

tains, (now called Rocky mountains), shall, together with its harbors, bays, creeks, and the navigation of all rivers within the same, be free and open for the term of ten years from the date of the signature of the present convention, to the vessels, citizens, and subjects of the two powers; it being well understood that this agreement is not to be construed to the prejudice of any claim which either of the two high contracting parties may have to any part of said country, nor shall it be taken to affect the claims of any other power or State to any part of said country, the only object of the high contracting parties, in that respect, being to prevent disputes and differences among themselves."

This convention remained in force till it was renewed by the convention signed at London, August 6, 1827, which provided:

"ART. 1. All the provisions of the third article of the convention concluded between the United States of America and his Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, on the 20th day of Oct. 1818, shall be, and they are hereby, further indefinitely extended and continued in force, in the same manner as if all the provisions of the said article were herein specifically recited.

"ART. 2. It shall be competent, however, for either of the contracting parties, in case either should think fit, at any time after the 20th October, 1828, on giving due notice of twelve months to the other contracting party, to annul and abrogate this convention; and it shall, in such case, be accordingly entirely annulled and abrogated, after the expiration of the said term of notice.

"ART. 3. Nothing contained in this convention or in the third article of the convention of the 20th October, 1818, hereby continued in force, shall be construed to impair, or in any manner affect, the claims which either of the contracting parties may have to any part of the country westward of the Stony or Rocky mountains."

From 1818, up to the present time, repeated efforts have been made to settle by negotiation the dispute between the two countries in regard to this territory; but Great Britain has always refused to propose such terms as this country could accept, without a sacrifice of her rights. In this condition the question stands at the present moment; and it might so remain, but for the change of circumstances which will in a short time render it both impracticable and impossible. While the country was only used for hunting, fishing, and fur-trading, there was but little difficulty between the two governments in relation to their conflicting claims, and it was not indispensably necessary to adjust them. But things have changed. Within a few years thousands of our industrious and enterprising citizens have gone with their families to that country to engage in agricultural, mechanical, and other pursuits of civilized life, and they are now cultivating the soil, and earning for themselves permanent homes, and an inheritance for their children. Does any one suppose that we have arrived at such perfection in the science of government as to justify the hope that two distinct races of people, each governed by a different code of laws, and owing allegiance to governments totally differing in their character, can settle and occupy the same territory, and maintain peaceable relations towards each other? Such a hope is illusive. Why then should we indulge further delay, when every moment we live this question becomes more difficult to settle? When a dispute arises between two neighbors as to the boundary of their lands, the dispute may often be easily adjusted at first; but if they once drive their fence-stakes, cut their ditches, and build their houses on the disputed territory, a friendly settlement of the boundary becomes almost impossible. So it will be in regard to Oregon. This territory is now regarded as greatly more valuable than it was in 1818; and if you wait ten years longer, its estimation will no doubt be more than quadrupled. Is it not important, then, that this question should be settled as early as practicable? In view of all this, I ask,

is it not our duty to take such measures as will facilitate the decision of this question? For one, I believe the country is ours to 54° 40', but the extent of our title is not the question now under consideration; and all who believe that we have rights in Oregon, no matter to what extent, so they be greater than the British government has offered to concede, ought to vote for this measure.

The President of the United States, in his annual message at the opening of the present session of Congress, says:

"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, I 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."

Now, sir, in the face of these facts, can we shrink from giving the notice? Some gentlemen take it for granted that this measure will cut off all negotiation but they are mistaken. It only carries out what public opinion has declared, and what the true policy of the country requires. If further negotiation shall be necessary or proper, then this notice in no wise prevents it; if further negotiation is unnecessary or improper, it is our imperative duty to give this notice. Passing this measure, then, will not prevent our government from doing anything that ought to be done, while it will untie our hands and leave us free to pursue such measures as the interests of the country demand. In doing these things we must observe our national faith, and violate no treaty stipulation. At the last session of Congress a bill to organize a Territorial government in Oregon passed this House by a vote of 140 to 59. This bill contained a section providing for the giving of the notice, in the following words:

"SEC. 43. And be it further enacted, That the President of the United States be, and he is hereby, required to cause due notice to be given to the British government of the desire and intention of the government of the United States to annul and abrogate the convention with Great Britain relative to territory on the northwest coast of America, concluded August 6, 1827, agreeably to the provisions of the 2d article of that convention: Provided, that nothing in the act contained shall be so construed or carried into effect by any of the officers or citizens of the United States, as to interfere in any way with any right which any of the subjects of Great Britain may have in the territory herein mentioned, as provided for in the convention aforesaid, until the expiration of twelve months after notice shall be given, as above provided, by the President of the United States."

Sir, I voted for this bill then, as did a very large majority of the members of the House, but it did