

letter. Surely, then, it ought to have some binding influence on the Democrats in this House.

In regard to this measure of notice now before the committee, I presume it will pass in some form by a large majority. Gentlemen doubtless are actuated by different motives: some, probably, will vote for it with a view to expedite negotiations; others, because the abrogation of the convention will remove an obstacle that now prevents the adoption of important measures for the occupation of Oregon. For one, I should prefer that those who are for compromising at latitude 49° would not vote for the notice at all. I should consider it one of the greatest calamities should the boundary be finally fixed at that line. Before I close my remarks, I shall touch on this subject again.

Much has been said about our sleeping on our rights for thirty years. Because, in 1818, 1824, and 1826, propositions had been made on our part to settle the controversy by adopting the forty-ninth degree, gentlemen suppose that we are bound to abide by those offers now. But the circumstances are very different now from what they were thirty years ago. The value of the country was not then fully known. Let me ask gentlemen from New England what they used to think about Illinois, and other western States, twenty years since? Did they not then consider it a far-off country, of little value, and inhabited by semi-barbarians? Not half the acts of barbarity and cruelty have been perpetrated in Texas and Oregon, which were charged as having been committed in the valley of the Mississippi. The people of the East then knew nothing of the West, and they believed the thousand fabulous tales related of western barbarity. There is a vast difference now. The value of the Mississippi valley is now properly appreciated. The change on the east side of the mountains is not greater than that which has taken place, to the west of them. At that time the value of Oregon was not known, its advantages were not appreciated. It was not then known that it was possible to open a communication by land from the Atlantic to the shores of the Pacific. The negotiators on our side were willing to part with that on easy terms with the value of which they were not acquainted. These considerations, which were then all-powerful, do not operate now. Great Britain rejected these offers; and we are not now bound by what we offered then.

This question of title should be settled. We owe it to our settlers in Oregon, and to those who are preparing to go there. Thousands are making preparations to go to that country, with the full belief that it is ours as far north as 54° 40', and that our Government will assert and maintain that right. Does any one believe that many of those who have gone, and who are preparing to go, would do so, if they supposed that the country was to be divided between our Government and Great Britain?—the one Government on the north side of the Columbia river, and the other on the south side? Such a state of things would, sooner or later, inevitably lead to difficulties and disturbances which would end in a war between the two countries. Then, sir, if war must come in the settlement of this question, it is better that it come now than later.

Mr. Chairman, I am opposed to war; I depre-

cate it; I consider it as a relic of the dark ages. Would to God there was some other way of settling the disputes of nations. But this is the manner in which we are sometimes forced to defend our rights. While I deprecate war as an enormous and a terrible evil, I do not consider it the greatest of evils. To what do we owe our present system of Government? How has our republic attained to its present magnitude? Is it not the result of war? Had our fathers tamely submitted to the exactions of Great Britain, what would now have been our condition? They made greater sacrifices for freedom than we are now called on to make for Oregon. For liberty, they pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. All was jeopardized freely for liberty, and for the possession of a comparatively sterile strip of land, not near so fertile or valuable as Oregon.

How long could peace be maintained, if our citizens were to settle on one side of the Columbia and British subjects on the other side? I ask gentlemen to reflect on the probable consequences of such a state of things. But, in reply, I hear it asked, how have we maintained peace for so many years on the Canada frontier? There is no parallel between the two cases. The one country is hardly worth possessing, much less fighting for; and yet how often have the most threatening difficulties arisen? And how will it be in Oregon twenty years hence, when its population will consist of millions, instead of the handful of people who are sparsely scattered through it now? Can gentlemen suppose that two nations, such as England and the United States, can occupy so important an extent of coast, and a country that will some day show the largest cities in the world, without danger of collision? Collision is as inevitable as that night follows day. It will come: the spirit of our people will lead them rather to court it. Canada will one day come into this Union; and California, in time, will belong to this Government. This is destined to be an "ocean-bound republic." Yet I would not sanction the taking of any step which is not perfectly consistent with the observance of good faith. But this country must come to us in the very nature of things. All I ask now is, that Congress shall extend our own laws over our own territory—a territory which seven-eighths of the people believe to be ours.

We have heard stated, with much humor, what constitutes a "masterly inactivity." I will not say that all who are opposed to this notice are in favor of such a "masterly inactivity" as that described with so much force and effect by the honorable gentleman from Ohio, [Mr. STARKWEATHER;] but I will say, that if gentlemen would use the same *masterly activity* in defending our right to Oregon as is manifested in obtaining the floor to talk about it, the battle would be nobly fought, and the victory speedily won. A corporal's guard of British subjects would not be found in Oregon after the expiration of the twelve months' notice.

I will here read an extract from the speech of the gentleman from Virginia, [Mr. BAYLY.] He says:

"The British attach no importance to Oregon, except for the purpose of carrying on the fur-trade. That is in a rapid decline, and when it disappears, the English will disappear with it in Oregon."