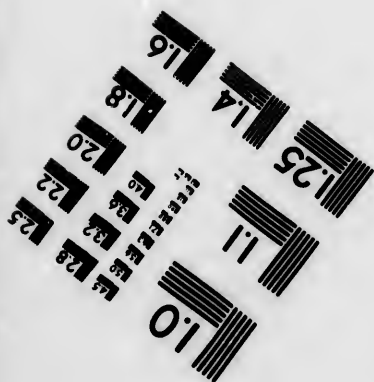
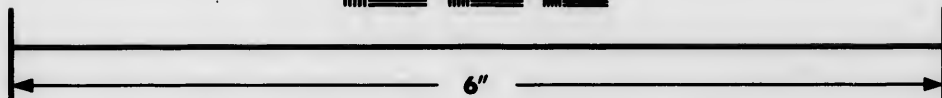
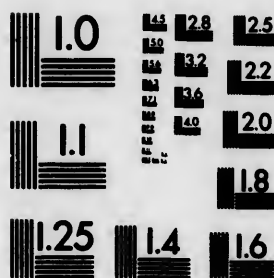


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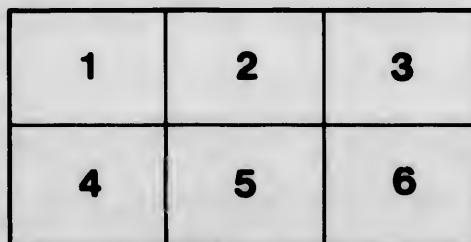
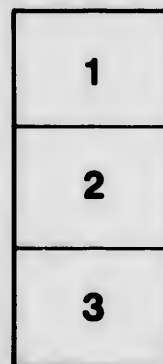
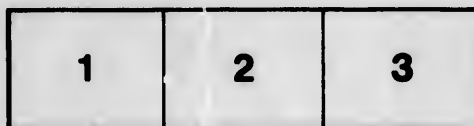
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MR.

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**SPEECH**

**OF**

**MR. J. S. PENDLETON, OF VIRGINIA,**

**ON THE**

**OREGON QUESTION.**

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*Delivered in the House of Representatives, U. S., January 26, 1846.*

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**WASHINGTON:**

**PRINTED BY J. & G. S. GIDEON.**

**1846.**

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## SPEECH.

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The House being in Committee of the Whole, and having under consideration the joint resolution reported from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, directing the President to give notice to Great Britain that the United States will terminate the convention between the two Governments, providing for the joint occupation of the Oregon territory, at the expiration of twelve months—

Mr. PENDLETON said, that when this debate commenced, nothing was further from his intention than any manner of participation in it. My disposition was, Sir, (said Mr. P.) to leave to those who have brought this trouble on the country, the business of settling it.

It was said early in the discussion, that this Oregon question and that of Texas were "born and cradled" in the Baltimore Democratic convention of 1844—"twins," as my honorable friend from Massachusetts says; *two*, he might with more precise accuracy have said, out of a very numerous litter, of as monstrous political absurdities as any conclave, by so rapid a parturition, ever spawned upon the world.

To another of the progeny of that celebrated convention—the most distinguished in his destiny, as the most remarkable in his birth—for with him, by an extraordinary violation of all the laws of nature and of reason, conception and delivery were a simultaneous, if not a single process—to the President of the United States, I mean—with a party majority at his heels, and with the command of both branches of Congress in the hands of his friends, I was inclined, I repeat, to leave the task of relieving himself and the republic, of all the consequences of his own peculiar system of regulating and conducting its foreign relations. I did not doubt but the party had already a sufficiently lively perception of the difficulties into which it has brought itself, to find reason—for the party's, if not for the country's sake—sufficient to stimulate an interested, if not a patriotic, dedication of its best energies to the object of its own extrication.

But, Sir, as long as I have known your party, and as thoroughly as I believed I understood it, and know that I do understand it, I confess I was mistaken on this occasion. I was perfectly aware of the spirit of compromise that shaped the decisions of your Baltimore convention—a spirit so liberal and large, that, in the brief session of two days, it found time, I believe, to deny and discredit every principle which, as a party, it professes; from its unanimous negation of its own great fundamental doctrine of instruction, to its unanimous recommendation of a Democratic Republican candidate for the Presidency, at the instance and upon the nomination of a Hartford convention Federalist. I desire it to be remembered that this Baltimore convention has been introduced into this debate not by me, but by its own friends and partisans. If time permitted, I should be happy to pay it my special respects, on many accounts. But, for the present, your one-hour rule compels me to let it pass.

I was about observing that I comprehended perfectly well the sternness of that necessity which caused your apparent harmony, and that it could not last, for it was not cordial in its character, nor founded on any basis of patriotism or principle. No, Sir; you might as well attempt to fether the flames with flax, or to chain the ocean with sand, as to keep in any efficient and permanent combination, the heterogeneous elements to be found



in the millions who compose your Democratic party; or, what is perhaps more difficult, to restrain the impatient and selfish aspirations of some of the leaders, whom they follow.

