear that the letter was based mainly on information given by Gibson. There is no evidence that either the Mormon leaders or the U.S. government ever took seriously the idea of a wholesale emigration to the Pacific.
2. Gibson to Young, May 30, 1859, Gibson Name File, Church Historian’s Office, Salt Lake City.
4. Gibson Name File.
5. Richard Francis Burton, The City of the Saints, p. 474. Three years later, Gibson read the book and wrote to his alleged son-in-law: “I have just got hold of Capt. Burton’s ‘City of the Saints’... It has a good deal of information for outsiders—minute in details, but no comprehensive grasp. I suppose he imagined his statement about my daughter’s marriage.” Gibson to Young, Aug. 11, 1862, Gibson Name File.

At least two descendants of Gibson, one living in Hawaii, the other in Canada, believe that Tallulah was married, at least in name, to Brigham Young, though the marriage was not consummated. The evidence in support of this supposition is, in addition to the account of Burton, the fact that Gibson returned in some haste from his church mission to the east coast of the United States, explaining that he was wanted home immediately (to check on how his daughter was faring in the home and care of Young?). When Gibson set out on his mission to the Pacific, he took with him only Tallulah, leaving his two boys in Salt Lake City. That action, they argue, showed a concern that Tallulah, aged seventeen, had been claimed—or might be—by Brigham Young as one of his company of wives.

However, the enumeration of the inhabitants of Salt Lake City for the U.S. census, made on October 16, 1860, while Gibson was returning from New York, lists a “Toledah” Gibson (correctly stating her to be a seventeen-year-old female born in Georgia) and shows no one of her vital statistics among the many females bearing the surname of Young. Further, the church historian of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints in Salt Lake City attests that a search of its records—both open and confidential—indicates that Tallulah was
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indeed “endowed” (i.e., confirmed) into the church, but that she was not “sealed” (i.e., married) to Brigham Young or any one else within the Mormon congregation.

7. Gibson to Young, Jan. 30, 1860, Gibson Name File.
12. Young to Hooper, April 26, 1860, Hooper Collection, Yale University.
14. Gibson to Young, July 1, 1860, Gibson Name File.
15. New York Times, July 10, 1860. See also article of July 9, “Proposed Mormon Emigration.”
17. Handwritten summary, Nov. 18, 1860, Gibson Name File.
22. Daily Alta California, April 12, 13, 1861; California Assembly Journal, April 10, 1861, p. 681; California Senate Journal, April 11, 1861, p. 605; Gibson to Young (Stockton), April 12, 1861, Gibson Name File.
23. Gibson to Young (San Francisco), June 8, 1861, Gibson Name File.
24. Gibson to Young (Sacramento), April 12, 1861, Gibson Name File.
25. Ibid.
26. Gibson to Young (San Francisco), May 13, 1861, Gibson Name File.
27. Gibson to Young (San Francisco), June 8, 1861 (P.S. June 14, 1861), Gibson Name File.
28. Daily Alta California, June 16, 1861; Bark Yankee passenger list, July 1, 1861, signed by Master John Paty, (Passenger Lists, AH), Polynesian, July 6, 1861; Pacific Commercial Advertiser, July 4, 1861. The passenger list gives Tallulah’s age correctly as eighteen but gives Gibson’s as forty-five, six years older than he was. The reason for this is not clear, but perhaps Gibson hoped thus to avoid any gossip about the relationship between him and his daughter. Even so, such gossip did surface later.
30. Ibid., July 18, 1861. See also Polynesian, July 13, 1861.
32. Wyllie to Gibson, July 5 and 20, 1861. FO & Ex., Misc. Interior & Foreign, AH.
33. Wyllie to Gibson, July 24, 1861, FO Misc. Interior and Foreign, AH.
35. Interview with Sister Kapo, widow of Elder J. W. H. Kou, A. Jenson Manuscript, Church Historian’s Office, Salt Lake City.
36. On the early history of Mormonism in Hawaii, see Directory, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Honolulu, 1934), pp. 9, 10; Comfort Margaret Bock, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,” Master’s thesis, University of Hawaii, 1941; and John F. Mulholland, Hawaii’s Religions, pp. 115–120.
37. Gibson to Young, July 10, 14, 16, and Sept. 2, 1861, Gibson Name File.
38. Gibson to Young, July 10, 1861, Gibson Name File.
39. Ibid., Sept. 2, 1861.
41. Gibson Diary, Sept. [21?], 1861, Historical File, folder M48, AH.
42. Gibson Diary, Sept. 13, 1861, Historical File, folder M48, AH.
43. Gibson to Young, Sept. 19, 1861, Gibson Name File.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
47. Long to Dryer, Sept. 21, 1861, encl. in Dryer to W. H. Seward, secretary of state, Oct. 10, 1861, USDS, Dispatches Hawaii, vol. 10.
48. Wyllie to Gibson, Sept. 20, 1861, FO Letterbook, vol. 37, p. 48, AH.
49. Wyllie to Kamehameha IV, Sept. 28, 1861, FO & Ex., Local Officials, AH.
50. Kamehameha IV to Wyllie, Oct. 2, 1861, FO & Ex., Local Officials, AH.
52. Ibid.
53. Gibson to Wyllie, Oct. 12, 1861, Kalanianaole Collection, AH.
54. Wyllie to Gibson, Oct. 15, 1861, FO Misc. Interior & Foreign, AH.
56. Wyllie to Kamehameha IV, Oct. 14, 1861, Kalanianaole Collection, private collection, file M80, AH.
57. Gregg to Kamehameha IV, Oct. 14, 1861, Kalanianaole Collection, AH. Gregg formerly was U.S. commissioner to Hawaii and corresponded with Gibson’s old antagonist, U.S. Secretary of State Marcy.
58. Dryer to Wyllie, Oct. 15, 1861, Foreign Officials in Hawaii, Commissioners, AH.
59. Pacific Commercial Advertiser, Oct. 17, 1861. In full, the notice read:

