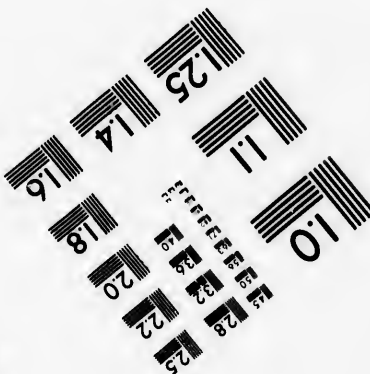
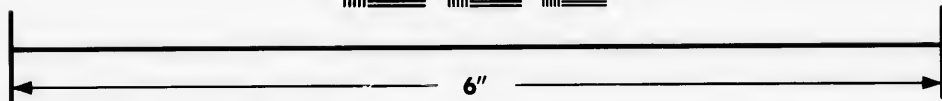
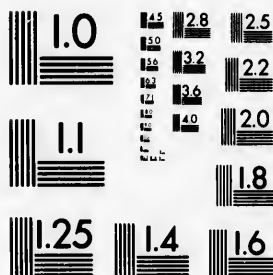


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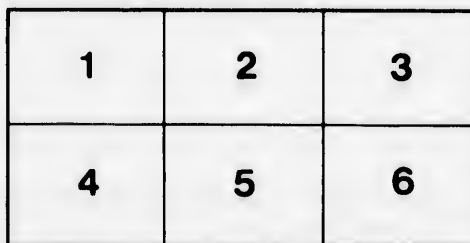
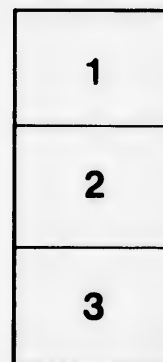
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SPEECH

OF

HON. ROBERT SMITH, OF ILLINOIS,

ON

THE OREGON QUESTION.

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1846

WASHINGTON:
PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF BLAIR AND RIVES.
1846.

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THE OREGON QUESTION.

The Resolution reported by the Committee on Foreign Affairs directing notice of twelve months to be given to terminate the Convention with Great Britain for the joint occupation of Oregon, being under consideration in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union:

Mr. SMITH addressed the committee as follows: Mr. CHAIRMAN: In rising at this late stage of the debate, on the proposition now before the committee, I have neither the vanity nor the egotism to suppose that I can say much that is new, or that will be interesting to those who may hear me; and could I be *certain* that the resolution introduced by the honorable chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs would pass this House without any amendments, and that it would be followed by the passage of appropriate bills to protect and secure our rights, and those of our settlers in Oregon, and all who are disposed to emigrate thither, I would content myself with simply voting for all such measures, and refrain from troubling the committee with a speech at this time. But as some doubt seems to exist in relation to this matter, I feel it a duty I owe both to myself and to those who gave me a seat in this House, to express my views *boldly and fearlessly* on this great American question. I agree with the venerable gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. ADAMS] and other gentlemen, who say that this is one of the most important questions which ever has, or ever will, come before an American Congress. And, sir, let me tell gentlemen that such is the magnitude of this question, and so strong and deep are the convictions of the people throughout the length and breadth of this country, that the whole of the territory called Oregon (included within the parallels of 42° and 54° 40' north latitude) belongs to the United States; and that the settlement and occupation of that valuable territory are of the utmost importance to the prosperity and harmony of the whole Union, and to the permanency of our republican form of government; that it will, like a mighty avalanche, overwhelm, or *politically bury*, all who obstruct or oppose the measures necessary for the consummation of this great object.

I come, sir, from one of the oldest settled portions of the great valley of the Mississippi—from that beautiful and fertile country *wrested* from the monopolizing grasp of Great Britain on the 4th day of July, 1778, by that bold, daring, and chivalrous soldier, George Rogers Clark, of Virginia, and his intrepid followers. These brave men succeeded

in capturing the British post at the ancient town of Kaskaskia, and compelled the cross of St. George to give place to the stars and stripes of our beloved confederacy. But for the sagacity, enterprise, and patriotism of General Clark and his gallant associates, one of the fairest and richest portions of this Union might still have been a dependency of Great Britain. The people of that region and of the North-western States will ever keep in vivid remembrance that they owe the blessings of the liberty and freedom which they now enjoy to the success of General Clark's expedition. They partake largely of that spirit of adventure which characterized the actors in that noble enterprise. They know well, sir, the perils and hardships incident to the settlement of a new country, and to their defence against the depredations of a savage foe. Many of them, too, while fighting under the command of the immortal Jackson and the gallant Johnson, gained an experience that enabled them to bear witness that the tender mercy of the British and Indian warfare is cruelty refined; but, sir, they would hurl with scorn from the high places of power *any* public servant who would shrink from the maintenance of the *rights and honor* of the nation, or from the defence, to the very last, of every inch of territory which of right belongs to us, even though it were a barren rock or sterile sands. Our right and title to the Oregon territory has for years occupied the attention of our wisest and most enlightened statesmen and jurists. They have spoken, written, and published the result of their investigations upon the subject, and spread them abroad throughout the land. The people have read and maturely reflected upon this question, and they have deliberately decided that the territory is ours, and should be defended, if need be, (in the language of Jackson,) at the "cannon's mouth."

The question of title has been so ably and fully discussed, that I will not go into an elaborate exposition of it. As it is acknowledged by all that Spain first discovered the northwest coast of America, and as we, by the "Florida treaty of February, 1819," came into possession of the Spanish title, I will go back to a period earlier than the discovery of Sir Francis Drake, by virtue of whose discoveries Great Britain lays some claim to this territory. And in doing this, I shall extract from the able reports of Mr. Cushing and Mr. Baylies, and the writings of other distinguished gentlemen who have examined thoroughly the early history and settlement of this territory.

“Without relying upon De Fonte, and giving away even the voyage of Maldonado, we have authentic proofs that Cabrillo (or Ferrello) had explored to latitude 43° in 1543; that Gali was at $37^{\circ} 30'$, if not at $57^{\circ} 30'$ in 1582; that the San Augustin was at the bay of San Francisco in 1593; that Juan de Fuca entered the strait now bearing his name in 1592; and that, in 1602, Vizcaino (that is, Martin de Aguilar,) surveyed the coast of California as far up as the river of Aguilar. Besides which, the outer coast of California was explored immediately after the conquest by the orders of Cortes and of Menduza, to Cape Mendocino, and was repeatedly visited by the Manila ships—to provide a port for whom the expedition of Vizcaino was, in part, undertaken. And upon these various discoveries, and the proximity of their settlements in Mexico, the Government of Spain proceeded, in the course of the seventeenth century, to make or authorize settlements in New California, so as to acquire all the territorial rights by which any European Government ever has obtained original claim to sovereignty of the soil in America.