But I was unprepared, I confess, for the events we have seen here. I did not suppose that the party, in thirty days after its full instalment into power—fresh from the people—burning, according to its own account, with fervent devotion to the public weal; and last, not least, banded together by a common and disinterested reverence for the high qualities of its chosen chief, would be found on such a question as this—a question settled at the Baltimore convention—split up and divided into angry and contending factions. And not only divided, but, if we may believe the evidence of one faction against the other, seizing on this great national question, as the occasion for commencing a miserable scramble, for the succession to the Presidential office.

I refer to these facts as things which have transpired in the face of the whole country, and therefore proper to be referred to; and for the further reason that they furnish, in part, the motive of my action on the present occasion. I take no sides between these criminating and recriminating parties. Least of all, do I tender any mediatorial offices—“*non nobis tantas componere lites.*” I find in the bitterness, as well as the prematurity of their discords, the best omen for the public good, that either their aspect or action has afforded, for a long time past.

Yet, since I have referred to these matters, and since, for the larger part, I believe the charges to be perfectly true, I owe it to my own sincere convictions to acquit myself of the suspicion of lending any sort of countenance to that very gross and ungenerous charge, which has been made against a distinguished member of the other branch of Congress.

If the man whose earliest distinction in public life, was his authorship of the war report of 1812, cannot be relied on to sustain his country in a just and righteous war, then, I do not know the man who can be depended on in such an emergency. It seems to be one of the hard conditions of great eminence in our country, to be peculiarly liable to the grossest imputations. A great statesman, distinguished for more than thirty years, in the highest offices of the republic, returns to public life after a temporary retirement, and the foreign press hails his advent, as auspicious to the cause of peace. Instantly he is charged with being under foreign influence, and we are significantly told to wait and see “which side he takes;” as if those who resist these mad projects of war were a foreign party, or under foreign influence.

I do not belong, and never shall belong, to the party of that Senator—never, certainly, whilst he keeps his present company—but I think far too well of him to suppose, that he can be, even for a moment, ruffled by so unjust an aspersion. I hope sincerely that he will be found, on this occasion, where his large experience and his matured wisdom make it almost certain he *must* be found, on the side of peace—the peace of his own country and of the world; that he will, with all the strength of his great intellect, resist the rash and ill-advised counsels that would plunge his country into war; and, in so doing, add another to the many unquestionable titles he already has, to the respect and admiration of all his countrymen. If I could be permitted to counsel that distinguished gentleman, I would say to him—Go, emulate the example of a *great pacificator*; and

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if, as in his case, services that deserve monuments more durable than brass, have no present return, but the cold ingratitude of a thankless generation—then you will not fail to win a higher reward than party can bestow—the unmixed approbation of your own conscience, and the sure and favorable judgment of the good and the wise, now and forever.

I will endeavor, Sir, to avoid the error of making a party speech, on the present occasion. If I have erred in attempting, for a moment, to lift the veil from that miserable jugglery which has led a confiding people to incur the hazard of a tremendous calamity, let it be attributed rather to an irrepressible indignation against the conjurers themselves, than to any insensibility to the high obligations, and the grave responsibilities, under which I am called to act, in common with all the members of this House.

This question, which should always have been, but never has been, a national one, is beginning to lose the party character it at first assumed, and is now coming to be very distinctly a sectional one. Gentlemen from particular sections of the Union seem to unite, without regard to party, in favor of this war measure of notice, as if the capacity to comprehend what is due the national honor, were circumscribed within certain geographical boundaries. In this state of things, I beg the indulgence of the committee, whilst I submit a few remarks, hardly intended to be arguments, but rather a statement of the reasons which decide my own course. And permit me to remark, *in limine*, that, although not absolutely inexperienced in public debate, I arise on this, to me, untried theatre, with the most unaffected and painful diffidence and distrust of myself; distrust of myself in all things, save a sincere and earnest desire to say, if I can, in any form, however homely, a single word that may contribute to avert from my country the most dreadful of all the scourges to which civilized society is liable—imminently, as I am forced to believe, imminently, at this moment impending.

I can imagine, Sir, no occasion of more solemn interest—no scene which ought to be marked by every circumstance of sober dignity, and moderation, and caution, more than that of a North American Congress—the representatives of twenty millions of people, as advanced in civilization, in wealth, in intelligence, in public and in private virtue, as any other twenty millions in the world—deliberating upon and discussing the issues of peace and war—issues always important and interesting, and, I may be allowed, I hope, without incurring, even in this belligerent presence, the reproach of an unmanly timidity, to say—not the less interesting, when, as in the present case, the adversary party is the most ancient of existing States, and the most powerful and warlike of either ancient or modern empires.

