

read by every American statesman, who believes we have anything to gain by promised negotiations for Oregon, or anything to lose by passing this resolution, and thus indicating to Great Britain a determination to assert our rights. Allow me, in proof of this opinion, to give you a few extracts from the documents themselves.

Here is the first letter of instruction from Henry Clay to Albert Gallatin, under date of June 19, 1826. After alluding to the instructions formerly sent to Mr. Rush, Mr. Clay adds:

"Nor is it conceived that Great Britain has, or can make out, *even a colorable title to any portion of the north-west coast.*"

I pray you, sir, to observe this expression of Mr. Clay. It is not, that Great Britain's title is weak, is imperfect, is questionable; it is, that she has not even *a color* of title. It is not, that her title is defective to the southern portion of this territory; but good, or at least plausible, north of the latitude of forty nine. No, sir, nothing of that sort. But it is, that from north to south, from east to west, over the entire territory, Great Britain has not a pretence, not a shadow of a title. It is, that to every part and parcel of Oregon, from the Spanish line on the south, to the Russian boundary on the north; from the summits of the Rocky mountains across to the waters of the Pacific; the United States are the true, rightful, legitimate owners.

That is the broad, unqualified assertion; and it is true. I pledge myself to this House, if the matter be called in question, before we have done with the subject, to prove, by the tenor of those very treaties to which England appeals, by the admissions of her own statesmen and historians, that to this vast territory, regarding which, for a quarter of a century, we have been tamely negotiating, our title is as clear, distinct, indisputable, as that of any gentleman on this floor to the farm he owns, or the plantation that is his, and was his father's before him.

Such is the truth; and such was Henry Clay's assertion. And yet, ere ever the ink was dry on that honest statement of our rights—before the letter was closed, in which an American Secretary of State declares to an American Minister, that Oregon is, and of right ought to be, ours, that same Secretary empowers that same Minister to trade off—oh no, sir, that is not diplomatic language—to *negotiate away* nearly one half the territory; meekly to cede to Great Britain that to which she has not even a color of title—nearly four hundred miles on the Pacific coast, with all the country thence to the Rocky mountains. Here is the paragraph, from the same letter:

"You are authorized to propose the annulment of the third article of the convention of 1818, and the extension of the line on the parallel of forty nine degrees, from the eastern side of the Rocky mountains, where it now terminates, to the Pacific ocean, as the permanent boundary between the territories of the two powers in that quarter. This is our *ultimatum*, and you may so announce it. We can consent to no other line more favorable to Great Britain."

This offer is made (so Mr. Clay writes in the same letter to Mr. Gallatin) "in a spirit of concession and compromise, which Great Britain should not hesitate to reciprocate."

Concession is a good thing in its place; and if a right be of doubtful validity, prudence sometimes bids us compromise, for the sake of peace. But thus to cede, at the first offer, to a nation that has, avowedly, not a color of title to it, a district of country one half as large as were the thirteen United States at the date of the Revolution,—this strikes me as pushing somewhat further than justice demands, or national honor warrants, the