

these principles, carried into effect, will produce war, but whether they are right and ought to prevail. Our forefathers did not stop to inquire whether resistance to the stamp act would lead to war. They did pause and investigate the principle of "taxation without representation," and determined to resist it, because it was subversive of their liberties. There was a panic—a peace party in the country then, as now; but the principle of American independence of all European powers was declared and maintained. At a later period, they did not relinquish their opposition to the impressment of American seamen, because it would lead to war. They preferred to fight the war of independence over again to a surrender of their national rights and honor. Our country did not falter on the French indemnity question, nor the right of search, nor the annexation of Texas, because of the threats of war. The history of these memorable events shows that in every crisis the action of our government has been characterized by a firm adherence to principle, which maintains the national rights and honor, and leave the consequences to take care of themselves. Experience has shown that the surest way of avoiding war is to be fearless in doing right and calmly wait the issue.

Passing from this branch of the subject, I have a few words to say upon the proposition to settle the controversy by arbitration. In the early part of the session I had the honor to introduce a resolution in opposition to the series of resolutions proposed by the gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. WINTHROP,] expressive of my unwillingness to adjust the question by arbitration. Arbitration is a fair and just mode of settling disputes only when the parties can mutually agree upon a disinterested and impartial umpire. The arbiter should not only be free of the bias of interest, but of prejudice, fear, and affection. I know not where an umpire free of all these influences could be found to determine a political principle or a question of territorial boundary between the United States and Great Britain. The principle of resistance to future European colonization on this continent which is involved in the Oregon question is sufficient of itself to array all the great powers of Europe against us in this controversy, while the smaller ones are too weak and dependent on England to be impartial. Besides our country occupies a peculiar position, with feelings, principles, institutions, and forms of government peculiar to ourselves and variant from the rest of the world. These considerations are sufficient to disqualify all the great powers of the globe from being impartial umpires, and the weaker ones are too much under the influence of the stronger to be selected for the purpose. But it has been said in debate that we dare not, in the face of the civilized world, refuse so fair and honorable a mode of settlement as arbitration. Did not England refuse the mediation of Russia between us in the last war? Did she not refuse to arbitrate the difficulties between her and Spain in 1790 in relation to this same Oregon territory? And did we not, in 1815, refuse the proposition of England to arbitrate the question of our right to the possession of the valley of the Columbia river under the treaty of Ghent? When did this doctrine of arbitration become so firmly engrafted on the laws of nations that neither party dare refuse to accord to it? We tried it once on

the northeastern boundary, and then refused to abide the award, because of the palpable injustice done us by the royal umpire. If we should again resort to it, we have no reason to anticipate an award more compatible with fairness and justice. The importance of Oregon to us is too great, and our right too clear to be hazarded by such an expedient.

Its value is not to be measured by the number of miles on the coast and the quantity of land; nor does it depend upon the character of the country, or the quality of the soil. These considerations are not unworthy of attention; but its great importance results from its commanding position with reference to a maritime ascendancy on the Pacific. It has been the policy of Great Britain for the last century to seize every important point—maritime and military—on the face of the globe, with the view of controlling the commerce of the world, by maintaining her ascendancy on the seas. The geographical position of her own sea-girt isle naturally controls the trade of the Baltic and northern Europe. Gibraltar, Malta, and the Ionian isles command the commerce of southern Europe, of northern Africa, and western Asia, and convert the Mediterranean sea into a British lake. St. Helena and a cordon of fortified islands stand sentinel on the western coast of Africa. Cape Town and the Falkland islands guard the only navigable avenues to the Indies. Her possessions in the east are as numerous as the islands in those seas—each a British fortress, watching the channels of commerce, and allowing no flag to wave except by her permission. Her possessions in North America—the Canadas, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, the Bermudas and Bahamas stretch around us like a military network, prescribing limits to our advancement, and terms to our intercourse with other nations. All that is necessary to make her system complete, is the possession of Oregon, with its innumerable bays, harbors, and maritime advantages. These are the considerations which lend importance to the Oregon question—considerations which induce England to cling to it with a tenacity which rejects all honorable compromise. What matters it to her whether it consists of ridges of barren rocks, or fertile plains and rich valleys? What difference does it make to her whether Gibraltar, Malta, St. Helena, or the Bermudas, are sterile rocks or fertile gardens? They are great military and maritime stations, commanding the commerce of the world, and protecting and supplying her navies. They aid her to maintain her ascendancy upon the seas, and this is all she expects or desires from them. So it is with Oregon. That coast is as essential to the success of her policy on the Pacific, as those are on the Atlantic and in the Mediterranean. We have the means of defeating her schemes in that quarter, and of setting bounds to her future progress. Hold on to Oregon, exclude Great Britain from the northwest coast, allow her to establish no future colony on the continent, and open a direct trade with China, Japan, the Indies, and all the islands of the Pacific, and the work is done. This I understand to be the policy of the President, as developed in his message, and I am prepared, and I believe the country is prepared, to sustain him in it, regardless of all consequences.