Let me not be hastily condemned, Sir, for speaking in terms of exaggeration of the momentous crisis in which it has been my fortune to appear here. I speak as I feel about it. It is an easy thing, Mr. Chairman, for children at school—boys at college should have more sense—to talk lightly about war, and battle, and bloodshed, between such people as those of England and the United States.

It is easy for that worthless and vagrant population which loafs about your cities—the bullies of election days, and patriots of the pot-houses—men for whom wars and revolutions have no terrors, because to them change can bring no inconveniences, “the cankers of a calm world and a long peace,” to talk and rant about war.

And, Sir, among our friends and compatriots here, there are circumstances and conditions naturally calculated to affect very importantly the relative composure with which we can contemplate those scenes of suffering and calamity, which a British war must inevitably produce to both parties, and to all who may become parties to it.

Gentlemen whose local position removes them beyond the range of danger—far beyond the point to which even successful invasion would have any motive to penetrate—who are fortunately so situated that, if it did reach them, they could easily place themselves in a condition that the invader would be alone the sufferer by the experiment—may find much less difficulty in going to war upon a Quixotic pretext, than those of us who, if we do not do all the fighting, must unquestionably pay nearly all the penalties.

I mean no manner of disrespect to the courage or patriotism of those gentlemen who talk lightly of an English war. As one who admires many traits of their personal character, I could only wish that some other occasion might be improved, when, placing themselves, their families, and their constituents in the front of exposure, they might vindicate their pretensions to that ultra chivalry, and impatient valor, and public devotion, which, under the actual circumstances of the present case, are not likely to be fully appreciated by practical and common-sense men.

But, Sir, the prospect of war must always be viewed by the people of the Atlantic States with very different emotions. The gentleman from Philadelphia was disposed to treat jocularly the remark of the gentleman from South Carolina, that he was alarmed at the probable issue of this question. I should think very indifferently of the understanding of that gentleman, if he did not feel some alarm at the prospect before us, seeing in it, as he does, the chance, not to say the strong probability, of a collision, which must inevitably involve more risks to his immediate constituents than to those of, perhaps, any other gentleman in this House. That honorable gentleman has, in my judgment, shown his good sense in the quick and accurate perception of the danger before us, and such a spirit as becomes a representative of his own gallant State, in spurning the well understood dictation of party, which would direct a different course from that he means to pursue. Though less exposed than that gentleman, I put myself in the same category with him; and I shall have the approbation of a constituency which, like his, has shown in every crisis of the country that they understood the point of the national honor; and that, whilst they are wise enough to "beware of rash entrance into a quarrel," once entered, they know how "so to bear themselves, that the adversary shall *beware* of them."

I consider this notice a war measure. I believe that a military occupation on our part of Canada, would not more certainly produce collision than it must; unless, as I very faintly hope may turn out, the British Government has already seen the propriety of receding from the position it has so long held in the negotiation about Oregon—and, before this moment, is so committed, that it may not choose to resume that or a stronger position—provoked, as it unquestionably is, to do so, by the great indiscretions occurring in this debate—the greater indiscretions of the known organ of our Administration—and the yet greater indiscretion than all, that of the President of the United States, in the manner in which he has brought the subject be-

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fore us and the country. I mean, in the terms of his annual message, in which he assumes that the possibility of amicable adjustment has ceased to exist, calls on Congress for authority to give notice, and, very unwisely, in my opinion, publishes the correspondence of the negotiators. In that message he says:

"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."

He says again:

"This notice it would in my judgment be proper to give," &c.

Again:

"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 of our citizens now inhabiting or who may hereafter inhabit Oregon, and for the maintenance of our just title to that territory."

He elsewhere asserts, that our title is to "the whole of the Oregon territory," and he affirms that it is "maintained by irrefragable facts and arguments." I give the words of the message, that there may be no mistake about the meaning of it.

What then, is the precise state of the case, as it now stands? Stated in the fewest possible words, and in reference to the single inquiry of whether this notice, in the actual circumstances in which it must be given, if given at all, is or is not a war measure, whether intended to be so or not?

A long negotiation (the argument greatly on our side) has been abruptly broken off: England, however, has manifested a zeal, an earnestness, and a willingness to submit to arbitration, which proves that she is sincere in the opinion (however erroneous in itself) that she has rights in the premises, and that in her opinion they are rights of some value. And if it does not prove that she is *sincere* in her conviction as to the right, then it shows the more strongly her high estimate of the value of her real or pretended interests there. The President of the United States has himself offered to give up five degrees forty minutes of the entire twelve degrees forty minutes which is its whole length, and that five degrees and forty minutes is said to be the best part of the whole territory—thus acknowledging that there was some color of claim on the part of England.

I do not mention this offer of the President in a spirit of complaint; for I approve it. Nor am I inclined at any time to make unnecessary complaint of that high functionary, or ever to do it in any other terms than those of proper respect towards the officer and the man. I refer to it to show that, by our own admissions, England has grounds—some grounds—on which to assert her claim.

