

In thus considering the operations of the laws of the two countries over Oregon, I have occupied the time of the committee on a subject far more important, to the peace of the country, than the question of giving the proposed notice, or the time and manner of giving it.

Notice certainly is not *necessarily* a war measure. It was provided for in the convention itself, and might, under other circumstances, have been given, without being regarded either as a measure of peace or of war. But this notice must be taken in connection with the declarations of the President in his message, and the running commentary in this House, and elsewhere, by distinguished men, and by men holding distinguished positions. What is the language of the message?

"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this conviction, the proposition of compromise, which had been made and rejected, was, by my direction, subsequently withdrawn, and our title to the whole Oregon territory asserted, and, as is believed, maintained by irrefragable facts and arguments."

Again:

"At the end of the year's notice, should Congress think it proper to make provision for giving that notice, we shall have reached a period when the national rights in Oregon must either be abandoned or firmly maintained. That they cannot be abandoned without a sacrifice of both national honor and interest, is too clear to admit of doubt."

Such is the language of the President, and immeasurably more belligerent is the language used in Congress towards Great Britain. We should remember the circumstances under which the negotiation was broken off, that it *is* broken off, and has not been resumed. The chairman of Foreign Affairs informs us that there is no negotiation, and I learn the same from the best authority. It is in this connection that a notice is proposed to be given—a *naked notice*, under the express declaration that *the national rights in Oregon "must be firmly maintained;"* and the further declaration, that "*no compromise which the United States ought to accept can be effected.*"

Such a notice is certainly not a declaration of war, but it furnishes the most serious impediments to the resumption and prosecution of negotiation.

Will Great Britain offer to negotiate, under such a notice? Can she do it without sacrificing her national honor? It thus very unnecessarily and most seriously embarrasses this embarrassing subject. But distinguished gentlemen, *very* distinguished gentlemen, on this floor, have told us, with the most perfect coolness, that all that we have to do is to give the notice, and at the end of the year take possession of the country—military possession—and for such a trifling affair as this Great Britain has no right to complain; and if she is so very unreasonable as to find fault with our just resuming our rights, and taking possession of the *whole* country, we will "sweep her from the continent." But they say this would not lead to war, but is decidedly a *peace* measure! I should like to know, sir, the *modus operandi* of this *peaceable military* possession. If it means that we will fill up the country, and make settlements in unoccupied portions of it, and bring the military force to subdue the hostile soil, it is a very harmless operation indeed—is just what we are now doing under the joint convention, and always have been. But if we are to take the *exclusive* possession of the country, what is to become of the British subjects in that territory—the fur traders, the stockade forts, the fortified posts of the Hudson's Bay Company, their armed men? Of course, no American can doubt but that we can capture them with great ease. It would be treason to intimate any such

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