To whom it may concern: Sometime in the latter part of July or the first part of August last, a man calling himself Walter M. Gibson presented at this Legation a passport issued by the then Secretary of State at Washington City, dated more than one year ago (precise date not recollected) together with a document purporting to be a commission from the French Government as bearer of dispatches to the Government of the U.S., with a request that his passport be visaed—which was done. Since which time the sentiments repeatedly uttered, and the conduct of his associates, have been such as to induce me to believe that he is not entitled to the protection of the U.S. Government; therefore I hereby revoke my visa of his passport.

60. FO & Ex., Ministerial Conferences, vol. 2, p. 115, Oct. 16, 1861, AH.
61. Nahaoleleua to Lot Kamehameha, Nov. 23, 1861. Interior Department, Misc., AH.
62. William Webster to Kamehameha IV, Oct. 16, 1861, Kalanianaole Collection, AH.
63. Gibson Diary, Nov. 5, 1861, Historical File, folder 48, AH.
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64. Gibson to Wing, Nov. 16, 1861, Gibson Name File.
65. Young to Dwight Eveleth, Nov. 8, 1861, Brigham Young Papers, Church Historian’s Office, Salt Lake City.
66. Gibson to Eveleth, Dec. 19, 1861, Gibson Name File.
68. *Ka Nuhou*, April 22, 1873.
69. Gibson Diary, Jan. 12, 1862, Historical File, folder M48, AH.
70. Gibson to Young, Jan. 16, 1862, Gibson Name File.
71. Gibson Diary, Jan. 31, 1862, Historical File, folder M48, AH.
72. Ibid.
73. Cummings and Eddy to Dryer, April 12, 1862, statement sworn to on April 15, 1862, U.S. Consul File, AH.
74. Gibson to Wyllie, Dec. 10, 1861, FO & Ex., Misc. Local, AH.
75. Gibson to Wyllie, n.d. (received March 31, 1862) FO & Ex., Local Officials, AH.
76. Wyllie to Dr. John Rae, April 8, 1862, FO Misc. Interior & Foreign, vol. 37, p. 120, AH.
77. Gibson Diary, May 23, 1862, Historical File, folder M48, AH.

