

which he believed "the title was clear and unquestionable." He deliberated well on the alternatives—chose the latter—run the hazard, and; fortunately, escaped the disaster. The negotiations have been terminated by the rude act of the British government; the proposition of compromise withdrawn; our title to the whole territory reasserted, and the President relieved from all embarrassments in his future action. We have the strongest assurances in the message that there are to be neither compromise nor propositions of compromise in future; that our government will stand upon all its rights—will give the notice—demand the possession of the valley of the Columbia, under the treaty of Ghent, and resist the establishment of any future European colony on any portion of the continent. The message is satisfactory and conclusive on all these points. The withdrawal of the proposition of compromise—the assertion of our title to the whole territory, and its maintenance by irrefragible facts and arguments—the recommendations for the extension of our laws, civil and criminal, for the establishment of Indian agencies, military posts and mail-routes, and for raising regiments of mounted riflemen to guard and protect emigrants and settlers, clearly show that the President is determined to maintain, at all hazards, the position he has assumed, in opposition to any future European colonization on the continent. I invoke attention to the passage in the message in which this principle is so admirably set forth:

"We must ever maintain the principle, that the people of this continent alone have the right to decide their own destiny. Should any portion of them, constituting an independent State, propose to unite themselves with our confederacy, this will be a question for them and us to determine without any foreign interposition. We can never consent that European powers shall interfere to prevent such a union, because it might disturb the 'balance of power' which they might desire to maintain on this continent. Near a quarter of a century ago, the principle was distinctly announced to the world, in the annual message of one of my predecessors, that the 'American continents,' by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European power. This principle will apply with greatly increased force, should any European power attempt to establish any new colony in North America. In the existing circumstances of the world, the present is deemed a proper occasion to reiterate and reaffirm the principle avowed by Mr. Monroe, and to state my cordial concurrence in its wisdom and sound policy. The reassertion of this principle, especially in reference to North America, is, at this day, but the promulgation of a policy which no European power should cherish the disposition to resist. Existing rights of every European nation should be respected; but it is due alike to our safety and our interests, that the efficient protection of our laws should be extended over our whole territorial limits, and that it should be distinctly announced to the world as our settled policy, that no future European colony or dominion shall, with our consent, be planted or established on any part of the North American continent."

Here we have the solemn assurance that during the administration of President Polk no compromise will be made on the Oregon question which shall recognize the right of Great Britain to plant a colony on the northwest coast. I have already shown that she has no colony there now—that it is not embraced within the limits of any of the British provinces in North America. The President has made the distinct announcement "to the world as our settled policy, that no future European colony or dominion shall, with our consent, be planted or established on any part of the North American continent." To what portion of the continent does this announcement refer? Certainly not to California, and the other Mexican departments, for they are in-

dependent states, and come within the previous declaration that "we must ever maintain the principle that the people of this continent alone have the right to decide their own destiny;" it cannot apply to Canada, or any other British colony on the continent, nor to the Russian possessions, for the President says that these "should be respected." To what portion of the continent, then, could the President have referred? For it is not to be presumed that he would formally and boldly promulgate a great principle of action as the settled policy of our government, without intending it to have some practical application.

The President is not in the habit of using words of mere sound, without meaning or sense. He intended this great principle to apply to all that part of the continent to which it was adapted—to all the vacant, unoccupied country, not within the limits of any regularly established government or colony. The language is clear and explicit—is susceptible of this meaning and none other—and as evidently refers to the country west of the Rocky mountains, as if he had described it by name, miles, and bounds. This view is consistent with the whole tenor of his message, and with his known opinions, as well before as after his election. He was only prevented from taking this position at the commencement of his administration, by the pending negotiations, which, for the time being, tied his hands, and committed his government to the principle of compromise. The moment he had extricated himself and the government from these embarrassments, he embraced the high American principle to which I have alluded, and proclaimed it to the world as the settled policy of the country. He who thinks that this settled policy will be unsettled by his administration, knows but little of the character and history of the eminent statesman who fills the presidential chair. I, therefore, assume, on the authority of the message, that no compromise will be made; and that no northern boundary in Oregon will be agreed upon which shall recognize the right of Great Britain to plant or establish a future colony on the northwest coast. If we agree to 49°, or to any other line south and east of the Russian possession, we do thereby "consent" to the establishment of a future European colony on the continent of North America, in direct conflict of "our settled policy" as announced to the world.

Bearing this point in mind, gentlemen will easily understand the meaning of the President in all his recommendations, and observe their consistency with his previously expressed opinions, that our title was clear and unquestionable—that no compromise could be effected which the United States ought to accept—that the notice should be given and the joint occupancy terminated—that our laws and institutions should be extended over the country—and that no future European colony should be established on the continent. I most heartily agree with the President in all these positions, and shall yield him my zealous support in sustaining them. But gentlemen in the opposition tell us that we must not advance this broad doctrine—this principle of American independence of all European crowns, because, they say, it will lead to war. I know not whether it will or will not produce war; nor do I care, so far as that consideration is to have any influence on our action. I prefer peace to war; but it must be an honorable peace—one which will not sacrifice the national honor or territory. The question which ought to be considered is not whether

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