And at that time, too, sir, we had not the title upon which to repose, nor in other respects were we then in a condition to assert more resolutely than we did our right as against Great Britain, independent of the title of Spain. It was, perhaps, sir, sufficient for us at that time to have our right of possession acknowledged by that Power. The ten years being about to expire, the term was indefinitely extended, very unwisely, I think, sir, in view of our then altered circumstances, by the convention of the 6th of August, 1827, which we now seek to abrogate; and when abrogated, we are for the third time in the exclusive possession, of the country as its legitimate sovereign; a trespass upon which, wilfully, and by force, by any other power, would be an act of war, to be treated accordingly. Having the right to be the party in possession, on the admission of Great Britain through Lord Castlereagh, in 1818, that right must necessarily be exclusive. Great Britain will have no right to occupy any part of the country; for if we are *of right* the party in possession, she cannot be there except wrongfully. Such subjects of a foreign power as shall choose, after that event, to remain in the country, would necessarily become subject to our laws and jurisdiction; and on taking the oath of allegiance, would share with our own citizens all the benefits of our national liberality, as grantees of lands, and participate in the advantages humanity derives, of whatever country or creed, from our much cherished and free institutions.

I think, sir, the time has arrived when this convention should be terminated; and I had hoped we would have voted upon the proposition, without debate, with great unanimity and promptitude. At present, sir, although we have the acknowledged right of possession to the territory of Oregon, in the greater part of it—in all of it north of the Columbia river, except a small American settlement at Bulfinch's Harbor, Great Britain, by her subjects and her chartered power, is in the actual and exclusive possession. So exclusive was this possession, that the northern bank of that river was known and called the "British side," and the opposite bank the "American side." Our own citizens, Mr. President, derive no benefit whatever from this convention; all the advantages are on the side of British subjects; and we, at the same time, the true owners of the whole country. This being the case, sir, unless we take some decided action in order to obtain, on our part, that exclusive possession which belongs to the right, they will continue to derive these benefits, to the exclusion of our citizens. It seems to me, therefore, sir, the advantages being all on the side of Great Britain, unless we give the notice; unless we express a desire to terminate the convention, it will never be terminated by Great Britain. Notice will never come from that side, sir. She has all that she desires, as things now stand, and has, therefore, no stimulant to act. She will not take the initiative. She does not desire to be remitted to her original barren pretensions; whilst we encounter no danger, by reposing upon a title "the best in existence." And, as was said the other day, by the Senator of Massachusetts, [Mr. Webster.] it cannot give offence to Great Britain, being but in accordance with a treaty stipulation; and I will add, sir, she would have no right to demand the reason for such action on our part, nor would we have the right to ask of her the reasons should she choose to give the notice, but receive it in amity should it come from that power. This convention, sir, is an obstacle in our path of progress, and we must get rid of it. So long as it exists, we can do nothing effective; we cannot extend our laws in their most ample scope over the country for the protection of our citizens there; we cannot erect means of defence or of refuge; we cannot make grants of land in fee to the settlers who are there now in thousands, reposing with confidence upon the firmness and justice of a government they dearly love; in short, sir, we can do no effective act whilst the convention exists. By abrogating it, we are at once enabled to exercise, in the fullest extent, any act of sovereignty, we may desire, it will restore us to freedom and enable us to pursue such a course for our own interest as we may choose, in our wisdom, to adopt. If we do not take this course, if we do not give this notice, if we allow things to remain as they are, there is manifest danger, before the lapse of many years, that difficulties will so grow up and thicken, that a war may be the result, or else, that a country, favored by Providence beyond almost all others in all the great essentials of human happiness, and so necessary to us in an enlarged view of our future destiny, may become, by our unpardonable neglect, an independent nation under some foreign guaranty and possessed of elements and a position well calculated to annoy and embarrass us hereafter. Sir, there are strong indications of a desire in several quarters that such should be its destiny. It is the opinion of gentlemen of great intelligence, high character and influence, that it is not possible that Oregon should long continue to be an appendage of our government, but must be independent.

I think differently, sir, if we do our duty. I think as it is an integral and most important part of our empire, we should be awake to its preservation. If we are mindful of this germ the enterprise of our people has planted on the shores of the Pacific, if we nurture it and cherish it, as it should be nurtured and cherished, bestowing upon it our kind, protecting care, it cannot but grow in beauty and expand in strength, and, deriving its sustenance from the parent stem, will flourish with it in undying verdure.