“Yet Great Britain sets up claims of some sort on the northwest coast, in virtue of the voyage of Sir Francis Drake, who landed, in 1579, at a point on the coast of California, either in the bay of San Francisco, or more probably in that of Bodega, but it is not well settled which. Sir Francis Drake also approached the coast in 42° or 43° degrees north, but without landing. One of the accounts of his voyage, indeed, (*The World Encompassed*;) says he went to 48° north; but this is incompatible with other parts of the same book, and also with another of the old accounts, (*Famous Voyage*.) They tell the story thus: On the 3d of June, Drake was in latitude 42° ; on the 5th, he made land in latitude 43° ; but it had then come on cold and tempestuous weather, and he was compelled to turn back, and so make a harbor in latitude of $38^{\circ} 30'$. These are the figures given in the books. In addition to which, it may be stated that Hackluyt places the limit of Drake's voyage at 43° , and Purchas at 40° ; and that neither Ledyard nor Harris carries him beyond the limit of Hackluyt.”—*Baylies's Report*, p. 15.

“Although Sir Francis pretended to take possession of the country, and to call it *New Albion*, this could amount to nothing as against Spain, the prior discoverer. England, by touching at New California, could not acquire any rights whatever; for whatever right such an act may be deemed by the European conventional law to secure, had already been appropriated by Spain. And Spain also proceeded to do that which England did not do, and which, by the same European conventional law, is deemed the consummation of the inchoate title gained by discovery: namely, the formation of settlements in the country discovered. To say nothing, therefore, of the absurdity of claiming title for England as against Spain by the piratical acts of a professional pirate—such as Sir Francis Drake, in most of his expeditions along the American coast, was—to say nothing of this, if Sir Francis Drake had been a peaceful, or at any rate a just explorer in behalf of England, yet, according even to the most liberal of all the rules of international law applicable to his case, his acts in reality conferred on his

Government no territorial rights whatever in America.”

“Don Juan Perez set sail from the port of San Blas, in January, 1774, in the corvette Santiago with Esteban Jose Martinez for a pilot, having orders to reconnoitre the coast from Monterey to the 60th degree of north latitude. They anchored in the Road of Nootka in August, 1774, first of all Europeans, and called it San Lorenzo. It was four years afterwards that Cook visited the same place, and called it King George's Sound.”—*Humboldt, Nouv. Esp. tom. i. p. 331.*

“The year following, (1775,) a second expedition sailed from San Blas, under the orders of Don Bruno Hequeta, Don Juan de Ayala, and Don Juan de la Bodega y Quadra. The incidents of this voyage are known to English readers by the journal of the pilot Maurelle, published in Barrington's Miscellanies. They explored the coast up to latitude 58° , and were the first to discover the mouth of the river Columbia, which they called Entrada de Hequeta.”—*Humboldt, tome i., page 330.*

“Spain was the first European Power that doubled Cape Mendocino and Cape Blanco, the first that visited the river of Aguilar, the first that discovered the inlet of Columbia river, the first that visited Nootka Sound, the first that discovered the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the first that formed any establishment on any part of the northwest coast from California to the forty-ninth degree of north latitude. Here is the prior title to that of England, both by discovery and by settlement.”

“Very slighting accounts of these voyages are to be found in the English books, which so minutely describe that of Cook, who, on his third and last voyage in 1778, explored the coast of America from Nootka Sound to Bhering's Strait; but being posterior to the Spanish navigators, Perez, Hequeta, and others of the older ones, could not by this voyage confer any rights of discovery on Great Britain. Moreover, Cook's explorations, it will be remembered, were from Nootka Sound northward, and do not touch the country of Oregon.”

“Gray's voyages are intimately connected with the title of the United States to the possession of Oregon, and therefore deserve to be more distinctly recounted.

“In the year 1787, Joseph Barrell, a distinguished merchant of Boston, in the State of Massachusetts, projected a voyage of commerce and discovery to the northwest coast of America; and Samuel Brown, Charles Bulfinch, John Derby, Crowell Hatch, and John M. Pintard, citizens of the United States, became associated with him in the enterprise. Two vessels (the ship Columbia, commanded by John Kendrick, and the sloop Washington, by Robert Gray) were equipped and provided with suitable cargoes for traffic with the natives, and set sail from Boston in October, 1787. This expedition was regarded with much interest, it being the first attempt from the United States to circumnavigate the globe. The Columbia arrived at Nootka Sound the 16th of September, 1788, and the Washington soon afterwards. Here they proceeded to collect furs. While on the coast, Captain Gray, in the Washington, entered into, and

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sailed some way up, the long-lost Strait of Juan de Fuca, which Martinez, in 1774, had seen, but not entered. Captain Gray was then transferred to the Columbia, and proceeded in her to Canton with the furs collected, and at Canton took in a cargo of teas for Boston. Captain Kendrick remaining on the coast in the sloop Washington. Thus far the enterprise had not proved a gainful one to the parties, two of whom (Messrs. Derby and Pintard) disposed of their shares to Messrs. Barrell and Brown; who, with their remaining associates, decided, nevertheless, to despatch the Columbia once again, with Captain Gray, to the northwest coast. He accordingly proceeded thither, and, on the 7th of May, 1792, came in sight of land in latitude 46° 58', and anchored in what he named Bullfinch's Harbor, now called Gray's Harbor. On the 11th of May, he entered a large river; and on the 14th, sailed up the same about fourteen miles, and remained in the river until the 21st of May. To this river he gave the name of his ship, and the north side of the entrance he called Cape Hancock—the south side, Point Adams. This is the first entrance and exploration of the river Columbia, the inlet or bay of which, however, had been seen by Ayala and Heceta, and called by them Entrada de Heceta, as we have before stated: and so far as the discovery and exploration of this river from the sea can confer any claims of sovereignty, those claims, therefore, belong to the United States, both in her own right and in right of Spain. And although the voyage was unprofitable to its enterprising projectors, it was highly important to the United States, as well by giving rights of discovery as because it opened the way to a most valuable and productive commerce, which was afterwards pursued by other citizens of the United States."