Rejecting the President's last offer, the British negotiator suggests, that he make some other proposition which, in very infelicitous phrase, he expresses the hope will be "more consistent with fairness and equity, and with the reasonable expectations of the British Government."

The President then says, substantially, I have offered you a large portion of the country; I did so for peace sake; you refused to accept it; then I withdraw my entire proposition, and I claim and will have the whole country; you shall not have one acre of it; I will call on Congress for authority to give the notice, (*that being the war power of our system, and therefore the only one competent to this step*), and, if it concur with me, we will proceed to make good our title in our own way.

It is vain for gentlemen to say, that "it is a provision of the convention that either party should give notice when it chooses, and therefore it is the first, and a peaceable step towards a settlement." Had either party given notice to the other (and given it in advance of any attempt at negotiation) that the joint occupancy was to cease; then, sir, it was a regular, peaceful, and proper measure. It would have been in that case the first step, towards the settlement of a long postponed question. The next step would of course have been negotiation, which would have brought the matter to an amicable adjustment, or to the arbitrament of arms.

But here, Sir, is altogether a different state of things. The notice now proposed, is not that peaceful notice contemplated and provided for in the convention of 1818, and afterwards continued as part of the subject. That notice was intended as a means in the hands of either party, of bringing on, when it saw fit, a negotiation to settle the points in dispute. But in this case, the parties waived the formality of notice, and proceeded to actual negotiation. The President of the United States has seen fit to break it off abruptly—without exhausting the usual and ordinary means of adjusting international questions of territory and boundary. He declares to us that no compromise can be effected. He publishes the whole transaction, as if to cut off the possibility of retreat from both parties; and calls upon us for our co-operation. The difference is too manifest, not to be seen and comprehended by the feeblest understanding.

The import of notice, if now given by authority of Congress, is nothing more nor less than this: We back the President at all hazards; we concur with him in the opinion that you do not mean to do what is right; we will not allow you a single inch of this territory; we will proceed at the end of twelve months to take possession of the whole country, as well your present establishments there, as the rest; we have no proposition for peaceful adjustment to offer, but we will make good our claim by some other means than compromise or arbitration. Do we not present to Great Britain the single and only alternative of war or submission? Sir, there is not a little page upon your floor that does not see that. Then I ask, can any man who knows any thing of England suppose, that she will submit to so harsh a treatment? To say nothing of the injury, did she ever submit to so much insult, from any Power, or from any combination of Powers? She says it is injury—all the world must pronounce it insult.

England is, however, a prudent and sagacious Government, and, with all her bull-dog spirit, would not like, more than another, to go into a very hopeless and unequal war. And alarmed, as doubtless she will be, when she hears of the very formidable proposition of the honorable gentleman from Michigan, who the other day pledged himself that Gen. Cass, and Michigan, and himself, would take Canada in ninety days, and let her loose, and take her again in half the time, she will pause and survey her actual condition, and see for herself whether or not she is prepared for the contest.

Is there, then, in her present circumstances—her credit, her army, her navy, her resources of every kind—any thing to make her fear the hazards of war, more than in ordinary circumstances, and at all times? Her army is stronger than, on a peace establishment, it ever was before; her naval power infinitely greater than when, single-handed, she swept the combined fleets of the other principal naval powers from every sea. Her credit is equal to the command of every dollar in Europe. She is at peace with all the

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world. She has the prospect of alliances on our own continent, in consequence of the relations which the wisdom of "progressive democracy" has established between ourselves and Mexico; and, if we are to confide in the judgment of those gentlemen here, who seem disposed to take the management of this whole business in their own hands, she has the sympathy of all the crowned heads with her.

I do not wish to press this point; it is a delicate one. I must say, however, that, in my poor opinion, England cannot—and that, with a proper and prudent regard for her own public character and moral influence with the world at large, and especially within her own possessions, she *dare* not—submit to it. If she does, then she pockets an affront grosser than any to which she has submitted for eight hundred years past; and she does so precisely at the time when she is more able, than at any other period of her existence, to resist and resent it.

Nor is it at all consistent with her general sagacity to suppose, that she will quietly fold her arms, and wait our twelve months' preparation. I believe the notice will produce war inevitably, and *immediately*, on its being given.

And it is substantially avowed to be the object of gentlemen, high in the regard of the dominant party, to force the country into war. One gentleman in the Senate has said that he considered war inevitable, at the beginning of the session, *because he then thought it certain the notice would pass*; that he now considers it doubtful, because it is somewhat uncertain whether the notice can be carried. I did not understand that gentleman to say that he is for war; on the contrary, they all say they are not for war—but he says he is for the notice; and we have his authority for considering the notice certain and *inevitable* war. If the notice does not pass, that gentleman will not vote the proposed naval appropriations; for, in that event, there will be, in his own words, "profound peace."

