

OREGON.

AMERICAN PROTECTION TO AMERICAN PIONEERS ;

Or,

SHALL OREGON BE SURRENDERED TO GREAT BRITAIN ?

" Let the fixed policy of our Government be, not to permit Great Britain or any other foreign power to plant a colony or hold dominion over any portion of the people or territory of the United States."—*James K. Polk, Columbia, Tennessee, April 23, 1844.*

This was the frank and patriotic opinion of Governor Polk, expressed before he had any anticipation that he should be called upon to carry it into the administration of the General Government, as the next President of the United States. It is worthy a President of this Union, embracing, in this comprehensive and unequivocal form, the great American questions of the day—our international law and the rights of territory.

The question, Shall Oregon be silently surrendered to Great Britain, or firmly claimed by the United States, is an issue that is mainly to be settled by the result of the election of 1844.

Such a declaration, from such a source, comes at this time with peculiar appropriateness in the enforcement of the truly American doctrine, proclaimed by President Monroe, in his celebrated manifesto, of December 2, 1823, when some of the European Powers were about to interfere to prevent the independence of the South American colonies, viz :

" That while the United States continued neutral and impartial in the contests of the European powers among themselves, it was otherwise in regard to their movements in this hemisphere ; that the United States would consider an attempt on their part to extend their peculiar political systems to any part of the new world as dangerous to our peace and safety ; and that we could not view a voluntary interposition of theirs in the affairs of the new Republics of America with indifference, or in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition towards the United States."

The firmness of this noble declaration, backed by the sense of the American people, checked the intermeddling of foreign Powers with South America ; and every true American now regards it as a part of the international law of the New World.

The time has arrived for its application, with additional force, to the assumption of Great Britain, that she has a right to found new colonies in North America, in territory not yet occupied. This is, in fact, the whole of the title that Great Britain sets up to Oregon ; and this lies at the bottom of all her diplomacy in the matter of the Northwestern boundary.

The Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives, in their report of January 4, 1839, well say of the pretension of Great Britain : " She distinctly puts her claim to Oregon on the ground that it is unoccupied territory, just like Virginia or Massachusetts before she colonized them ; and that, as unoccupied savage territory, she may now colonize the Columbia river ; not that it is a part of a colony now possessed by her, but country in which she has a right at this day to found a colony. This pretension the committee deem to be inadmissible, and prejudicial to the rights, the security, and the peace of the United States."

Shall it be met, or shall it be permitted to encroach from a pretension to a right, is now the issue that the American people, through their Government, can no longer evade.

The United States will ask of foreign Powers nothing that is not right, and they will submit to nothing that is wrong. Shall this American doctrine be applied to this American question ; and if we have the right, shall we maintain it ? The people have not thoroughly examined this comparatively new but vastly important question. The impulse must come from them, if our rights are not to be sacrificed in Oregon. Let us, therefore, look at the question, as we would examine the title deeds to our farms.

Have we the right to this territory, and is its value such as to authorize the enforcement of that right ?

The people of the United States desire no territory that may not be justly acquired, and they will claim none that does not justly belong to them. But they will surrender none that does.