"Vancouver himself, in his own narrative, states truly and candidly, with the frankness natural to a brave sailor, that he derived the knowledge of the existence of Columbia river from Captain Gray, who had previously visited it, and named it, and who spoke Vancouver, and communicated to him the fact. On the 29th of April, 1792, Vancouver says that he spoke the ship Columbia, of Boston, Captain Robert Gray; that Gray gave information of a river in 46° 10'; and he then proceeds to mention a previous voyage, that of the Washington, in which Gray had entered the Strait of Juan de Fuca.—(Voyage, vol. i.) Afterwards, when Vancouver sent Broughton, one of his officers, to explore the river Columbia, he says: "Broughton had for his guidance thus far up the inlet a chart by Mr. Gray, who had commanded the American ship Columbia." In the same place he uses the name of Point Adams, applied by Gray."—(Vol. ii., p. 53.)

Mr. Buchanan, in his letter of the 30th August last, to the British Minister, (Mr. Pakenham,) and at the close of his able and unanswerable argument in favor of our title to the whole of Oregon, says:

"Upon the whole: From the most careful and ample examination which the undersigned has been able to bestow upon the subject, he is satisfied that the Spanish American title now held by the United States, embracing the whole territory between the parallels of 42 degrees and 54 degrees

40 minutes, is the best title in existence to this entire region; and that the claim of Great Britain to any portion of it has no sufficient foundation. Even British geographers have not doubted our title to the territory in dispute. There is a large and splendid globe now in the Department of State, recently received from London, and published by Malby & Co., manufacturers and publishers to the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, which assigns this territory to the United States."

Having said thus much, Mr. Chairman, in support of our title to the whole of Oregon, I shall take occasion to call the attention of the committee to the opinions of many distinguished Senators at the third session of the 27th Congress, on the bill introduced by one of the then distinguished Senators from Missouri—now no more—[Dr. Linn,] "to authorize the adoption of measures for the occupation and settlement of the territory of Oregon, for extending certain portions of the laws of the United States over the same, and for other purposes." The occupation and settlement of the Oregon territory by our Government was a favorite measure of the able and talented Senator Linn; and he labored during his brilliant senatorial career with a zeal and an ardor deserving more favorable results than he lived to see accomplished. But his name will long live in the grateful remembrance of every patriotic American for the bold and noble course he pursued on the Oregon question. The bill of Dr. Linn met the same objections we now find urged against the proposition under consideration—that it was inexpedient to legislate—that it would excite the indignation of Great Britain, and that war would result; whilst, if we would only cease to legislate, and go on settling the country quietly, it would soon fall into our hands. Mr. Benton, in answer to some of the objections urged against the bill, and in defence of our title, said:

"On one point there is unanimity on this floor, and that is as to the title to the country in question. All agree that the title is in the United States. On another point there is division: and that is, on the point of giving offence to England by granting the land to our settlers which the bill proposes: on this point we divide. Some think it will offend her; some think it will not. For my part, I think she will take offence, do what we may in relation to this territory. She wants it herself, and means to quarrel for it, if she does not fight for it. I think she will take offence at our bill, and even at our discussion of it."

Mr. Benton further said:

"I maintain that the passage of this bill, and these grants to the settlers, can give no just ground of offence to Great Britain; and this opinion is the regular deduction from the unanimous opinion of this Chamber, that the title to the territory is in the United States."

In conclusion, Mr. Benton remarked:

"I go now for vindicating our rights on the Columbia, and, as the first step towards it, passing this bill, and making these grants of land, which will soon place thirty or forty thousand rifles beyond the Rocky mountains, which will be our effective negotiators."

England will find fault with us, do what we may—merely for calling in question the British right

to the territory; but I, for one, am not to be deterred by any such considerations. I do not know but we may have to fight for our rights; but no dread of such a contest shall ever operate to deter me from a bold assertion of our title. I am in favor of the passage of a bill at this session, with a preamble, declaring the title to be in the United States. That title will be defended and maintained. I am ready to give pre-emption rights of land to settlers in Oregon. Do this, and hardy and enterprising settlers will speedily emigrate to the territory, and will prove themselves our best negotiators. I am against negotiation *in toto*: that is a field in which Great Britain has always beaten us, and always will.

I will also give the committee an extract from the speech on the same bill of the present distinguished Secretary of the Treasury, (Mr. Walker.) He said:

"The question now was, readily, whether we are to assert our rights in relation to this territory, or to abandon them; whether we will maintain our title, or, by our own neglect, suffer it to be placed in doubt. Now, he was fully prepared to say that he was not disposed to abandon one inch of the territory claimed by this country on the northwest coast, from the 42d to the 54th degree of northern latitude. To the whole of this territory he considered the title of the United States indefeasible, and we should not abandon our claim to one inch of it. He was not prepared to abandon our title to an inch of the territory, on the ground that our assertion of it would lead to war, or on any other ground, because he considered that title indisputable and indefeasible. He believed it now to be the duty of Congress to assert our title; to declare to the world that we will maintain our rights, and will not abandon them. If Great Britain is to take offence at our declaration that we will maintain our rightful claim, her doing so will be no argument to him that we ought to yield."

Mr. Chalmers (I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet, (I have, however, heard that one of the family name has claimed to be one;) I, however, venture to predict that, if we ever get into a conflict with Great Britain, we will never make peace so long as that Government continues to possess one foot of territory on this continent.

For the benefit of my whig friends, and to show that the Oregon question is no party question, I will read short extracts from the speeches of certain distinguished whig Senators during the pendency of Dr. Linn's bill.

Mr. Crittenden was opposed to the "preamble."

"Believing, as he did, that our title is complete and unblemished, he would not sully it by any such proceeding."

Mr. Archer, of Virginia, said:

"He hoped the Senator from Missouri understood that he was not either opposed to the bill, or to the maintenance of our rights whenever there would be occasion to assert them. He only objected to the expediency and necessity of the preamble to the bill."

Mr. Phelps, of Vermont, said:

"As a member of the select committee, he should say that he did not consider the preamble

to the bill, when pressed by the chairman, very important; but he was willing to retain it, on the ground that it was necessary to satisfy the public mind. But now that the subject had been debated, and a question put on striking out the preamble, he thought it better that it should be retained, than that any doubt should be created by striking it out."

