

as they had done, the free navigation of the Columbia river. The right of any foreign Power to the free navigation of any of our rivers, through the heart of our country, was one which I was unwilling to concede. It also embraced a provision to make free to Great Britain any port or ports on the cape of Quadra and Vancouver's Island, south of this parallel. Had this been a new question, coming under discussion for the first time, this proposition would not have been made. The extraordinary and wholly inadmissible demands of the British Government, and the rejection of the proposition made in deference alone to what had been done by my predecessors, and the implied obligation which their acts seemed to impose, afford satisfactory evidence that no compromise which the United States ought to accept can be effected. With this conviction, the proposition of compromise which had been made and rejected, was, by my direction, subsequently withdrawn, and our title to the whole Oregon territory asserted; and, as is believed, maintained by irrefragable facts and arguments.

"The civilized world will see in these proceedings a spirit of liberal concession on the part of the United States; and this Government will be relieved from all responsibility which may follow the failure to settle the controversy.

"All attempts at compromise having failed, it becomes the duty of Congress to consider what measures it may be proper to adopt for the security and protection of our citizens now inhabiting, or who may hereafter inhabit, Oregon, and for the maintenance of our just title to that territory. In adopting measures for this purpose, care should be taken that nothing be done to violate the stipulations of the convention of 1827, which is still in force. The faith of treaties, in their letter and spirit, has ever been, and, I trust, will ever be, scrupulously observed by the United States. Under that convention, a year's notice is required to be given by either party to the other, before the joint occupancy shall terminate, and before either can rightfully assert or exercise exclusive jurisdiction over any portion of the territory. This notice it would, in my judgment, be proper to give; and I recommend that provision be made by law for giving it accordingly, and terminating in this manner, the convention of the sixth of August, 1827.

"It will become proper for Congress to determine what legislation they can in the meantime adopt without violating this convention. Beyond all question, the protection of our laws and our jurisdiction, civil and criminal, ought to be immediately extended over our citizens in Oregon. They have had just cause to complain of our long neglect in this particular, and have, in consequence, been compelled, for their own security and protection, to establish a provisional government for themselves. Strong in their allegiance and ardent in their attachments to the United States, they have been thus cast upon their own resources. They are anxious that our laws should be extended over them, and I recommend that this be done by Congress with as little delay as possible, in the full extent to which the British Parliament have proceeded in regard to British subjects in that territory, by their act of July

'2, 1821, for regulating the fur trade, and establishing a criminal and civil jurisdiction within certain parts of North America."

Whilst, Mr. Chairman, I do not consider this a party question, but a great American question, I am free to confess that I do not like to see a single Democrat against giving the notice, and at the expiration of twelve months, taking possession of the country; for, disguise it as you will, all who oppose these measures will be pronounced by the people to be on the British side of the question. And while I would urge upon the Whig side of this Hall, by the considerations of patriotism and love of liberty which should actuate every American freeman, to go for extending the area of freedom over the whole of Oregon, I feel that all these considerations must operate with greater force upon the Democratic portion of the House. The Democracy believe that the people have virtue and intelligence enough to govern themselves, and that the Representative of the people is bound to obey their will or resign.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I am convinced that Mr. Polk owes his elevation to the distinguished station he now so honorably fills more to his opinions on the Texas and Oregon questions than to all other considerations united. And, sir, in his election, I consider that the people decided both these great questions in the affirmative. What were Mr. Polk's views in relation to Oregon? Let an extract from his letter of the 23d April, 1841, written from Columbia, Tennessee, answer. He says:

"Let the fixed policy of our Government be, not to permit Great Britain or any other foreign Power to plant a colony or to hold dominion over any portion of the people or territory of the United States."

The President, in his Inaugural Address, says: "Nor will it become in a less degree my duty to assert and maintain, by all constitutional means, the right of the United States to that portion of our territory which lies beyond the Rocky mountains. Our title to the country of the Oregon is clear and unquestionable; and already are our people preparing to perfect that title by occupying it, with their wives and children." * * * "To us belongs the duty of protecting them adequately wherever they may be upon our soil."

But, Mr. Chairman, we are asked why this "hot haste?" They urge us to let things remain as they are—to "bide our time"—and we will get the whole of Oregon. In answer, I have only to say, that those who believe in the right of instruction have no discretion in this matter. The sovereign people are calling upon their public servants to settle this vexed question, by giving notice to Great Britain of our intention to terminate the convention of August 6, 1827, and to take active and energetic measures to protect our citizens and to secure the territory. And if war results from this course, on whom does the calamity fall? Is it not on the people? Who fight the battles of our country? Who defend the national honor? Whose blood and whose treasure have been poured out like water, in times past, to defend the nation against the aggressions of proud and haughty England? And whose will again be poured out, in the event of war? The people's; yes, the thousands who remain at home in time of peace, quietly and in-