

tion that it was an offer made, not from a conviction of right, but from a regard for peace and concord. Sir, I have been surprised to hear gentlemen rely upon this as evidence of title in Great Britain. There is no lawyer on this floor who does not well understand the principle upon which an offer of this kind is placed. A proposition to compromise is not an admission; it is never so treated, unless it contains the admission of a fact, which these propositions never did contain. It cannot be allowed in evidence in a court. Nor does it prove anything, save the pacific dispositions of the party who may make it.

Sir, whatever the motive may have been which prompted these offers cannot be material to this discussion: they were refused, they were withdrawn, they no longer exist. They were never considered in the light of an admission, and ought not so to be considered now. And it is, to me at least, most evident, that whatever were the grounds of our title before those offers were made, upon those grounds it must be considered to remain, unless, indeed, time and progress have widened the basis and strengthened the claim.

But, Mr. Chairman, I cannot refrain from expressing my surprise at the quarter from whence these doubts as to our title usually proceed. And, indeed, the whole argument of the honorable gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. HOLMES] is calculated to excite great astonishment. Has the honorable gentleman forgotten the Baltimore Democratic convention? or must I recall its resolutions to his mind? If I remember well, it was not until great progress had been made in its deliberations that South Carolina appeared at all; but when she did come, she condescended to approve the action of the convention, and gave her assent, with great dramatic effect, to its nominations and its principles.

Sir, amid the shout for "Polk and Dallas, Oregon and Texas," were Virginia and South Carolina silent? or did they lend force and fervor to a declaration which they seem now to think was a deliberate fraud upon the nation? And, sir, at the last session of Congress, when Mr. Polk had become known, and Texas was to be annexed, where was the southern wing of democracy then? Sir, they were ardent in their professions of an enlarged patriotism. The honorable gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. RHETT] voted for the Oregon bill of last session, with this very notice in it; that was a bill exercising the highest sovereign power over the territory—extending our laws, establishing our government, granting land; in short, sir, incorporating it as a part of these United States. Sir, these gentlemen were then extending "the area of freedom;" but when, by the aid of South Carolina in the Senate, the bill failed; when Texas is annexed, and another slave State added to the Union; then the democratic resolutions have lost their authority—Texas and Oregon are not twin stars, and gentlemen suddenly perceive that the star of Oregon is obscured by the clouds of war.

The gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. HOLMES] began the remarks just addressed to the committee, by a very fanciful allusion to a dark spirit now hovering over this fair land, and obscuring the bright face of heaven. How long, sir, has this vision tortured the gentleman's imagination? since when has it frightened him from his propriety?

If I remember that distinguished gentleman increased when course at the last session of Congress, there were expectations come not spirits enough in the "upper air" to damp the passion of Congress. As long as Texas was in doubt, Mexico and many of it might be contemned and England defied. It was not enough that Texas was already possessed of the most of those republican institutions, but she must have her star blazoned upon our banner; and at the very moment when Mexico was threatening war for not for it which enlisted the sympathies of the civilized world against us, a bill passed this House by a very large majority to exercise the highest attributes of sovereignty over the whole territory of Oregon. Where then was the honorable gentleman's vision of war? Were the wings of the dark spirit furled? Or is this but the "dark hour" which, in common with other seers and sages, the honorable gentleman is subject?

I desire, sir, before I proceed to discuss the grave arguments of gentlemen, to address myself to the suggestion so often made, that notice is war. They will not notice, Mr. Chairman, is a stipulation of the convention; it is the agreement of the parties; it provides for a period of twelve months between the notice and the abrogation of the convention itself; and the mere statement seems to me to be an answer to the idea that it is, or of itself can be, war. It is nothing more nor less than proof of our desire to have the question determined; it asserts no right, it suggests no remedy. It will, undoubtedly, bring us more directly to the consideration of both Governments the necessity of settling the question; and it is a question that should be settled. But it is a measure consistent with the treaty, it springs out of the treaty, and it will scarcely be contended, that a respectful compliance with the conditions of the convention can be considered as war, or as of itself leading to war. Let me ask, if Great Britain were to give this notice to us, (as she unquestionably might do,) would that be war, or cause of war? No, sir; it would undoubtedly convince us that she was in earnest; we should feel, more than we now do, the necessity of some decided action; but the question of war or peace would be determined with reference to our rights. If, after that notice, Great Britain should not only claim, but attempt to take, what is "unquestionably ours," I trust we should manifest a becoming sense of what might be due to ourselves; and, in this event, unjust aggression might lead to war. But the notice would do no such thing; it is pacific, because provided for by the treaty; it is peaceful, because it leaves every mode of settlement still open to both Powers; and it is proper, because it tends to the immediate settlement of a difficulty, which time certainly does not render more easy of adjustment. Mr. Chairman, while discussing the propriety of notice in this point of view, let me observe, that the notice does not prevent a settlement on any basis proposed. Does any gentleman desire arbitration? The notice does not reject it. Is compromise insisted upon? The notice is silent upon that point. Is forty-nine the true line? The notice does not deny it. No, sir, I repeat, the notice may tend to preserve peace; but the notice itself cannot lead to war. It is an act which manifests our desire, if you please our determination, that the question shall be settled; and, Mr. Chairman, it is nothing more.

But, sir, if the objections thus urged against the notice are matter of surprise, how is our surprise