All these distinguished Senators united in admitting that our title was clear and indisputable; they were, however, opposed to the preamble of Dr. Linn's bill, chiefly because they feared that its insertion might, in some degree, prejudice our title by seeming to express a doubt on the subject. Whenever our title comes to be fully examined, all doubt on the subject must come to an end. Senator Linn's bill passed the Senate by a very large majority. This fact, and the arguments urged in its favor, are deserving of some consideration. I will refer to the eminent Senator from South Carolina, [Mr. Calhoun,] who made an eloquent speech in opposition to the bill, because he deemed it impolitic to urge our claims *then*. Mr. Calhoun said that our title was so good that it stood in no need of a *hasty* assertion of it. He concluded by saying that, if the bill were to pass, notice to Great Britain ought *first* to be given. While I do not by any means approve all the course of that distinguished Senator on this question, I trust that he will yet be found coming to the rescue, whatever may be the final determination of Congress.

I might here indulge in some comments on the course pursued by certain gentlemen of the South in this debate; but it is not my intention to charge members from the *South* or *North*, who see fit to oppose this notice, with a want of patriotism or devotion to what *they* deem the best interest of the country. We have had too many proofs, assuming the substantive forms of noble and generous deeds, of that devotion to the interests of the whole Union, to allow us to doubt their patriotism. And whatever course these gentlemen may take *here*, I have full confidence that, if war shall come, they will not stop *then* to inquire the cause, but will be found in the front rank, defending the rights and the honor of our common country. I have more charity for the honesty of those who differ from me in opinion than some gentlemen seem to possess; I believe men may honestly differ on great questions. But members from the West have been charged with the design of madly driving the country into a war with Great Britain by their "western furor, braggadocio," &c., in pressing the question of notice. Is it to be characterized as vain *boasting* and *braggadocio* to assert here that we are able, ready, and willing to defend our rights, both in peace and in war? When we say that we believe and trust in the arguments advanced by our negotiators in relation to our title to the whole of Oregon, and declare our determination to aid in carrying into effect the recommendations of the President in his Annual Message, are we to be told that it is "demagoguism?" I wish to avoid war, if we can do so without compromising our rights or our honor; but sooner than would either, I say give no war, with all its horrors. If we shrink from the maintenance of our rights, from an ignoble fear of war, we will show ourselves unworthy descend

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nts of our patriot fathers! Did they, although a
mere handful, shrink from asserting their rights,
or fear of incurring the displeasure of England?
If our form of government confers more blessings
upon mankind than that of Great Britain, surely
all lovers of freedom, all philanthropists, should
exert their whole energies to secure Oregon, that
those who inhabit it may enjoy the blessings of a
republican government.

In listening to the ingenious and eloquent speech
of the honorable gentleman from Kentucky, [Mr.
G. DAVIS,] I was almost persuaded that the coun-
try watered by Frazer's river belonged to Great
Britain. The honorable gentleman from Kentucky
contended with great zeal, that they had discover-
ed and settled that country, and had as good a title
to it as we had to the country watered by the Co-
lumbia river; and he argued that it would be a gross
outrage now to attempt to take possession of that
portion of Oregon. But near the close of the gen-
tleman's speech, he contended that by delaying to
give the notice, and by going on and settling the
country, we would, in time, be able to take the
whole up to 54° 40'. As soon as I heard that, the
whole effect of the gentleman's able and ingenious
argument evaporated. I thought such a proceed-
ing unworthy of a great and growing country like
this. We ought to act in a more frank and manly
manner. We should come out like men, and ex-
press our views and purposes without disguise.
Like the gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr.
WILKINSON,] I am not for the "hush policy." I
want nothing like stage effect. I go for declaring
our rights, and maintaining them. This is what
the people expect at our hands.

It seems that gentlemen opposed to the notice
think that, by not giving notice, we can go on
settling and improving the country; and that Eng-
land will remain passive; and that thereby we shall
be the gainers. This view is based upon the pre-
sumption that the British Government is at once
ignorant, stupid, and imbecile. If England con-
siderers her claim to a portion of the country just,
and worth retaining, does any one believe for a mo-
ment that she will remain inactive? Can any gen-
tleman point me to the time, or to the place, when
that Government did not put forth all her power
and energies to acquire and to secure territory?
Do they suppose that the English Ministry are not
advised of all we say and of all we do on this ques-
tion?

The great majority of the American people be-
lieve that the whole of the Oregon territory right-
fully belongs to us; that it is ours; and that we are
called upon by every consideration of patriotism
and love of freedom—by the duty we owe our pa-
triot fathers—to come up now, boldly and manful-
ly, and declare this fact to the civilized world—
that we intend to terminate the treaty of 6th Au-
gust, 1827; and that after the twelve months shall
have elapsed from the time of giving this notice,
we will take possession of our territory, "peace-
ably if we can, forcibly if we must." This, Mr.
Chairman, I believe to be our duty; and nothing
short of this will satisfy the country; nothing less
than this will redeem us in the eyes of the world,
after the declarations we have sent abroad in rela-
tion to our claims to this country. If the will of the
people is to be disregarded in the adjustment of

this great question, where is the benefit of our
democratic or republican form of government?
How is it better than a monarchy? Where is our
boasted freedom? Where is the popular will of
the masses? And echo will answer—"Where?"
Gone, sir; gone! abused! violated! trampled upon!
For myself, I have listened attentively to the ar-
guments of the gentlemen who are in favor of de-
lay, and opposed to giving the notice now; and, sir,
for the life of me, I cannot see the truth of their
conclusions. If giving the notice to England is
cause of war now, it will be cause of war if given
next year, or at any future time. If England in-
tends to hold on to any portion of that territory,
and to fight for it, it matters not when we attempt
to dispossess them, war will be the result. It may
be true, that for the last two years we have been
increasing our population in Oregon faster than
Great Britain has; but such will not be the result
in time to come, unless we adopt decided and en-
ergetic measures to take and to hold possession of
the country. Whilst we are willing to negotiate,
England has no fears of results. She knows full
well that she can out-negotiate us. Take, for ex-
ample, the northeast boundary. But, sir, when
they see that we claim the whole country, and
come to believe that we intend at any future time
to take possession of it, they will teach us that we
have gained nothing by delay.