Chapter 5

1. Gibson to Young, Aug. 11, 1862 (with additions Aug. 28, 30, and September 12, 1862), Gibson Name File, Church Historian’s Office, Salt Lake City.
2. Ibid.
5. Wyllie to Gibson, private note, Oct. 27, 1862. FO Misc. Foreign, AH.
6. Privy Council Records, Nov. 5, 1862, AH.
8. Gibson to Geo. A. Smith, March 13, 1864, Gibson Name File.
10. Letter, John R. Young to Franklin W. Young, June 14, 1864, A. Jenson Manuscript, Church Historian’s Office, Salt Lake City; Pack, “Sandwich Islands Country and Mission.”
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
15. J. R. Young to F. W. Young, Jenson Manuscript.
16. Gibson to Brigham Young, April 7, 1864, Gibson Name File.
17. Wyllie to Gibson, April 11, 1864, FO Misc. Interior & Foreign, vol. 37, AH.
Chapter 6

1. The decision to withdraw the government’s offer of a lease is noted in the Cabinet Council’s minutes for August 24, 1866, AH.


4. In June 1845, Wyllie drafted a “Political Creed and Principles as professed individually by the Members of the present Administration of His Majesty Kamehameha III,” which was also signed by the other leading haole advisers to the King, G. P. Judd and John Ricord. It stated that “the subjection of the Islands to white domination would lead to the extinction of the native race,” and pledged to educate the Hawaiian people so that they could soon assume positions of authority in the government. Printed in Reports of Ministry of Foreign Relations, 1855, Appendix, pp. 118–123, AH.


6. Ibid., Nov. 1864, reproducing letter from Gibson to Damon dated Oct. 13, 1864.

7. Gibson himself never had such funds but his later associate, or confederate, Claus Spreckels, did bring the large funds needed for the development on Maui of the kind of irrigation system envisioned by Gibson. See Jacob Adler, Claus Spreckels: The Sugar King In Hawaii, pp. 44–51.


10. Gibson to George Nebeker, Laie, Oahu, Sept. 3, 1867, Gibson correspondence file M48, AH. Gibson wrote that his family was pressing him to return to their “old home.” Messrs. Bell and Bluff (“our mutual friends”), he noted, had earlier called on him for the right of first refusal should he decide to sell.

11. Gibson, whose visa on his American passport had been revoked by Commissioner Dryer in October 1861 (see p. 223, note 59), received his papers as a citizen of the Kingdom of Hawaii in 1866.


14. Ibid., June 9, 1869. Gibson’s dispatch was dated January 5, 1869.

15. Gibson claimed he had incurred expenses of $676 in helping Dr. Smith lobby and that Smith paid him $300. He requested, but never received, the balance. Gibson to Minister of Foreign Affairs C. C. Harris, March 9, 1870. FO Letterbook, vol. 51, AH.


18. Ibid., June 2, 1869.

19. Letter dated June 21, 1870, Interior Department Immigration-Other Countries File, AH.


21. Gibson to Kamehameha V, Sept. 9, 1872, Interior Department Immigration File, 1865-1899, AH.


23. Ibid., pp. 242–244.
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26. Ibid., May 13, 1873.
27. Ibid., Dec. 9, 1873.
29. Ka Nuhou, March 4, 1873.
30. Ibid., Sept. 16, 1873.
31. Ibid., Dec. 23, 1873.
32. Ibid., Dec. 16, 1873. Kalakaua’s letter was dated Dec. 9, 1873.
33. Ibid., Jan. 20, 1874.
34. Hawaiian Gazette, Feb. 16, 1874.
35. Ka Nuhou, March 10, 1874.
36. Ibid., Feb. 17, 1874.
37. Ibid., March 10, 1874.
38. Ibid., May 21, 1874.
40. Hawaiian Gazette, July 1, 1874.
41. The address was printed in Honolulu Jan. 31, 1876.
42. “Address to the Hawaiian People!”, pp. 3-4.
43. Ibid., p. 5.
44. Ibid., pp. 7-8.
45. Pacific Commercial Advertiser, March 18, 1876.
46. Ibid., Sept. 9, 1876.
47. Ibid., Nov. 18, 1876.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., Nov. 18, 1876. Walter Murray Gibson was shown as proprietor and Fred. H. Hayselden as manager of the store.
51. Feb. 24, 1877.
52. C. R. Bishop to E. H. Allen, Nov. 11, 1873, Allen Papers, box 3, LC.