Another distinguished Senator, whose position in the party is eminent—for he seems to be vigorously contesting the leadership with the old stagers—cannot be screwed down to the point of saying, that it will *not* produce war.

He will answer no further than to say that, "in his opinion, it will not be just cause of war." He does not seem to care at all about a war, if we do not give a just cause for it.

My opinion is, we should do every thing an honorable people and Government can do, to avoid it; and in this case the difficulty is, in my judgment, not how we may honorably avoid it, but how it is possible to get into it, in any other than a most dishonorable way.

England wants no war with us. She knows very well that she has nothing to make by it; and that, whilst she would inflict on us incalculable injury, she would suffer just as much, probably more, than ourselves. War may yet come out of this thing, and come fairly. I say, then, Sir, let it come. When we can stand justified before God and man—justified in our own consciences—we shall present an undivided front, an unconquerable force; conscious that we are right, with the sympathies of the world in our behalf, and the God of battles on our side.

But the inquiry which occurs to a practical mind is, will we get Oregon by a war? The honorable gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. RHETT,) expressed opinions on this subject in which I entirely concur, and need not repeat. How is it to be done? If the object could be accomplished by a mere war of words, the thing might be practicable enough. If the Congress of the United States and the English Parliament would agree to set-

le it by a bout at stump speaking, then I think, Sir, we should have decidedly the advantage. In the thunder and lightning part of the performance, we might safely undertake the Lords and the Commons too.

Suppose the fight to be on the contested premises—for there it must be before we can take or keep Oregon—how would you meet England there? A very few men, unincumbered with the armor and subsistence of war, can with great difficulty make their way to Oregon. It is impossible for large numbers to reach there at all. They could not carry subsistence to last them, and could not possibly gather it on the way. Would you go by sea? Run the gauntlet of the British fleet in a voyage of twenty thousand miles? I suppose there is no man, of any sort of judgment or information, here or elsewhere, that supposes you could get a ship into the mouth of the Columbia, from this day in ten years to come? Sir, you could not get out of sight of your own land, with the first transport. The very wave that bore it from your shores would return to strew its fragments upon the strand. England, whose boast—and no idle boast it is—has been, for three hundred years, that “her march was on the mountain wave, her home upon the deep,” was never so able as now, to maintain her naval supremacy.

There is one, and only one way in which the thing is within the bounds of possibility; and that is, by whipping England elsewhere so severely, that she would be willing to surrender the question, for the sake of peace.

Suppose England would not invade us. I believe it has not yet been suggested that we would invade England. But gentlemen say, we would take Canada. I have no doubt we could take Canada. But would that give us Oregon? If you think Canada worth more than Oregon, you would not make the exchange, after you had taken it. If England considers it worth less, she would not desire to exchange Oregon for it; and, if a result of this sort is looked to, then we are making war, not for Oregon, but for Canada—a thing which I have no doubt is perfectly true, as to some who vote for this notice.

I say we could doubtless take Canada; not Sir, but at a price far beyond her value. We should not have to take it from the mongrels and hybrids, that might form largely the mass of a mere Canadian army—Canadian French and half-breed Indians. No Sir; we should meet men of our own mettle; it would be Saxon against Saxon; and there is no child’s play there. The blood of some of the most gallant of our countrymen has stained, on more than one occasion, the snows that for half the year veil her frozen and unfertile regions; and whenever England and America meet to do battle, there, then, sir—

“Few, few shall part where many meet,  
The snow shall be their winding-sheet,  
And every turf beneath their feet  
Shall be a soldier’s sepulchre!”

Mr. Chairman, there would be no war in Oregon, nor for Oregon, after it is commenced. New York will be the battle-field. The poisoned chalice will be commended to her lips. She will have an early and a bitter taste, of the fruits of that policy, which she has so largely contributed to fasten on the country. Her magnificent emporium, with its stately palaces and its imperial treasures, presents an object worthy the steel of that powerful adversary, the roll of whose morning’s drum rattles round the globe, and the vigor of whose potent arm, has been tested in the triumphs, of a thousand battle-fields.

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There, Sir, would be the tug of generous and manly war; and there, perchance, powerful as the great empire State is, the services of the descendants of those men, whose blood was poured upon every field where her revolutionary banners were unfurled, might not be entirely disdained; but, alas! they will have other, and sadder, and more dangerous duties to perform. For this war measure seems to be pressed on by a combination, one element of which avows its purpose to bring upon the South, afflictions and perils, which nothing but the phrenzy of abolitionary fanaticism could contemplate without agony. For us, beyond the ordinary incidents of civilized war, horrors to which we are supposed to be peculiarly liable, are reserved.

