

however careful may have been his observations, what is to be its fate, and when it shall be disposed of?

Sir, in the interval between the report of this resolution and the day designated for its consideration, the Senator from Kentucky [Mr. CRITTENDEN] proposed a substitute, which has for its object the removal of the responsibility (whatever that may be) of giving this notice, from Congress, where it properly belongs, and to place that responsibility upon the shoulders of the Executive. From this responsibility, should it be transferred to him, the President will not shrink. Authorize him, in his discretion, to give this notice to Great Britain, and as certainly as the sun rises, on the day on which he is vested with such discretion, will this notice, before that sun sets, be given. This we all know. But is it right, is it consistent with the dignity and character of the Senate, to evade their just and proper responsibility, and confer it upon another department of the Government? How unlike is this to the chivalrous bearing of my friend from Virginia, [Mr. ARCHER,] who, the other day, expressed his unwillingness to vote for any measure which might lead to war, because, from his age and position, he was protected from its consequences. Is there not something timid and unmanly in such a proceeding? Something very unlike the brave and proud heart of old Kentucky—a State ever jealous of the division of the spoils when danger is the booty to be parcelled out? Should war grow out of this notice, as some suppose it will, is it proper that this power to make war should be, most unnecessarily, placed at the discretion of any Executive? I had thought there was a sort of Whig confessional, which was, that the Executive power of this country “was too great, was increasing, and ought to be diminished.” There certainly was a time, sir, when our friends over the way had not such unbounded confidence in Executive discretion; a time, sir, when we were told by a prominent leader of the party, that he would not confer such extraordinary power upon a Democratic President, if the enemy were at the gates of the Capitol. Why this sudden, this generous, unsolicited, unlooked-for confidence? It surely cannot be, that the Senator from Kentucky [Mr. CRITTENDEN] desires to place the President, upon this exciting question, in a position in which, whatever he may do, or omit to do, the opportunity will be afforded to factionists and slanderers for the gratification, to the full extent, of their unholy wishes. Though such are the inevitable consequences, in my judgment, of the exercise of this discretionary power on a question of such magnitude, yet I shall ever be the first, so far as he is concerned, to disclaim, on his behalf, any such unworthy design.

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. CRITTENDEN] also proposes to limit, as to time, the discretionary power of the President on the giving of this notice. It is to be given, not before the close of the present session of Congress. And this limitation I think unwise. Whatever consequences shall grow out of the giving of this notice, I think it very proper that Congress should be here, in session, ready and willing to meet them. Unless on very great and unforeseen emergencies, I desire

never again to see another called session of Congress. The country, I think, for all the good they have done, are sufficiently satisfied with such experiments. And, after all, what good can we expect from a delay of ninety or a hundred days in the giving of this notice? Will the country be better prepared for it than now? I think not.

I object, also, to the “Preamble” of the Senator, as I do to the “forthwith,” in the Senator’s resolution. The “Preamble” of the Senator is mainly an historical narrative. It recites but facts well known to every body, and, therefore, for the purpose of information, is wholly unnecessary. Do we earnestly desire a speedy settlement of this Oregon controversy? Our acts, as well as our words, show it. It requires no preamble to satisfy any one of this. Preambles and forthwiths, Mr. President, have ever been my abomination. The first, I regard as a reflection upon my capacity, and the other, a restraint upon a gentleman’s liberty. What benefit can the Senator expect from his preamble? Is it intended as a gilded cover, or as sweetening to the physic, we are about to administer? Or is it designed as a piece of diplomacy, by which her Majesty’s Ministers are to be tickled, and good-humoredly coaxed into negotiation? Is it calculated that this preamble will produce this result? My opinion is, sir, that Great Britain will be more apt to look at the measure itself, its purposes and consequences, than to any garb, however fanciful, in which it may be clothed. That Power will negotiate with or without this preamble, unmindful of our anxiety, should she consider it her interest to do so, and not otherwise.

Sir, shortly after the Senator from Kentucky [Mr. CRITTENDEN] had favored the Senate with his proposition, the Senator from North Carolina [Mr. MANGUM] gave us notice of his intention to move two additional provisos to the resolution offered by the Senator from Kentucky. The first of these was, to submit the Oregon controversy to arbitration; and the other, to organize in Oregon a Territorial Government after a specified time, and upon certain enumerated conditions. But, on the 10th of February, the day on which this question was taken up, that Senator finding, I suppose, that a proposition to arbitrate this question had been offered by Great Britain, and that that offer had been rejected by the United States; and finding, also, I suppose, that in the House of Representatives, a separate bill to organize in Oregon a Territorial Government had been reported, he abandoned his intention of offering those provisos. Those propositions, therefore, not now being before the Senate, I have no remarks to make upon them.

Subsequently to this, the Senator from Georgia [Mr. COLBERT] proposed an amendment to the resolution offered by the Senator from Kentucky, of which I have spoken, and the Senator from Kentucky, in part, accepted and adopted it as his own. The proposition of the Senator from Kentucky, as modified at the instance of the Senator from Georgia, differs from the original in this: the original proposition of the Senator from Kentucky authorizes the President, in his discretion, to give or not give the notice after the close of the present session of Congress; that proposition, as now modified, proposes that Congress (and not the Pre