Chapter 7

2. Ibid., June 15, 1878.
5. Ibid., June 22, 1878; Hawaiian Gazette, June 26, 1878.
10. Ibid.
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15. Walter M. Gibson, Sanitary Instructions for Hawaiians, p. 47.
17. Ethel M. Damon, Sanford Ballard Dole and His Hawaii, pp. 157-158.
20. Pacific Commercial Advertiser, Oct. 6, 1880. Gibson’s constant critic Henry Whitney had sold the newspaper to the firm of Black & Auld in 1870.
23. Ibid., Aug. 20, 1881.
24. Ibid., Nov. 5, 1881.
27. Kuykendall, Hawaiian Kingdom, 3:250.

Chapter 8

2. Pacific Commercial Advertiser, April 15, 1882.
4. Ibid., pp. 399-400.
10. See Chapter 7, p. 212. For fuller account of Spreckels’ experience in Hawaii, see Jacob Adler, Claus Spreckels: The Sugar King in Hawaii.
11. Estate of Kamehameha IV, 2 Hawaiian Reports 715 (1864), Hawaii Supreme Court.
12. Adler, Claus Spreckels, p. 56.
14. Journal of the Legislative Assembly, July 11, 1882, AH.
16. Journal of the Legislative Assembly, July 21, 1882, AH. Spreckels received Royal Patent 3343, dated Sept. 30, 1882, in exchange for his quitclaim to any other interest in Crown lands. Interior Department Land File, August 1882, AH. According to a persistent legend, which arose later, Spreckels won the lands from Kalakaua in a poker game. The myth was still being denied by Hawaii land officials as late as 1934. See Adler, Claus Spreckels, p. 296, note 22.

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18. The Planters’ trustees were quoted as stating that the sugar industry directly and indirectly paid more than four-fifths of all government taxes (U.S. Minister R. M. Daggett to U.S. Secretary of State F. T. Frelinghuysen, Oct. 21, 1882, U.S. Embassy Hawaii, Despatches from U.S. Ministers in Hawaii, 1843-1900, microfilm no. 566, UH). Much was made of this claim during the Gibson regime, but the treasury records of the period show it to be exaggerated. Customs receipts at the time provided approximately half of the total revenues, and their burden would have been widely spread among the population. Other important taxes, namely the poll and road taxes, were largely borne by the more numerous Hawaiians. See Robert M. Kamins, *The Tax System of Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1952), pp. 157-164.

19. *Hawaiian Gazette*, Nov. 1, 1882, reported the gist of a heated meeting of the Planters’ trustees, held the previous month. Minister Daggett enclosed a full copy of the trustees’ statement in his report to Secretary of State Frelinghuysen on Oct. 21, 1882. It proclaimed that “those great and good friends of this little Island Kingdom, who have done so much to raise it from the depths of barbarism and to place it within the family of nations, will not now quietly and without rebuke look upon an assumption of autocratical powers which would soon result in a retrogression to the level from whence its people have been lifted.... The foreign element of the population, although numerically small, always has been, is today, and always will be, the greatest if not the only safeguard the nation has” (U.S. Embassy Hawaii, Despatches From U.S. Ministers in Hawaii, Feb. 14, 1881, microfilm no. 566, UH).


21. *Daily Bulletin*, Oct. 25, 1882; *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Oct. 24 and Nov. 4, 1882. Contempt for the judiciary allegedly was shown by the legislature in enacting statutes taking from the Supreme Court the power to review the appointment of district judges named by island governors (who were themselves appointed by the King) and in ceding the Maui lands to Spreckels, disregarding the Supreme Court ruling of 1864 holding that the Crown lands were inalienable.