It depends upon ourselves, whether this country shall remain with us or not. Its destiny is, under Providence, in our own power, and we encounter a most weighty and fearful responsibility, if by any supineness, timidity, or want of resolution on our part, its preservation shall be jeoparded, and, in the end, lost to us forever.

If it was proper, sir, in the nascent state of the Atlantic colonies, for Great Britain to assert, and prosecute, and establish by force of arms, and by arguments from the cannon's mouth, the principles she did establish for the extension of her territory,—how much more proper and necessary is it for us, sir, in this our age, with all the improvements in mechanical philosophy and the arts, by which space is annihilated and distance measured, not by miles but my minutes, with our teeming millions on the vast plains of the West, in reach of the Pacific—many thousands of whom have gone to settle upon its shores and upon the fertile banks of its rivers—that the full benefit of this principle of British law should be claimed by us, and we be as ready and as willing to contend for it, even unto war, as she was with our aid, against France. And why should we hesitate to take the initiative of measures which will force her, sir, to acknowledge her own doctrine? The judgment of the civilized world will be pronounced against her should she disavow the doctrine, and the sin of a war, should one follow, will lie heavy on her soul.

Relying, Mr. President, on the principle of public law, as to territorial rights, taught us on the heights of Abraham and on Braddock's field, Great Britain will have no reason to complain if we urge them against her, who originated them and gave them currency. And, sir, when Oregon shall be filled with our people, (as it soon will be if this government is true to its own interests,) no apprehensions of any foreign intruder, under what flag soever he may seek to make his entrance, need be entertained. It is our true policy then, sir, to give the notice, and assert and maintain the principle of British law, which England is estopped from denying, and which establishes our title to the Russian line. If, however, sir, I could be made to believe that the effect of the notice would be, as has been intimated, to place our government in a position to compromise our undoubted right, upon any other line south of that, I would vote against it, and fall back upon the "masterly inactivity" of the Senator of South Carolina, [Mr. Calhoun,] as the wisest policy, and leave to time to accomplish the great object to which the whole American heart is so earnestly and truly devoted. But, sir, I have full faith in the prudence, firmness, and sagacity of the Executive, and do not anticipate any such calamitous result. I do not suffer myself for a moment to believe that he will violate his published pledges. No, sir, I have implicit faith in him, and that he will so act on this and on all other great occasions, in which the interests and honor of his country are involved, as to command the unqualified approbation of those who have raised him to his present elevated position.

Considering, sir, the contiguity of Oregon to our western settlements, and as the only vent, westward of the vast surplus productions of the rich basin of the Mississippi to the shores of Asia, with her millions of inhabitants, and its accessibility by railroads from the Atlantic States, bringing them also into close proximity to the same great markets; and considering also, that our republic opens her public domain to the over-populated countries of Europe, and offers to all who may seek it cheap fee-simple farms, and the full enjoyment of our free institutions, we cannot be charged, sir, in desiring to possess Oregon, with selfish or ambitious views, or with a spirit of mere territorial aggrandizement; but the impartial and the just will see in it a desire only to extend more widely the area of human freedom, and diffuse more broadly the means of human happiness—as an extension, sir, of that grand theatre, on which God, in his providence, and in his own appointed time, intends to work out that high destiny he has assigned for the whole human race.

But, Mr. President, it is said the difficulty must be settled by negotiation. The notice, sir, will not prevent negotiations; on the contrary, it will stimulate the parties to bring all differences growing out of this controversy to a conclusion. There are many things to negotiate about, sir, many important questions and interests which are fit subjects of negotiation; and among them are those pertaining to the Hudson's Bay Company. And, I believe, sir, that all the difficulty, or nearly all, which surrounds this question, so far as Great Britain is concerned, is the obligations she is under to that corporation, growing out of the renewal of their charter in 1838, for twenty-one years, in which, by the way, sir, the privilege was reserved to Great Britain to grant, for the purpose of settlement or colonization, any of the lands comprised within the limits of their charter. In the correspondence with the British Colonial Secretary of State, which led to this renewal, sir, the company urge, as a reason for it, that "they have succeeded, after a severe and expensive competition, in establishing their settlements, and obtaining a decided superiority, if not an exclusive enjoyment of the trade; and that they occupy the country between the Rocky mountains and the Pacific, by six permanent establishments on the coast, sixteen in the interior country, besides several migratory and hunting parties; and they maintain a marine of six armed vessels, one of them a steam vessel, on the coast." They also speak of their large farms, and of other projects, having reference to an export trade, and the settlement of their retired servants in the country. All these things, sir, superinduced by the act of Great Britain, tend, no doubt, to embarrass her, as she may, in justice, be compelled to answer, over to that company, for an injury that may result to it from a surrender of her pretensions to the country.

