

SPEECH.

on the resolution giving the twelve months' notice for the termination of the joint occupancy of the Oregon territory.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, Mr. BEDINGER addressed the committee as follows:

Mr. CHAIRMAN. The magnitude and great importance of the question at present under discussion, the intense interest manifested by the whole country in its progress and in its decision, and the very able manner in which it has been treated by those who have already participated in its discussion, cause me to approach it with the greatest hesitancy.

But it is due to those whom I have the honor to represent, as well as to myself, that, before recording my vote upon a question of such magnitude and grave importance, I should render a reason for the vote I shall give, and for the course of conduct which shall deem it my duty to pursue. I therefore respectfully solicit the attention of the committee whilst, in as brief a manner as I possibly can, I proceed to state the causes which have influenced me, and led my mind to that conclusion at which it has arrived.

I confess, sir, that this question has been to me one of exceeding perplexity, doubt, and difficulty; and, although I have succeeded in convincing my own mind as to the course which it is proper that this House and this country should pursue in regard to it—although I have found reasons amply satisfactory to my own judgment, yet I am far from believing or hoping that I shall have the ability or good fortune to convince others—in this hall at least—that my judgment is not led me into false positions and untenable ground. That this question should appear, to one of my small experience, difficult and perplexing, could not excite the wonder of any person. For firmer, and wiser, and more experienced heads than mine have been much puzzled by its consideration, and many an anxious hour of painful hesitation has been occasioned those who have most carefully examined it, and are most familiar with it.

We have, on the one hand, the masterly view of the subject taken by the Executive in that admirable State paper, his annual message, and doubtless the weight of his opinion and recommendation is, indeed it should be, very sensibly felt both here and elsewhere. The opinion of the Executive is sustained and strengthened by the beautiful and indubitable reasoning of the Secretary of State, who, by his triumph which he has achieved over the British diplomatist, has convinced the world—the rational and impartial world at least—that the claims of his country are founded in truth and justice, and cannot be thrown by sophistry or fraud. This opinion is supported, moreover, by many able heads and patriotic hearts, both here and elsewhere—by noble and

gallant spirits, who seem already to be panting for an opportunity to hurl the gauntlet to our haughty opponent and rival, and challenge her at once to mortal combat; and I confess, sir, that when I reflect upon the overhearing and domineering spirit of Great Britain, I feel as much disposed as any one else possibly can, to raise my voice, and, if need be, my arm also, in opposition to her. No man's heart glows with fiercer indignation than mine, when the wrongs and aggressions of that relentless power are arrayed before me. Nevertheless, sir, I must be allowed to express the fear that it has been with others as it was, at first, with myself—they have suffered their patriotism to obscure their judgments, and their indignation against Great Britain to hurry them into a line of conduct not the most politic, and not the most wise. For myself, sir, having the character at home, (and I fear elsewhere also,) of being rather hot-headed, I have felt a little afraid of surrendering myself wholly to the impulses of my nature in this matter; and, exerting myself to the utmost to subdue my belligerent spirit, I have succeeded in arriving at the conclusion, that although Great Britain richly deserves from us a thorough drubbing, yet she can afford to wait for it a while, (it will come in time, sir—it will come in time,) and we can afford to postpone the infliction of it at least for the present. And for this reason, among others, I do not think it politic or wise, at this moment, to throw down the gauntlet to her by so suddenly dissolving the present existing state of affairs between her and ourselves in our disputed territory.

Let us look at this question for one moment, if we can possibly do so, calmly and dispassionately. I know that gentlemen generally use these words by way of preface to the fiercest outbursts and most impassioned appeals. But I would respectfully beg gentlemen to calm themselves, and look carefully at this question. First, then, I will cheerfully admit that the man who now doubts that our title to the whole of Oregon is, as against Great Britain, "clear and unquestionable," must be cursed by nature with remarkable stupidity, or he must be blinded by ignorance and prejudice. If any such person there be, I refer him to the correspondence between the Secretary of State and the British minister. If that does not convince him, I give him up in despair. It would be presumption in me to attempt to satisfy such a judgment. And this is all, sir, that I intend to say upon this part of the subject. Oregon is ours—every acre, every poor rood of it—and we must and will have it. There is another fact equally as clear and unquestionable as the one just admitted—"an axiomatic fact," in the words of the gentleman from Georgia, [Mr. COMM.] and one