Whilst we are to meet the brunt of the conflict, and to bear in immense disproportion the expenses that attend it; to fight for the country, and to meet and drive back its invaders from our long line of defenceless shores; presenting a complication of difficulties, distresses, and dangers, that might not only command the sympathies of strangers, but plead for the mercies of God, what fraternal greetings have we from one portion of our own country? It is just at this moment that the fiend-form, of ferocious fanaticism, steals upon the scene—with prayers and piety hanging upon its tongue, but the fires of hell burning in its heart—and beckons a dark, and, as it thinks, a terrible enemy upon our rear. The dagger and the torch, the conflagrations and the murders, of insurrectionary strife, are threatened to our homes. Is there to be no peace for us? Are all the horrors to which I have alluded to be perpetually attempted to be forced upon us, by men who cry “peace, peace, when there is no peace?” Is there no period of repose? Can no question of peace or of war be discussed in this house, that we are not still to be struck at? Is ours to be the fate of Prometheus, chained forever to a rock, which we cannot escape, and gnawed at by, not this eagle, but this insatiate vulture of abolitionism?

Cannot “potent, grave, and reverend seigneurs” learn to understand our position and our character, and be taught that we will not and cannot submit forever to this obstinate, this insolent interference with our own private affairs; that there is a point at which patience ceases to be a virtue; that the crisis may at last be forced upon us; and that, if they be right in supposing us too weak to protect ourselves, (of which we have no fears,) then, that they should credit us with the strength and courage to sustain a struggle, in which, if we did not succeed in preserving ourselves, we could not fail to pull down the pillars of our common temple in ruin upon our heads; and in consigning to an early and inglorious grave our great experiment—with all the sublime recollections that gather round its history, and all the brilliant anticipations that brighten in its future—if it could be pursued in a spirit of concession, and patriotism, and submission, to the principles of the Constitution?

As to the merits of this Oregon question—I mean, as to the character of our title—I find no occasion to go into it at all. It seems that we all agree in one thing, and that is, that our title is a better one than the English title; that, if it be not one which can bear the test of judicial scrutiny, still it is a better one on all grounds, than that of England. What I mean, is in reference only to the comparative strength of the two titles—English and American. My own opinion is, that either title is far from being a clear one. But I speak to the point, as between England and the United States; and,



in whatever I say on that subject, I desire to be distinctly understood as not intending to affirm that a clear, legal, or equitable title, is in either Government to the whole, or any part of it.

I am for making our title good by prudent means, by wise and judicious policy, by "masterly inactivity," if that be best, as I clearly think it is.

I will not bore the House, not with a "thrice told tale," but one already twenty times told, of the reasons which bring my mind to the conclusion in favor of our title—good, at all events, as against England. I should but follow in the course of numerous gentlemen who have preceded me in this debate—themselves following the able and unanswerable arguments of our two ministers, Messrs. Calhoun and Buchanan.

I concur in every argument, opinion, and sentence of the speech of the able and learned gentleman, who with so much distinction represents the city of Boston on this floor; and who, whilst he in tones that bring conviction of his sincerity to every ingenuous mind, declares his purpose to stand by his country, and his whole country, in any emergency to which she may be brought, yet evinces not a timid, but a manly and a rational anxiety to preserve the public peace. He may well take such a part; for he who has least done so, might be said to have lived in vain, if he had failed to be impressed by all the splendid institutions which adorn and enrich his beautiful city, and the great and wise commonwealth of which that city itself is the ornament and pride, with the truth of the proposition, that peace hath her triumphs, as well as war.

I say, Sir, I adopt that honorable gentleman's whole speech, for it was addressed to the *sense*, and not to the *nonsense*, of this House or the country. That gentleman gave proof, in the entire speech, as well as in the particular declaration, of the great confidence which he reposes in the calm judgment, the "sober second thought," as he called it, of the people of this country: that, however true might have been the remark of the British courtier, in reference to the British people, it was not true of our day and country.

Whilst I concur with all the gentlemen who have preceded me in the matter of the title, so far as its validity is compared with that of England, there is another point in regard to which I differ with perhaps the whole of them; and that is, as to the value of this territory to our Government. In my judgment it is not worth one farthing to the United States. Waiving all inquiry into its intrinsic capacities and value, (which I hold at a very low rate, even to those who want territory,) I maintain that it is of no value to us, because we want no more territory; that if we were cramped within too narrow boundaries, still Oregon is too remote from us to form a portion of our Union, with advantage either to itself or to us. We may incur the heavy expense of nursing its infancy, but, long before it approaches manhood, it will be able to stand upon its own legs, and will then set up for itself, as it ought to do.

I call gentlemen's attention to the character of the vote which will be given on this very question, as an answer, full and complete, against the theory of those who favor a national policy, of endless and perpetual expansion—expansion, until our Union comprehends sections that cannot have a common interest or common attachment, bringing into the Confederacy a principle which tends inevitably and irresistibly to national disunion and ruin.