The President recommends giving the notice;
and after alluding to the three unsuccessful attempts
that had been made by the two Governments, in
1818, 1821, and 1826, to settle this question by
compromise, he proceeds to state:

"When I came into office, I found this to be the
state of the negotiation. Though entertaining the
settled conviction that the British pretensions of
title could not be maintained to any portion of
the Oregon territory upon any principle of public
law recognised by nations, yet, in deference to what
had been done by my predecessors, and especially
in consideration that propositions of compromise
had been thrice made by two preceding Adminis-
trations to adjust the question on the parallel of
forty-nine degrees, and in two of them yielding
to Great Britain the free navigation of the Colum-
bia, and that the pending negotiations had been
commenced on the basis of compromise, I deemed
it to be my duty not abruptly to break it off. In
consideration, too, that, under the conventions of
1818 and 1827, the citizens and subjects of the
two Powers held a joint occupancy of the coun-
try, I was induced to make another effort to settle
this long-pending controversy in the spirit of mod-
eration which had given birth to the renewed dis-
cussion. A proposition was accordingly made,
which was rejected by the British Plenipotentiary,
who, without submitting any other proposition,
suffered the negotiation on his part to drop, ex-
pressing his trust that the United States would
offer what he saw fit to call some further propo-
sals for the settlement of the Oregon question,
more consistent with fairness and equity, and with
the reasonable expectations of the British Gov-
ernment." The proposition thus offered and re-
jected repeated the offer of the parallel of forty-
nine degrees of north latitude, which had been
made by two preceding Administrations, but
without proposing to surrender to Great Britain.

as they had done, the free navigation of the Columbia river. The right of any foreign Power to the free navigation of any of our rivers, through the heart of our country, was one which I was unwilling to concede. It also embraced a provision to make free to Great Britain any port or ports on the cape of Quadra and Vancouver's Island, south of this parallel. Had this been a new question, coming under discussion for the first time, this proposition would not have been made. The extraordinary and wholly inadmissible demands of the British Government, and the rejection of the proposition made in deference alone to what had been done by my predecessors, and the implied obligation which their acts seemed to impose, afford satisfactory evidence that no compromise which the United States ought to accept can be effected. With this conviction, the proposition of compromise which had been made and rejected, was, by my direction, subsequently withdrawn, and our title to the whole Oregon territory asserted; and, as is believed, maintained by irrefragable facts and arguments.

"The civilized world will see in these proceedings a spirit of liberal concession on the part of the United States; and this Government will be relieved from all responsibility which may follow the failure to settle the controversy.

"All attempts at compromise having failed, it becomes the duty of Congress to consider what measures it may be proper to adopt for the security and protection of our citizens now inhabiting, or who may hereafter inhabit, Oregon, and for the maintenance of our just title to that territory. In adopting measures for this purpose, care should be taken that nothing be done to violate the stipulations of the convention of 1827, which is still in force. The faith of treaties, in their letter and spirit, has ever been, and, I trust, will ever be, scrupulously observed by the United States. Under that convention, a year's notice is required to be given by either party to the other, before the joint occupancy shall terminate, and before either can rightfully assert or exercise exclusive jurisdiction over any portion of the territory. This notice it would, in my judgment, be proper to give; and I recommend that provision be made by law for giving it accordingly, and terminating in this manner, the convention of the sixth of August, 1827.

"It will become proper for Congress to determine what legislation they can in the meantime adopt without violating this convention. Beyond all question, the protection of our laws and our jurisdiction, civil and criminal, ought to be immediately extended over our citizens in Oregon. They have had just cause to complain of our long neglect in this particular, and have, in consequence, been compelled, for their own security and protection, to establish a provisional government for themselves. Strong in their allegiance and ardent in their attachments to the United States, they have been thus cast upon their own resources. They are anxious that our laws should be extended over them, and I recommend that this be done by Congress with as little delay as possible, in the full extent to which the British Parliament have proceeded in regard to British subjects in that territory, by their act of July

'2, 1821, for regulating the fur trade, and establishing a criminal and civil jurisdiction within certain parts of North America."

Whilst, Mr. Chairman, I do not consider this a party question, but a great American question, I am free to confess that I do not like to see a single Democrat against giving the notice, and at the expiration of twelve months, taking possession of the country; for, disguise it as you will, all who oppose these measures will be pronounced by the people to be on the British side of the question. And while I would urge upon the Whig side of this Hall, by the considerations of patriotism and love of liberty which should actuate every American freeman, to go for extending the area of freedom over the whole of Oregon, I feel that all these considerations must operate with greater force upon the Democratic portion of the House. The Democracy believe that the people have virtue and intelligence enough to govern themselves, and that the Representative of the people is bound to obey their will or resign.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I am convinced that Mr. Polk owes his elevation to the distinguished station he now so honorably fills more to his opinions on the Texas and Oregon questions than to all other considerations united. And, sir, in his election, I consider that the people decided both these great questions in the affirmative. What were Mr. Polk's views in relation to Oregon? Let an extract from his letter of the 23d April, 1841, written from Columbia, Tennessee, answer. He says:

"Let the fixed policy of our Government be, not to permit Great Britain or any other foreign Power to plant a colony or to hold dominion over any portion of the people or territory of the United States."

The President, in his Inaugural Address, says: "Nor will it become in a less degree my duty to assert and maintain, by all constitutional means, the right of the United States to that portion of our territory which lies beyond the Rocky mountains. Our title to the country of the Oregon is clear and unquestionable; and already are our people preparing to perfect that title by occupying it, with their wives and children." * * * "To us belongs the duty of protecting them adequately wherever they may be upon our soil."