22. Sanford Dole, William R. Castle, and Dr. N. B. Emerson were all members of the Hawaiian League, which in 1887 imposed a constitution radically reducing powers of the king. Castle was also on the Committee of Safety, which engineered the overthrow of the monarchy in 1893, to be replaced by a Provisional Government and Republic presided over by Dole.

23. The Planters regarded a reply from Gibson, rather than from the king to whom they had addressed their protest, as a slap in the face (as it probably was intended). See Lorrin A. Thurston, *Memoirs of the Hawaiian Revolution*, pp. 92-94.


25. Gibson frequently referred to Hawaiians and other Pacific island people as “red skins.” Other Americans in Hawaii did, too, for example Supreme Court Justice A. F. Judd. See Kuykendall, *Hawaiian Kingdom*, 3:224, note.


27. Ibid., p. 264.


29. Ibid.


Notes
Chapter 9


2. Quoted in Ethel M. Damon, Sanford Ballard Dole and His Hawaii, p. 172.


4. W. M. Gibson, President Board of Health vs. The Steamer Madras, 5 Hawaiian Reports 109 (1884). Three years later, the British owners of the Madras were granted by the Hawaii Supreme Court damages of $30,000 for the costs they had incurred because of the delay in allowing the ship into quarantine. See Ernest Andrade, “The Madras Affair,” Hawaiian Historical Society Annual Report for 1959, pp. 39-43.


7. Cabinet Council Minute Book, 1874-1891, p. 271 (Sept. 20, 1882), AH.


9. Cabinet Council Minute Book, 1874-1891, p. 283 (March 6, 1883), AH.

10. Jacob Adler, Claus Spreckels: The Sugar King in Hawaii, pp. 139-140. The account in this chapter of the silver-bond exchange relies on this biography of Spreckels.

11. Ibid., p. 141.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., p. 144.


15. Even after the kingdom fell and after Hawaii was annexed to the United States in 1898, the Kalakaua coins were in continuous use. They were not formally withdrawn until January 1904, at which time Hawaii was the only part of the United States where silver coins other than American circulated widely at par. Ibid., pp. 156-157.


20. Ibid., p. 256. The description was written by David G. Adee, a lawyer in Honolulu during December 1883, representing the Pacific Mail Steamship Company.

21. Relying on photographs of Mother Marianne, Sister Mary Laurence Hanley and O. A. Bushneil so describe her in A Song of Pilgrimage and Exile: The Life and Spirit of Mother Marianne of Molokai, p. 11.

Chapter 10

1. Gibson to Dr. William Hillebrand, Feb. 1, 1883. Hillebrand, then retired in Switzerland after a long medical practice in Hawaii, had recommended Dr. Arning to Gibson, offering assurance that Arning would receive “every assistance.”
Notes


2. This account of the negotiations between Gibson and Bishop Hermann Koeckemann and of the recruitment of Mother Marianne relies on Sister Mary Laurence Hanley and O. A. Bushnell, A Song of Pilgrimage and Exile: The Life and Spirit of Mother Marianne of Molokai, pp. 45–83.

3. Ka Nuhou, April 15, 1873.

4. Gibson to the Lord Bishop of Olba (Koeckemann), Jan. 4, 1883 (a copy of the letter is in the Archives of the Sisters of St. Francis, Syracuse, New York).

5. Facts about the life of Mother Marianne prior to her coming to Hawaii are from Hanley and Bushnell, Song of Pilgrimage and Exile, especially chapters 1 and 2.


8. Van Giesen went to Molokai as overseer of the construction of new buildings at the leper settlement. He remained only a short time and then disappeared from history—but not murdered, as might have been expected from the widespread hatred he had engendered in lepers and their families. See ibid., pp. 181–182.