I maintain the title, however, and acknowledge our obligation to make it

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good at all hazards, when the necessity arises for its assertion. But I utterly deny the right of a particular section to claim this as a sectional question, or Oregon as a Western property. The Western States have no more rights, no more interests, in this subject, than have the Eastern. And I protest against *their* right to decide, when we are to go to war for this miserable and worthless territory.

It may be asked, how I would make it good? Why, the most agreeable process, it seems to me, would be that indicated by the honorable chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and called by the honorable member from Indiana "the American multiplication table." I think it very doubtful however, whether our present chief Executive officer is precisely the man to head an operation of that sort; of this I am sure, that at that particular game her Majesty Queen Victoria would beat him, and beat him badly.

[Here Mr. C. J. INGERSOLL observed to Mr. P. that Sir Robert Peel had eleven children.]

Then, Sir, if it were a question not between the two sovereigns themselves, but between their respective Premiers, Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Buchanan, it would be no less against the American side.

Sir, I would leave it to time, to a reasonable extent at least. I would renew the negotiations; if that could not be made successful, I would submit to reference; I would settle the question as honest men may and must settle all such questions, by the umpirage of impartial and competent referees. It is no point of honor to be settled; but purely a question of boundary, between contiguous proprietors.

And finally, Sir, if these means all fail, and this bullying power of Old England, so much and in such bad taste abused in this debate—though, by the way, her part of the bullying and blustering is yet to be enacted on this subject—shall persist in a course of injustice, and above all, shall attempt to bully us—then fight her, Sir, and fight her to the death.

I feel, Mr. Chairman, a reverence too sincere, a devotion too deep, for that venerable Commonwealth, which I so unworthily represent in part here, to insult her by telling you, or the world, where she will be found when that crisis arrives. Virginia belongs to no "peace party in war;" to no war party in peace. And, as she disdains to enact the braggart in the quarrel, so it may be safely assumed, that she will never play the part of the traitor in the conflict.

The President of the United States speaks of our obligations to facilitate emigration to Oregon, and to protect our "patriotic pioneers" who are there. And gentlemen tell us of the attachment of these people to their dear native land. Why do they leave it, Sir? Why is it that, with instinctive aversion, they retire before the advance of civilization—preferring the wild excitement and the rugged discomforts of the wilderness to the repose, the security, and the refinements of social and cultivated life? They manifest their attachment, by disregarding the influences that bind ordinary men to the places of their nativity; by snapping recklessly the ties of blood, and kindred, and social connexions; and calmly, and of their own free choice, deserting a generous soil and a genial clime—abandoning the hearths and the altars of their childhood and youth, they toil through a vast and cheerless wilderness—where savage man and savage beast meets them at every turn—through scenes where danger lurks in every path, and death is whispered in every breeze—to gain at last

a home so inhospitable and rude, that according to the learned gentleman from Philadelphia, it takes the genius of Shakspeare to do justice to its horrors.

And it is for these restless and wayward wanderers, that the distinguished gentleman from Alabama would have our Government endeavor to realize the fabulous ubiquity of the Roman power—sending its ægis throughout the world, for their protection. Sir, I am against any such principle. It is easier for these people to stay at home, than for us to go to war. If they will go upon territory, the title of which is unsettled, let them go at their own risk. A few men have no right to involve millions in war. It is not the policy of our Government to be running over the world looking after citizens, whose allegiance is manifested, only by acts of expatriation. They went to Texas to fight for their liberty; they achieved great victories; had wonderful prosperity; found the true El Dorado—a country, richer than the dreams of Spanish avarice had pictured—a country, in behalf of which it would seem, that a relenting Providence had repealed the primeval curse; for we were told that production leaps spontaneously from its bosom, and man need not toil for his bread. Yet, in a few brief years, though unscourged by war, or pestilence, or famine, they call on us to annex them “immediately or sooner,” or their friends say, they will perish. We do annex them, in a way which, for its form and precipitation has left a deeper stain on our national character, than any event since the declaration of our independence.

And straightway they next put out for Oregon, and, getting there, call on us to terminate a convention, under which, for thirty years, we have got along in peace; and to do it directly and instantly, despite the hazard of a war—a war which, if it does come, may, and most probably will, be the most destructive which has for centuries occurred. And that over, (if, indeed, it be the good fortune of our Confederacy to survive it,) they would make another start, for God knows where—perhaps to the North Pole, if they could find a trail, or make a trail to it—and the ægis, I presume, would be immediately called for again, supposing any other people in the world absurd enough to contest with them such a possession.

But, Sir, if I am mistaken in regarding this as a war measure, then I am still opposed to it as a peace measure. It loses us inevitably and certainly about half the territory of Oregon; for I suppose no man, and least of all, those gentlemen whose consciences are so nice on the point of the national honor, can doubt that, with the notice, the last proposition of the President must be re-submitted. The settlement of the question now must lose us the better half of the country: time, emigration, and “the multiplication table,” get us the whole of it. This is no point of interest to me. I make the suggestion for gentlemen who consider it a very valuable country.

