

Oregon and Texas into an unnatural coalition with those of a bank and a tariff, its being, without reference to consequences, urged into the Presidential canvass, have greatly embarrassed the negotiations of our Government. That miscellaneous assemblage of gentlemen and patriots, known as the Baltimore Convention, the fruit of whose labors was the nomination of Mr. Polk and the passage of the Oregon resolution, who met for the purpose of nominating a candidate for the Presidency, and the proclamation of the principles on which that nominee was to be elected; instead of confining themselves to principles which relate to the domestic administration of our Government, unfortunately for the country took its foreign policy under consideration, and announced the remarkable resolution which I have before mentioned. They threw a new element of strife into the party contest, and gave beginning to these very difficulties which now beset us, and whose termination the most sagacious cannot foresee. The President, feeling himself instructed by the resolution, announced, in his inaugural address, that our title to Oregon was clear and indisputable. His officious, if not official, organ—and, perhaps, both officious and official—reasserted the same; and though the President, in the mean time, had offered to compromise by a surrender of part of the territory—all north of the 49th parallel—on its rejection, broke off all negotiation, and in his annual message to Congress reaffirms our title to be good to the *whole*, and declares that he believes no compromise which the United States ought to accept can be effected, advises the giving of the notice to terminate the Convention, and says that at the end of the year's notice we shall have reached a period when the national "rights in Oregon must either be abandoned or firmly maintained, and that they could not be abandoned without a sacrifice of both national honor and interest."

This language and this tone, Mr. Chairman, of the President, adds another difficulty in the way of giving this notice, because the President seems to regard it as one of a set of war measures. He either intends to bully or fight, and he has thus brought this whole matter to a crisis; and in a crisis like this the people's representatives are, by their peculiar relation to the people, particularly called on to express their conviction as to the course to be pursued; and the Whigs on this floor, from the fact that they are trammelled by no party dictation, committed by no Baltimore resolution, are in the position to act calmly and patriotically. I trust, nay, I know, they will give the President no factious opposition, but will unite with his friends, and give the notice which he asks. We have gone too far to retrace our steps with honor. Safety is only in advance. But, under a sense of all the responsibilities which now surround Congress, I hope, it will take only such steps as are perfectly right, and make no advance but that which it will be able to maintain before Christendom, and to the maintenance of which we can pledge the honor of the people and power of the nation. And, having determined to bring this long pending controversy to a close, we should take our ground, step by step, peaceably, yet bravely; and, in making our *ultimatum*, it should be that, not of the President, not of politicians, but of the whole American people, which they would maintain by sword and battle.

I answer the question what sort of notice shall be given, by saying, that the notice which may be given, should be qualified by the expression of opinion, that the whole matter of difficulty should be adjusted by negotiation; that it can be so adjusted, and honorably, I cannot doubt. My only reason for preferring some modification, such as suggested above, is, that the naked notice, as reported by the Committee of Foreign Affairs, looked upon as one of that series of measures recommended by the President and which may terminate in war, has a warlike aspect; and though assured by its friends on this floor that its purpose is peaceful, yet the very fact that this purpose is the subject of debate, even among the friends of the Administration themselves, proves its questionable character. And, sir, like the ghost in Hamlet, it is difficult to say *whether* it be

"An angel of death, or goblin damned—
Bring with it airs from heaven, or blasts from hell."

On a question like this our position should not be debateable—should not be the subject of a doubt—it should be pacific, manly, and firm.

It is objected further, Mr. Chairman, that if notice be given it will produce war. It is not