

give the "notice," and they say no. Sir, they will do nothing. Are we any nearer exclusive possession than we were in 1818? Has time or delay accomplished anything? Is not the question more embarrassed now than it was then? and is not the purpose of England, if we can fairly judge it, more adverse to our views now than formerly? The convention of 1827 was not a treaty of *settlement*; it excluded the idea of colonization; and yet England, it is said, claims the territory now, for the ultimate purpose of building up a colony on that coast. Can it be true, then, that delay will lessen the difficulty? No, sir; if it can be settled without an appeal to arms, now is the auspicious moment. Delay but extends the interests of both Governments, and multiplies the obstacles to concord; and if, most unfortunately, the ultimate arbiter must be the sword, delay will neither lessen the horrors of conflict, nor quicken the ardor of preparation.

Sir, in every point of view the question should be settled; it enters with an evil influence into every circle of human concern; it becomes an element of party warfare; it affects and varies the value of property; it paralyzes the energies of commerce, and causes industry to be uncertain of its reward. I repeat, that I desire peace and hope for peace; but I consider it wisdom that the whole question should be determined now. And, sir, I think this notice will tend to preserve, not to destroy, pacific relations. It brings the matter to an issue; the two nations will stand face to face; they will be fully conscious of the importance of their decision; the appeals made for the preservation of the peace of the world may reach the hearts of both. I think England will see that she will not pursue her accustomed policy to risk a war, which can add nothing to her glory or her power, for a barren shore on a distant sea. And it may be that the same considerations which induced the President to offer to accept the 49th parallel as the dividing line, after he had declared our title to the whole "clear and unquestionable," may still prompt him to surrender what he has told the country and the world is American territory.

I shall address myself for a moment to the argument drawn from our supposed weakness, and on which so much reliance is placed. It is asked, how can we contend with England? Where are our ships, our cannon, our money, and our credit? The gentleman from South Carolina predicts its disaster with the fury of the Pythoness, if not with the wisdom of the Oracle. Sir, it is not an argument becoming an American Congress. I do not undervalue England. I have heard with regret very many things said of her in this debate, which I think were neither wise nor just. Still less would I undervalue our own capacity to maintain our rights. In the two wars which we have maintained for independence and for national honor, we did not stop to adopt this policy of calculation—a policy which is as fatal to national as to individual honor.

Sir, it is a most reasonable course for a nation to weigh deliberately and well the consequences of any official and solemn declaration of her policy and her rights, and perhaps most of all should she ponder over an assertion to a claim to territory; but in proportion to the hesitation with which she makes it, should be the promptness and vigor by which she maintains it. To make a reckless claim

and a shameful abandonment would have disgraced the pettiest prince that ever stumbled from a throne. To us I trust it is impossible. This nation, by its Chief Executive, has declared our rights. They are territorial rights upon this continent. They spring not only from traditions of discovery—from doubtful exploration—from qualified settlement, but from the principles of an American system, "and they must be preserved." If to maintain them war must follow, we deplore the necessity, but we do not fear the result. I shall indulge in no speculation as to comparative strength, since no comparison ought to change our conclusion; but I may remark that our present defenceless condition is more apparent than real, and that what is thought to be our weakness is really a source of strength. We have no peace establishment of fleets and armies, like that of England or France; but the means which they devoted to its support has remained in the hands of our people—a productive capital to employ our energies and develop our resources. We have cultivated the arts of peace. They have given us more strength to forge the "thunderbolts of war." I know, sir, it will take time to prepare, but before a crisis shall arrive we can seize it by the forelock. The call of the Executive, like the foot of Pompey in the Senate, will rouse up armed legions; but, sir, one "Pharsalia" will not destroy the energies of this Republic.

Mr. Chairman, the whole argument of gentlemen on this branch of the subject, is not so much an array of reasons against the war which they now apprehend, as against any war for any purpose. A republican Government is always comparatively unprepared for war at its beginning; but should Republics, therefore, yield their rights and abandon their territories? Sir, to state the argument is to answer it. The gentleman from South Carolina, [Mr. HOLMES,] who manifests so lively a sense of the danger to which war would expose us, must remember that a dread of war does not always prevent it. It was a fine conception of the ancient poet, that the chariot of Mars was drawn by flight and fear. It was Sir Boyle Roche, I believe, who said, "that the best way to avoid danger was to meet it plump." The genius of the Greek and the humor of the Irishman have given expression to a sentiment worthy of reflection.

It will be perceived that, throughout the course of these remarks, I have not only treated the title to the whole of Oregon as admitted by a large majority of this House, but I have chosen to assume the validity of our rights as the basis upon which my own opinions as to this notice have been formed; and I desire now to give, in a few words, the views which I entertain upon that question.

It is not necessary for me to express any opinion at this moment as to the wisdom and policy of Mr. Polk's inaugural address; but I may say that I consider this nation as bound to stand by the claim which is made, and that there are insuperable objections to the relinquishment of any portion of Oregon to Great Britain. It is to be remembered, that while we claim the territory by discovery and treaty, Great Britain, denying our title, does not set up title in herself. She says "she has rights in Oregon"—she has citizens there—and she contemplates colonization. It is precisely in this state of things, Mr. Chairman, that

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