Gentlemen talk about *honorable* peace. Who, here, is for dishonorable peace? Will some of these war-hawks come down from their exercises with the eagle, and condescend to deal in common sense for a few moments, and let me know—for I wish to learn—wherein it is that the peace subsisting between the United States, and Great Britain, is a dishonorable peace? Have we an insult, a trespass, or even a menace to avenge? Has our flag been insulted, our soil invaded, or our honor impeached? It seems to me, Sir, that it is more dishonorable to break, than to keep such a peace.

Suppose, Sir, that votes enough to carry this measure be given, not with the wish or the expectation of getting Oregon, but to get Canada—thus ex-

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citing the people of the country on the merits of the Oregon claim, for the purpose of directing their force against a province, to which we have no claim, and to any attempt to take which directly, they could not, as an honest people, be brought. Was there ever a war, more infamous and atrocious than that would be?

But, Sir, I observe by the watch before me, that I have less than half a minute left me. I have many things I would like to say on this subject, and I regret for this time, and for this only, the existence of your hour rule.

Here the chairman's hammer came down.

## TO MY CONSTITUENTS.

The one hour rule of the House of Representatives made it impossible for me to discuss the question of title at all, without neglecting every other point entirely. The presentation of the mere historical detail would have taken more than the entire hour. I find no fault whatever with the settled practice of gentlemen in writing out "what they would have said if they had had time," and especially when they signify their intention to do so at the time they speak. As a general proposition, it is right and proper they should do so. But for myself, in this particular case, I have preferred to report, verbatim et literatim, what I did say—without the intentional addition or subtraction of a single idea or word. Otherwise, I should have made copious quotations from the numbers just published by Mr. Gallatin. Had I seen those numbers before I spoke, I should have declared my intention to do so; and then, without any difficulty, could have selected whatever I deemed important to strengthen my own views on the subject. But I had not read a line of either one of them.

I can now only call the attention of such, as have no better employment than to give an hour to the foregoing speech, to the four numbers signed Albert Gallatin, appearing in the last few days in the National Intelligencer—the last of the series this morning. I will here only quote, in Mr. Gallatin's own words, his statement of the propositions which he meant to establish; and which, more than any other writer or speaker, I think he has established. He says:

It has been attempted in these papers to prove—

1st. That neither of the two Powers has an absolute and indisputable right to the whole contested territory; that each may recede from its extreme pretensions without impairing national honor or wounding national pride; and that the way is therefore still open for a renewal of negotiations.

2d. That the avowed object of the United States, in giving notice of the abrogation of the convention, is the determination to assert and maintain their assumed right of absolute and exclusive sovereignty over the whole territory; that Great Britain is fully committed on that point, and has constantly and explicitly declared that such an attempt would be resisted, and the British interests in that quarter be protected; and that war is therefore the unavoidable consequence of such a decisive step—a war not only necessarily calamitous and expensive, but in its character aggressive—not justifiable by the magnitude and importance of its object, and of which the chances are uncertain.

3d. That the inconveniences of the present state of things may in a great degree be avoided; that, if no war should ensue, they will be the same, if not greater, without than under a convention; that not a single object can be gained by giving the notice at this time, unless it be to do something not permitted by the present convention, and therefore provoking resistance and productive of war. If a single other advantage can be gained by giving the notice, let it be stated.

4th. That it has been fully admitted by Great Britain that, whether under or without a convention, the United States have the same rights as herself, to trade, to navigate, and to occupy and make settlements in and over every part of the territory; and that, if this state of things be not disturbed, natural causes must necessarily give the whole territory to the United States.

Under these circumstances, it is only asked that the subject may be postponed for the present; that Government should not commit itself by any premature act or declaration; that, instead of increasing the irritation and excitement which exist on both sides, time be given for mutual reflection, and for the subdual or subsidence of angry and violent feelings. Then, and then only, can the deliberate opinion of the American people, on this momentous question, be truly ascertained. It is not perceived how the postponement for the present, and for a time, can, in any shape, or in the slightest degree, injure the United States.

I need not say to such a constituency as my own, that, in quoting Mr. Gallatin, I rely on the highest living authority. That venerable gentleman—by far the most illustrious of American statesmen yet left to us—the trusted friend of Jefferson and Madison, and a great leader of the Republican party in its best and purest days, may possibly have still some claim to the respectful consideration of his countrymen.

The quotation which I have made is intended to attract the public attention, in my own district, to arguments and opinions, calculated, I believe, to enlighten its judgment, and to fortify it against the insane ravings of a senseless clamor, which, incapable of comprehending, or careless of encountering, the inevitable consequences, would place the country in a condition in which it will be impossible to avoid war.

JOHN S. PENDLETON.

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