9. Gibson to Mother Marianne, Nov. 12, 1884, Archives of the Sisters of St. Francis, Syracuse, New York.

10. Gibson kept diaries over much of his adult life. Rachel Wescoatt, his granddaughter, then living in Hawaii, lent six of them (presumed to be for 1882 through 1887) to Kathleen Mellen, author of An Island Kingdom Passes, a book that treats Gibson most favorably. Mrs. Mellen extracted or paraphrased many of the entries and her notes are in the library of the Brigham Young University, Hawaii campus, at Laie, Oahu. According to Mrs. Mellen, after she had kept the diaries for about three months, Mr. Wescoatt reclaimed and burned them, except those for the years Gibson lived on Lanai and for 1886 and 1887. The latter two years’ entries Mrs. Mellen gave to Professor Gwynn Barrett, a historian in Utah, “with the understanding that they would be taken out of the Hawaiian Islands. Her reason for this, she said, was that certain persons of the Islands had not been sympathetic to Gibson. Later Mrs. Mellen and Mr. Barrett agreed that the diaries would be given to Brigham Young University [at Provo, Utah].” Jacob Adler and Gwynn Barrett, The Diaries of Walter Murray Gibson, 1886, 1887, p. viii. This fully annotated volume is the source for all references to Gibson’s diaries for those two years. In the Hawaii State Archives (Historical File M48) is a photocopy of typewritten diary entries dated in 1861 and 1862, said to have been found, this century, in a Lanai house once occupied by Gibson. Since the language seems to be in Gibson’s style and the references agree with what is independently known of Gibson’s life in 1861-1862, the presumed entries were used in Chapter 4 as the basis of Gibson’s reelings about Lanai. A more complete transcript of the Lanai dairy is appended to Frank McGhie, “The Life and Intrigues of Walter Murray Gibson,” M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, Provo, 1958.

11. Adler and Barrett, Diaries, entry for March 11, 1886.

12. Ibid., entry for June 11, 1886.

13. Ibid., entry for July 20, 1886.


15. Ibid., entry for Jan. 8, 1887.

16. Ibid., entry for Jan. 21, 1887.

17. Ibid., entry for Feb. 19, 1887.
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3. See Chapter 9, p. 151.


5. Report of Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1886, Appendix, pp. 1xxxv-1xxxvi, AH.


10. Kathleen D. Mellen, *An Island Kingdom Passes*, p. 147, quoting from Gibson’s diary for 1883, now destroyed. The quotation is highly plausible (see p. 230, n. 10, on the vanished diaries).

11. Queen Liliuokalani’s Diary, Jan. 16, 1887, AH.

12. Four German warships were ordered to Samoa. See Kuykendall, *Kingdom of Hawaii*, 3:338.

13. Hooper, *Elusive Destiny*, p. 63. “In spite of contemporary opposition, he used the precedent for international activism established by Wyllie and St. Julian so effectively that it became, with time, simply another part of the Island definition of proper civic interest.”

14. The informer was probably Frank Godfrey, a copyist-clerk with the gov-
ernment who was appointed ordinance sergeant in the Rifles. See Adler and Barrett, eds., The Diaries of Walter Murray Gibson, 1886, 1887 pp. 150, 151, and 153.

16. Hawaiian Gazette, July 1, 1887.
18. Ibid., entry for July 1, 1887.
19. Gibson later told reporters that he lived with the jailer, taking his meals with him. “I was not locked up, and the jailer told me that they had no warrant for me nor any authority on which to hold me.” Honolulu Daily Bulletin, Aug. 23, 1887, citing San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 11, 1887.
20. Adler and Barrett, Diaries, entry for July 12, 1887.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.

Chapter 12

1. Daily Alta California, Aug. 7, 1887.
2. Ibid.
5. Judicial practice at that time in Hawaii called for native Hawaiians to serve on juries only if one or both of the parties were themselves Hawaiian. Similarly, non-Hawaiians served only if at least one party was non-Hawaiian.
6. Pacific Commercial Advertiser; Jan. 3, 1888, quoting San Francisco Examiner, Dec. 15, 1887. As early as 1874 Gibson said that he was writing “a true history of Hawaii.” Ka Nahou, March 24, 1874.
13. Walter M. Gibson, Camoens and the Heroic Age of the Portuguese, p. 20.

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