

convention with Great Britain. By that treaty, Great Britain and the United States may, for the present, jointly occupy Oregon; with a provision that a year's notice from either nation shall terminate the joint occupancy. The resolution provides for giving that notice; and the question to be decided is, whether it be expedient to give that notice at the present time?

To have a proper understanding of this question, and a just estimate of its importance, we should distinctly bear in mind, what, and how large, this Territory of Oregon is. Its southern boundary, fixed by the Florida treaty of 1819, is the parallel of 42° north latitude. Its northern limit, determined by the Petersburg treaty of 1824, is the parallel of fifty-four degrees and forty minutes. Its front, then, on the Pacific, is about twelve degrees and a half, or upwards of eight hundred and fifty miles. Its average depth to the Rocky Mountains is some five hundred and fifty miles. It contains nearly half a million of square miles, or more than three hundred millions of acres, of territory—one fourth more (let us remember that) than the territory of the thirteen original States, when they asserted their independence. This stock farm of ours, therefore, in the Far West, is no paltry possession. The greatest revolution the world ever saw, was kindled in defence of a territory of smaller extent, and, if recent accounts may be trusted, of scarcely more intrinsic value.

The subject is of an importance such as demands a careful investigation. Permit me then, sir, to ask your attention, and that of the House, to a brief review of the negotiations that have passed, and the measures that have been proposed, relative to this rich and extensive country.

In October of the year 1818, before we had acquired the Spanish title to this portion of the continent, a convention was signed at London, providing, that any country on the northwest coast of America, westward of the Stony Mountains, which may be claimed by Great Britain or the United States, shall, for ten years thenceforward, be free and open to the citizens and subjects of both Powers, without prejudice to the title, in whomsoever residing.

Six years later, in 1824, about the time we agreed with Russia on our northern boundary, the venerable gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. ADAMS,] then Secretary of State, set on foot a negotiation for the final adjustment of the boundary question; authorizing Mr. Rush, our minister at the court of St. James, to propose, first, the latitude of fifty-one; and, if Great Britain persisted in refusing that, then the latitude of *forty nine*, as the dividing line between the territories of the two countries.

The offers were made in succession, and the British ministers refused them both. They expressed their willingness to run the forty-ninth degree to where it strikes the northeasternmost branch of the Columbia, and thence down the middle of that river to the Pacific, into which the Columbia falls about latitude forty-six.

Mr. HOLMES. In forty-five and a half.

Mr. OWEN. My impression is, that it is a little north of forty-six; but, if it be forty-five and a half, the proposition of Great Britain was but the more unfavorable to us.

This proposal, from which Great Britain declared the United States must not expect her to depart, was at once rejected, and the negotiations were broken off.

Two years afterwards, they were renewed—Mr. Clay being then Secretary of State.

The official papers connected with this second negotiation should be