

it may not be a "little war;" but neither will it be a hasty one. It is not upon a sudden impulse that the peace of the world will be broken. Nor will England adopt a course which has been left for the excited imagination of the gentleman to suggest.

Mr. Chairman, I admit the power of England; it is a moral as well as physical supremacy. It is not merely her fleets and her armies; it is not merely her colonies and her fortresses; it is far more than these: There is a power in her history which compels our admiration and excites our wonder. It presents to us the field of Agincourt, the glory of Blenheim, the fortitude of "fatal Fontenoy," and the fortunes of Waterloo. It reminds us how long she ruled the empire of the wave—from the destruction of the Armada, to the glories of Trafalgar. Nor is her glory confined to arms. In arts, in science, in literature, in credit, in commerce, she "sits superior." Here are "the princes of the mind." She gives laws to learning and limits to taste. The watchfires of her battlefields yet flash defiance and warning to her enemies; and her dead heroes and statesmen stand as sentinels upon immortal heights, to guard the glory of the living. Sir, it is thus I view the power of Great Britain; and I am therefore not concerned at the description of it given by the gentleman from South Carolina. But I confess, sir, that this conviction of her greatness makes a very different impression on his mind and mine. He recounts her fleets, her armies, her steam-marine, her colonies, as reasons for what I understand to be submission. He has drawn a picture of our commerce destroyed, our flag dishonored, and our sailors imprisoned. He imagines our forts dismantled, our cities burned, our lakes possessed by the enemy; and, worse than all, our industry destroyed, and the spirit of our people broken. Sir, what is this but an appeal to our fears? If it be, it is an appeal which will find no echo in the depths of the American heart. I, or the contrary, would point to the glory of England in a spirit of emulation. She has attained her greatness by her fortitude and her valor, as well as by her wisdom. She has not faltered, and therefore she has not failed. If she has sometimes been grasping and arrogant, she has at least not "blenched when the storm was highest." It is true, sir, that she has steadily pursued the line of a great policy; and for that policy she has dared much and done more. She has considered her honor and her essential interests as identical, and she has been able to maintain them. Sir, I would follow her example. I would not desire to set up pretensions upon light and trivial grounds. I would be careful about committing the national honor upon slight controversies; but when we have made a deliberate claim in the eyes of the world; when we persist that it is "clear and unquestionable;" when compromise has been offered and refused; when territory upon the American continent is at stake; and when our opponent does not even now claim title in herself, I would poise myself upon the magnanimity of the nation, and abide the issue.

It appears to me, Mr. Chairman, that England will not abandon what I think to be her general, wise, and statesmanlike course, for this disputed and barren territory. Unlike us, she has neither honor nor essential interests involved in the question. She has asserted no title in herself. She is

only contending for the privilege of colonizing; and I do not believe that any good reason can be given why she would risk a war with us. England will no doubt see that she has much to lose, and that she can gain nothing. I repeat, sir, I do not think that our assertion of our right to the whole territory ought to lead to war, if England still pursues the wise and statesmanlike policy by which she has been distinguished.

But, Mr. Chairman, suppose it to be otherwise: how does the argument stand then? We assert this territory to be ours. The President believes it—our negotiator believes it—this House believes it—the country believes it. But, say gentlemen, England will go to war. In my opinion this will not be so; but if she does, is that a reason for surrendering our rights? If it be, national honor is indeed an empty name, and the spirit of our fathers is dead within us. I know that whenever a western man touches upon this view of the subject, it renders him liable to a sneer at what gentlemen are pleased to call "western enthusiasm." I desire to treat this as an American question, and I shall not be driven from that course. I am not one of those who supported Mr. Polk; I used the utmost of my little ability to prevent his election; and when Mr. Clay was beaten, I confess I felt as the friends of Aristides may be supposed to have felt when he was driven from Athens. I, of course, had no share in the Democratic Baltimore convention. I thought then, and I think now, that it was unwise and unfair to attempt to make "Oregon" a party watchword. And I believe that much of the difficulty in which we now find ourselves arises from that course. But when the question is made—when our title is asserted—when the opinions of our people, based perhaps upon the action of the Government, have become fixed, and we are willing to maintain our rights at any sacrifice, then many of the movers of this agitation began to flatter; some have got Texas, and are content—some have become enamored of "white-robed peace"—some clamor for 49° and compromise—but they all join in deprecating "western enthusiasm." Sir, the West will be true to its convictions. I believe that portion of the West which sustained Mr. Polk will still be for the "whole of Oregon." And, sir, I think that those who opposed him, and many of whom believed that the Democratic outburst for Oregon was a mere party manoeuvre, will now consider it an American question, and stand by the country. Such, sir, will be my course on this floor. I am a Whig, and I shall remain a Whig; but I am convinced we have the right to the whole territory, and I am ready to maintain it.

Sir, there was another remark made in the course of this debate, which may merit a reply. It was said that it was the restless spirit of western men which caused this trouble by their occupation of Oregon, and they were ridiculed for seeking homes across the Rocky mountains. I desire gentlemen to remember that it has been the policy of this Government to encourage the settlement of the West. Our whole system of land laws, and especially our pre-emption laws, have that tendency. And as to Oregon itself, this House has received with the greatest favor for several preceding sessions, a bill for the express purpose of encouraging settlement on the borders of the Pacific.

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