

to that effect passed the House at its last session, and under an adverse report made by the gentleman from [Adams] chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, a similar character is now pending in this House—an adverse report. Some such bill is not unlikely to become a law this very session, or will, in the course of a year or two.

Yet our right to pass such a bill, with a kind clause now necessary and important in any Oregon bill—though it be not a direct infraction of the treaty, which is “free and open” to the subjects of England equally with those of the United States, it affords ground for an argument of some validity that it is.

This should not be. Let us not jeopard a title, clear and certain in itself, by proceeding to assert it after a dubious or questionable manner. Let every step we take in such a matter as this, be not only, but above all suspicion. We must not go to war with England, with the right even by implication, on her side. With the right clearly on our side, we will not go to war with us.

Let us, then, begin at the beginning. Let us pass the resolution now. Before we promise possession, even in the future, to others, let us ourselves take measures fully to obtain it. The treaty provides the mode. Let us strictly conform to its provisions. That done, we have satisfied every requirement—we have silenced every scruple. And we may then proceed, untrammelled by restricting conventions, to lay the foundations, on the far shores of the Pacific, of free and independent States; destined to spread and to perpetuate those noble institutions that have given us the peace and prosperity we now enjoy.

Thus regarded, the subject assumes a breadth and an importance that carries it far beyond any mere boundary dispute. It becomes a question of principle, rather than of territory. It is not so much whether Oregon shall be ours or England's, as whether the blessings of self-government shall, or shall not, be granted to the infant country. Oregon is not a possession only; it is a trust. As it is the duty of a parent to neglect nothing that shall secure the welfare and happiness of those to whom he has imparted being, so are we bound to secure and maintain for this young Territory every advantage, social and political, which it is within our power to procure for her. If this land be truly ours, we have no right to expose it, by desertion, to colonial servitude or revolutionary war. Millions will hereafter inhabit it. Their political destiny is in our hands. To the world—to after ages—we must render an account of our guardianship. Let us see to it, that we have a good account to render. Now, whether we choose, let us assert for these future Pacific States, that station among the powers of the earth to which the laws of nature and the progress of improvement entitle them. Let us watch over their defenceless infancy. Ere long, they will join their elder brethren of the confederacy; and, though prairie, and forest, and mountain, now intervene, they will become one with us—not in political bonds only, but in sentiment and in habit, in feeling and in creed.

These are, very briefly stated, the reasons which induce me, notwithstanding the adverse report of the committee, still to maintain, that, as a measure both of policy and of justice, the joint resolution which terminates Great Britain's occupancy of Oregon ought now to pass.