But, Mr. Chairman, we are asked why this "hot haste?" They urge us to let things remain as they are—to "bide our time"—and we will get the whole of Oregon. In answer, I have only to say, that those who believe in the right of instruction have no discretion in this matter. The sovereign people are calling upon their public servants to settle this vexed question, by giving notice to Great Britain of our intention to terminate the convention of August 6, 1827, and to take active and energetic measures to protect our citizens and to secure the territory. And if war results from this course, on whom does the calamity fall? Is it not on the people? Who fight the battles of our country? Who defend the national honor? Whose blood and whose treasure have been poured out like water, in times past, to defend the nation against the aggressions of proud and haughty England? And whose will again be poured out, in the event of war? The people's; yes, the thousands who remain at home in time of peace, quietly and in-

for trade, and establish jurisdiction within the territory.

do not consider this an American question, I do not like to see a single notice, and at the existing possession of the territory will, all who pronounced by the side of the question. On the Whig side of the question, and actuate every American the area of freedom, I feel that all these with greater force upon the House. The Democrats have virtue and themselves, and that the people is bound to obey

convinced that Mr. distinguished station to his opinions more than to all other sir, in his election, I ded both these great things. What were Mr. Oregon? Let an example, April, 1844, written answer. He says:

Government be, not any other foreign Power dominion over any territory of the United

Address, says: "I do not see degree my duty to constitutional means, as to that portion of the Rocky mountain of the Oregon is and already are our at title by occupying it." * * * "To occupying it adequately our soil."

asked why this "hot things remain as they and we will get the of, I have only to say, right of instruction ter. The sovereign public servants to living notice to Great terminate the convention take active and encourage citizens and to war results from this unity fall? Is it not battles of our national honor? Whose have been poured out and the nation against haughty England? and out, in the event, the thousands who ce, quietly and in-

dustriously tilling the soil and improving the country,—it is this class upon whom all this great responsibility and calamity (if such shall result) will fall. And, sir, are they not to have the poor privilege of directing their public servants what to do in this matter? I, sir, am one of those who believe that the "sober second thought of the people" is seldom wrong; and I firmly believe that three-fourths of the people of this nation, if they could vote on the resolution now under consideration, would be found voting in the affirmative.

I am not, sir, for extending our laws over a single inch of territory that does not belong to us; and the alternative of war would not deter me from going to the very last inch of what is rightfully our own. Gentlemen may call this demagoguism—bravado—gaseonade—bragadocio—and whatever else they may think becoming. I am responsible only to my constituents and to my God. I believe I know the will of those whom I represent, and I dare to do it, come what may. And as to Him who rules the destinies of nations and of men, I believe that He is on our side, and that He will bless and protect us as He has done in days that are past. Experience was the best light in which to look at the future. In all the wars we have thus far been engaged in, He has thrown His shield of protection over us, and blessed our arms with victory; and I trust, if we are again compelled to hazard a war for the maintenance of our rights in Oregon, we shall again experience the same happy result.

Gentlemen all contend that ours is one of the best Governments on earth. Is there, then, a man who enjoys the peace and privileges, the happy security and freedom which distinguish the inhabitants of this land, who is not willing to risk something to confer the same blessings on the thousands who now, and the millions who will hereafter, inhabit Oregon? He does not deserve the name of an American citizen if he would not. A man so selfish and so dastardly, ill deserves the rich blessings he enjoys.

I deprecate all idea of calling this a party question. It should not be so considered or so treated. In my own State it is not a party question. My Whig colleague, who represents truly the Whig population of the western States and Territories, is willing to go as far for Oregon as he who goes farthest. He goes for the last pebble that reflects the light of an Oregon moon. This shows what the feelings of the great West are on this question.

I might adduce still stronger proofs. With the political party with whom I am in the habit of acting, the distinguished gentleman from Massachusetts has not heretofore been very popular. They consider him as an eminent and a profound statesman; some of his public acts they applaud, but there are more which they disapprove; but now they say, with one accord, that if he continues his present course in relation to our rights in Oregon, his life will terminate in a blaze of glory. With them, this is a question which overrides all others.

It has been said, however, that this strong feeling about Oregon is assumed for political effect, and has been gotten up to aid the fortunes of a particular candidate for the Presidency; in a word, that the Oregon question is neither more nor less

than a great question of President-making. This is not the feeling in the region from which I come. True, in the West, no man would be elected a corporal who did not profess to go for every inch of Oregon. For no other reason is this feeling cherished, than from a determination to maintain our rights. All candidates and their pretensions sink into utter insignificance in comparison.

We boast of being the followers of Thomas Jefferson; and, as such, we ought to go for the greatest good of the greatest number. So long as there exists a doubt in our minds on this question, let the people of Oregon have the benefit of that doubt. I implore gentlemen, by their regard for the great principles of Democracy, to give their hearty support to this truly Democratic measure.

At the Baltimore convention, resolutions were passed embodying the views of the Democratic party throughout the land.

The following is the one in relation to Oregon:

"Resolved, That our title to the whole of the territory of Oregon is clear and unquestionable; that no portion of the same ought to be ceded to England or any other Power; and that the reoccupation of Oregon and the reannexation of Texas at the earliest practicable period, are great American measures, which this convention recommends to the cordial support of the Democracy of the Union."

This resolution met the hearty response of the people in all quarters of the Union. I could cite the committee to hundreds of public meetings responding to the nominations made at Baltimore, and the resolutions passed in relation to Oregon. I will, however, refer only to the great ratification meeting in the city of New York immediately after Mr. Polk's nomination:

"Resolved, That the title of the United States to the territory of Oregon being unquestionable, we hold it to be the bounden duty of our Government, as we believe it to be the sentiment of the united Democratic party, that this territory should be preserved entire and undivided; that no part of it should be surrendered to any foreign Power; and that early and effectual provisions should be made by law for its complete occupation, and for the protection and security of our citizens now settled in and emigrating to it."

These resolutions embodied the views and opinions of the great mass of the Democratic party, and I contend should have some influence upon the Democratic portion of this House. I venture to say there is not a man on this floor who has not received numerous letters approving the ground taken by the President, in his Message, on the Oregon question. From those who are on the Whig side in politics, this approbation could not have been excited by the President's doctrine respecting the sub-treasury or the reduction of the tariff. To what is this owing? It cannot be denied that it is owing to the bold, manly, and independent ground taken in relation to the Oregon question. Never, sir, has a Message of any Chief Magistrate of this nation since the formation of the Government been more enthusiastically applauded and approved than has the annual Message of Mr. Polk. I have received the most decided testimony from my Whig constituents, approving this to the

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. STARRWEATHER;] 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."

of the dark ages. The other way of settling this is the manner forced to defend war as an enormous consideration it the greatest our present system or republic attained it not the result of submitted to the extent would now have the greater sacrifices called on to make for aged their lives, their All was jeopardized possession of a common near so fertile or

maintained, if our citizens of the Columbia and side? I ask gentle consequences of such y, I hear it asked, for so many years is no parallel between country is hardly fighting for; and yet entering difficulties Oregon twenty years consist of millions, who are sparsely gentlemen suppose and the United at an extent of coast, they show the largest danger of collision? It might follow day, people will lead them one day come into time, will belong to be an "oceanic" not sanction the perfectly consistent ch. But this country nature of things. s shall extend our —a territory which ve to be ours.

much humor, what "y." I will not say notice are in favor as that described by the honorable [ARKWEATHER:] but could use the same or right to Oregon floor to talk about ight, and the vic's guard of British Oregon after the notice.

om the speech of Mr. BAYLY.] He

importance to Oregon, rying on the fur-line, and when it appear with it in

He is mistaken in relation to this matter. They are turning their attention extensively to agriculture. I here beg leave to give an extract from Captain Wilkes's Narrative of the Exploring Expedition, in proof of this statement:

"In connexion with the company's establishment at Nisqually, they have a large dairy, several hundred head of cattle, and among them seventy milch cows, which yield a large supply of butter and cheese; they have also large crops of wheat, peas, and oats, and were preparing the ground for potatoes. These operations are conducted by a farmer and dairyman brought from England expressly to superintend these affairs. A few Indians are engaged in attending the flocks, and the company's servants are almost exclusively employed as laborers.

"I have mentioned these agricultural establishments as connected with the Hudson Bay Company, and they are in reality so; but as their character precludes their engaging in these operations, another company has been organized, under the title of the 'Puget Sound Company,' the shares of which are held by the officers, agents, and servants of the Hudson Bay Company, and its officers are exclusively chosen from among them. Dr. McLaughlin, for instance, chief officer and governor of Fort Vancouver, on the part of the Hudson Bay Company, is also a director of the Puget Sound Company, and has the entire management of its concerns. His salary is five hundred pounds.

"The capital of the Puget Sound Company is five hundred thousand pounds, divided into shares of one hundred pounds each. Only two hundred thousand pounds of this have been paid in. The operations of this company are, in consequence, large. They began by making large importations of stock from California, and some of the best breeds of cattle from England. They have also entered into farming on an extensive scale, using as laborers the servants of the Hudson Bay Company, who are bound by their contracts to do all manner of service that may be required of them, even to the bearing of arms.

"This company have the supplying of all the ports and stations of the Hudson Bay Company on the west side of the American continent, and also furnish the Russian ports with grain, butter, and cheese; of the former article the Russians take about fifteen thousand bushels. It is also their intention, when they shall have succeeded in breeding a sufficient stock of cattle and sheep, to export hides, horns, tallow, and wool, to England, in the return ships, which now go home comparatively empty, as the furs occupy only a small portion of the capacity of the ship. In this way it may be readily perceived that they will be enabled to drive a profitable trade, particularly when it is considered how little care the cattle require in this territory, in consequence of the grass and natural hay which the soil affords at all seasons. It is the prospect of the advantageous results to be derived from these operations that has induced the Hudson Bay Company to change their trading establishments into large agricultural ones."

The servants of the Hudson Bay Company are abandoning the fur trade, and turning their atten-

tion to agricultural pursuits. There is no question of the fact; it is susceptible of proof. Captain McNeil, an American speculator from Boston, a shrewd and enterprising man, has gone there, and in a few years had made sad inroads on the profits of the company. What were they to do? Unwilling to apply open force, they bought him out. The facts only go to show that when an American of talent and enterprise goes to settle in that country, they immediately endeavor to enlist him in their service. In the case of McNeil they succeeded, and he is now an active partner in that company. Such is their policy. They are doing all they can to get the country permanently settled.

To illustrate further the value of Oregon for agricultural and other purposes, I will give a few extracts from the Journal of Captain Spaulding, of the ship "Lausanne," in the year 1841. In speaking of the settlement at Fort Vancouver, and of Dr. McLaughlin, chief agent of the Hudson Bay Company, he says:

"The Doctor has been very successful in the introduction of domestic animals. He first brought a few cattle overland from California, and, as he seldom has any slaughtered, they have now increased to about seven thousand in seven years. He has also introduced sheep, some of which are of the finest species of the Merino and Saxon breeds. I saw a flock of one thousand at Vancouver, the finest and fattest I ever saw. He has about two thousand at Vancouver, and thinks Oregon peculiarly adapted for growing wool. He has also a large garden adjoining the fort containing about four acres, filled with the choicest fruits, viz: apples, pears, plums, cherries, strawberries, gooseberries, currants, &c., and vegetables of almost every description."

Speaking of salmon in the Columbia river, and all its branches, he says:

"They are literally alive with salmon in the summer months, which ascend to the fountain head. The company take about one thousand barrels per annum, three hundred of which the Doctor gives away every winter to keep the Indians alive.

"I have no doubt that ten thousand barrels of salmon might be taken from the Columbia and its branches, without at all diminishing the stock, independent of what is required for the support of the Indians. Salmon constitutes their principal food, and no doubt ten thousand barrels are annually taken by them. Indeed, the whole north-west coast, from the Columbia river to 60 degrees, has every river and brook that is deep enough for a salmon to enter, filled in the summer season. A gentleman, whose veracity is undoubted, told me that he has seen Frazer's river, in Puget's Sound, for miles, so filled with them, (the water being about three feet deep,) that you could not step without actually treading on them. The salmon of the north, however, are not so large, fat, or fine, as those of the Columbia river; those taken from this river are, no doubt, the best in the world. Some of them will weigh fifty pounds; the average weight is about eighteen or twenty pounds."

In speaking of the fur trade, he says:

"The Hudson Bay Company has an exclusive monopoly of all the fur trade north of the United

States, from Hudson's Bay on one side, to the Pacific and Russian settlements on the other; and have a very large number of employees, who traverse this immense region in every direction, having posts or stations all over the same: indeed, they have spread a complete network throughout the length and breadth of the country. As they have the fur trade entirely in their own hands, they husband their resources, and only bring out an average quantity of furs each year; and when they become scarce at any one post, they remove from there, so as to give the beaver and other furs time to resuscitate. The company consists of eighty members, or shares; eight of the stockholders reside in England, and the others in the Oregon country. Each chief agent, and agents of each individual post, are shareholders. The fur trade is entirely monopolized by this company; but not content with this, they are turning their attention to every other branch of business. For instance, they have taken possession of almost every eligible spot in Oregon where there is a water power, or a good site for factories; they have selected out the finest sites for farms; they have erected mills—both saw and flour mills—with a view of supplying the Sandwich Islands with lumber and flour, and the Russians at the north with flour and butter from their farms; they are in fact grasping at everything. They are now about establishing a post at the islands, as also in California; and a Mr. Simpson has been sent to both these places to effect this object, their instruction being to monopolize the entire trade of both places for the sale of English goods, lumber, flour, butter, &c.; and unless our Government insist on our just rights, and drive them out of the Columbia, they will certainly succeed in driving all the American commerce from both the islands and California, as they have already done from the northwest coast. Their resources are immense, and their ambition unbounded. But, would they confine themselves to the region north of the United States, we should have less reason to complain, notwithstanding they are using our just means—means that properly belong to the people of the United States—to annihilate our trade in the Pacific, while, upon the land, they are cutting the best timber, and improving the best soil in Oregon, besides having arrogated to themselves the almost exclusive occupation of the Columbia river. Nor does this selfish grasping at all satisfy them; for they annually send a large party through the acknowledged territory of the United States to California, to trap beaver and kill sea-otter."

Captain Spaulding, in the same journal, after giving numerous instances of the barbarity and cruelty of the trappers of the Hudson Bay Company towards the Indians, and the inhuman and cold-blooded murder committed by them, says:

"Since then, as would naturally be expected, they (the Indians) had been at enmity with the whites. That these irresponsible servants and agents of this monopolizing British company should be suffered thus to murder, destroy, and rob these Indians, and enrich themselves, through the neglect of our Government, whose duty it is to protect these poor, defenceless, weak, and wretched beings, is what no man, as it seems to

me, who has the blood of an American coursing in his veins, can or ought tamely to submit to. Is it not high time that our Government, after so long a delay, should arouse itself to the protection of its own interests in Oregon? For, if it sleep but a little longer, that valuable territory is certainly lost to us forever. Give the English only the north part of the Columbia river—let them plant ten guns upon Cape Disappointment, and all the navies in the world could not take the command of the river from them. The cape and Tongue point are two perfect 'Gibraltars' on the Columbia; and the Hudson Bay Company have already taken possession of the latter, as they have also of every other eligible spot on the Columbia."

Captain Spaulding says it is the prevailing opinion in Oregon, that the grasping ambition of England will not stop short of the acquisition of California, with a view of possessing themselves of the bay and harbor of San Francisco, the finest on the whole coast of the Pacific for a naval depot, being accessible at all times for ships of any draught of water. In speaking of the colony from the United States settled on the Willamette river ninety miles above its mouth, he says:

"It is the finest grazing and wheat country in Oregon. At present (1841) it consists of about seventy families, who raise considerable grain, and have about three thousand head of cattle. The mission last year raised one thousand bushels of wheat, and made butter, cheese, &c., enough for their own use. They have five hundred head of cattle and two hundred horses; and last year they sowed four hundred bushels of wheat, one hundred and twenty bushels of peas, and planted a large quantity of potatoes and vegetables of all descriptions.

"The extent of the country comprising the Willamette valley, is about three hundred miles long and two hundred broad, interspersed with ravines of wood, generally in sufficient quantities for fuel and fencing. The land, in its natural state, is usually ready for the plow, and is producing from twenty-five to forty bushels of wheat to the acre; and the climate is so mild, that the cattle subsist in the fields without fodder or shelter of any kind being prepared or provided for them through the winter. Salmon can be taken at the Willamette falls (which, however, the British have taken possession of, and compelled our people to build their mills at the falls above) with little trouble, from May to September, in almost any quantity. I have no hesitation in saying that ten thousand barrels might be taken per annum. Probably no place in the world offers greater inducements to emigrants. Provisions might readily be procured to support one thousand emigrants at any time."

I think, Mr. Chairman, that I have clearly shown that the honorable gentleman from Virginia was in error, in believing that Great Britain valued this country only for its furs, and that the territory is of immense value for agriculture alone. Of its commercial advantages, which have been so fully set forth by gentlemen who have preceded me in this debate, I will only say, that the most sanguine friends of Oregon have not overrated these advantages, and time will prove my prediction correct.

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Let me here quote a short extract from a speech
of the distinguished Senator from Missouri, [Mr.
Benton,] who has given this question much atten-
tion, and whose opinions are therefore entitled to
great weight. After giving a glowing description
of the beauty, grandeur, and fertility of the coun-
try, he says:

"Such a country is formed for union, wealth,
' and strength. It can have but one capital, and
' that will be a Thebes; but one commercial empor-
' rium, and that will be a Tyre, queen of cities.
' Such a country can have but one people, one in-
' terest, one Government; and that people should
' be American, that interest ours, and that Govern-
' ment Republican. Accursed and infamous be the
' man that divides or alienates it."

We will gain nothing by withholding the notice,
and meanwhile it is our duty—we owe it to our
own hardy pioneers—to quiet the question of title.
It cannot be disguised that the feeling which pre-
vails in that part of the country from which these
emigrants go, is, that the territory is ours, and that
we are going to protect it by our laws. The emi-
grants themselves believe it, as firmly as if it were
already written in the statute-book. They went
there in the same spirit in which the Pilgrims came
to Plymouth; with the same patriotism, the same
love and admiration of free government, and the
same desire to enlarge the area of freedom.

I had intended to say much more on this sub-
ject, but I perceive that my time is fast elapsing.

I regret that the correspondence between our
Secretary of State and the British Envoy came in
before I had an opportunity of making the remarks
I had wished to submit to the committee. I would
not have it understood that anything, from any
quarter, would have any weight with me, beyond
its own intrinsic truth. I was, however, glad to
learn that the President had refused to arbitrate
this question; in this the people will triumphantly
sustain him. But I feel it to be due to myself and
to my constituents, to declare, that—much as I
venerate the character and standing of our distin-
guished Chief Magistrate—if the offer made by
him of latitude 49^o as a boundary line had been
accepted by the British Minister, the people of the
West would have denounced the act in such terms
of censure as would have made all future Presi-
dents tremble. I regret exceedingly that Mr. Polk
ever made this offer. I have no doubt he was ac-
tuated in that offer by the purest and best of mo-
tives—in my judgment there are few wiser heads
than his, or purer hearts; but he allowed his sin-
cere deference for the acts of his predecessors to
peril his own popularity. The offer, happily, was
not accepted, and no very serious consequences
have ensued. Had it been accepted, this Admin-
istration would have been forever prostrated—as
will any other that ever hereafter shall surrender a
single inch of American soil, the title to which is
clear and unquestionable.