Now, sir, it would be manifestly proper for the two governments to confer together on these matters, to negotiate about them, and perhaps, sir, it might be found to be expedient to indemnify this company for their outlays there, and concede to them the use of the Columbia river for a few years, to facilitate their exit, with their property from the country, and as auxiliary to winding up their affairs. So far as these and kindred matters are concerned, sir, I hope negotiation will go on, but am utterly opposed to it, if it is to involve a cession of any portion of the country to Great Britain. I am opposed to that, sir, and will never sanction such an act by my vote. A nation, sir, submitting to a negotiation which shall end in compromising a claim so valid as ours, by yielding up a part, when it has strength enough to preserve the whole, does, in my judgment, an unpardonable wrong, and becomes dishonored, not only in the estimation of its own people, but of the world. I will never consent to it, sir, let what may happen.

But it is said, sir, that the matter should be referred to arbitration, and that such a mode is in strict conformity with the law and practice of nations in like cases; and our government is censured, sir, for not accepting a proposition of this nature, when lately tendered by the British Envoy. The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. Crittenden] said the other day, that he did not know what right we possessed to exalt ourselves above all law heretofore recognized amongst nations, and to say that our territorial disputes are to be placed above all arbitration; and then, with great emphasis, remarked, "what a glorious homage would this Republic render to its own best principles by accepting the arbitration of a tribunal composed of men distinguished only for their talents, knowledge, science, and moral worth." Sir, I should be very much opposed to submit a question of territorial right to any power on earth, or to any board of civilians, in whatever form it might be proposed. There are, to my mind, sir, insuperable objections to it, and it does not seem to me to be practicable according to the proposition of the Senator. Leaving out of view all others, there is one fatal objection to such a proceeding, and that is, the parties cannot be compelled to abide by the award: there is no power by which it can be enforced. Instead of settling the question finally, it might render it more complicated than before; and in the event of a refusal by one party to stand by the award, war most probably would ensue. Suppose the Columbia river, sir, should be declared by the arbitrator as the line, in conformity with the British proposition; can any one believe this government or country would abide by it? If a monarch is made the arbitrator, we would have his prejudices to encounter, and incur the risk of his submitting the question to one of his Ministers, or Secretaries, or Chiefs of a Bureau; and in either case, we would have no personal knowledge of some of the parties by whom the award is to be made. The arbitrators, whoever they might be, would not be required to be governed by the right of the case, nor by the strict law of the case; nor would they be thus governed. Other principles—considerations of expediency, suggestions of policy, and, withal, a desire to give each claimant something—would naturally influence them. Sir, this administration could not stand a single moment before the American people, if, by its act, by referring a question of this nature to the decision of a board of arbitrators, the entire control of the Pacific coast, and of the commerce with China, and the foreign export and import trade of the western States now opening to them with the east, shall be lost to them. No administration could survive a surrender of such important prospective interests. Arbitration, sir, is out of the question. In controversies between individuals submitted to arbitration, the arbitrators are known to the parties, and a power is vested in the courts to enforce obedience to the award; but there is no tribunal to compel obedience between nations. The whole thing is surrounded by difficulties. Besides, sir, there is really nothing here to arbitrate about; for a proposal to arbitrate, and an acceptance, presuppose a right exists to a part of the country, which we deny. Where a right to coterminous territory is admitted to exist, but the boundary undefined, it may be proper, in such a case, to refer the matter to mutual friends, to establish the line of boundary. That was the case in regard to our north-eastern boundary; and it was referred to the King of the Netherlands; and he, instead of attending to the terms of the submission, and following the highlands, assumed the valley of St John's River as the true boundary, which satisfied neither party. But, sir, it is unnecessary to say anything about arbitration, as the government has, in the most decided manner, rejected the proposition; and there is no wish, I am sure, on the part of this country, that it should be accepted at any future time. Whilst negotiating, sir, in 1818, upon this very question of Oregon, then called "the settlement on the Columbia river," a reference of it to the Emperor of Russia was in contemplation. The action of our government then, sir, upon the suggestion, was not different from the present. In a despatch from our Secretary of State (Mr. Adams), of the date of July 28, 1818, to our negotiators (Messrs. Rush and Gallatin), I find the following passage, which I will read for the benefit of the Senate, from the 4th volume of American State Papers, title "Foreign Relations," p. 377:

"The expediency itself of submitting questions of territorial rights and boundaries, in discussion between two nations, to the decision of a third, was *unusual*, if not *entirely new*, and, should the contingency occur, will probably encounter difficulties of execution not foreseen at the time when the stipulation was made of resorting to it. The subjects in controversy are of a nature too *intricate* and *complicated*, requiring, on the part of the arbitrator, a patience of investigation and research, historical, political, legal, geographical, and astronomical, for which it is impossible to conceive that the sovereign of a great empire could *personally* bestow the time."

This, sir, was American doctrine then, and it is correct. Mr. Adams was right. Questions of this description should not be submitted to a foreign power, for the reasons given by him, and those I have given—that there is no power existing to enforce the award, and if one of the parties does not choose to abide by it, it can only operate to produce the conflict which it was the object of the arbitration to avoid. While speaking of this subject, sir, I wish to notice the peculiar phraseology of the letter of the British minister conveying the proposal, to the rejection of which so much exception seems to have been taken. In his note of the 10th January last, to our Secretary of State, after alluding to the rejection of his first proposition, as contained in his note of the 27th of December, for a reference of the question "of an equitable partition of the territory," and the objections of our Secretary to it, he says:

"This premised, the object of the undersigned in addressing to Mr. Buchanan the present communication, is to ascertain from him whether, supposing the British government to entertain no objection to such a course, it would suit the views of the United States government to refer to arbitration, not, as has already been proposed, the question of an equitable partition of the territory, but the question of title in either of the two powers to the whole territory, subject of course to the condition, that if neither should be found, in the opinion of the arbitrator, to possess a complete title to the whole territory, there should, in that case, be assigned to each that portion of territory which would, in the opinion of the arbitrating power, be called for by a just appreciation of the respective claims of each."

Now, sir, it will be perceived here is no distinct proposition to refer the question of title at all; he merely inquires, Supposing Great Britain should entertain no objection to refer the question of title to arbitration, what would the government of the United States be willing to do? It would have been proper, in my judgment, to decline a reply to a proposition presented in such a form, as it was not a definite proposal to submit the question of title. It is a "fishing" question. A hypothetical case is presented, which our government might well refuse to entertain, and made subject to the condition, on the happening of a contingency, of an equitable division of the territory. Sir, we do not desire a division of the territory. I am instructed, and feel pleasure in acting up to those instructions, to oppose by my vote a surrender of any portion of territory rightfully belonging to us through the instrumentality of arbitration by crowned heads, or a board of civilians, or by negotiation in any form. I would advise negotiation, sir, as I have already said, in regard to all other matters growing out of this question, or with which it is legitimately connected; and should be disposed to be liberal. I would grant to the Hudson Bay Company, which has so much at stake, certain privileges for a limited period. I would do nothing that is unjust, nor advise it to be done; and in taking a retrospect of our past history, sir, I believe the greatest enemy of republican principles cannot point his finger to a single act of national injustice committed by us. It may be said, to the glory of the American name, that not a single act in our whole career can be found, by our most unscrupulous enemy, calculated to stamp injustice upon our national character. We have never done injustice; we have always sought, in our national conduct, in all our difficulties and embarrassments, to carry out the golden maxim, "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you." Our reputation, in this regard, is pure and unspotted, sir; and I desire to keep it so. I wish to do nothing bordering even upon the confines of injustice, and, therefore, sir, if the Hudson Bay Company have important interests there—and that they have I am free to admit—and the British government is responsible to them for any injury which may result, in consequence of any disposition of the country policy may require Great Britain to make; and if, in order to carry on their trade a few years longer, and settle their affairs, they should desire the use of the river for a short period, I would concede it to them most cordially. I would afford them every facility for closing up their affairs, and leaving the country to our exclusive jurisdiction; but to no division of the territory could I ever consent. We all recollect, sir, that memorable display of the wisdom of Solomon—the case of the living child claimed by two mothers—and the exhibition of true parental affection on that occasion. She who consented to the division of the child was adjudged not to be the true parent, and the real mother was restored to her own. So it is, sir, with the true friends of Oregon; they cannot consent to a division of the child of their love. If England is the true parent, give it all to her, sir. We cannot consent to a division of the territory, either by the Columbia river or the 49th parallel. And here, Mr. President, I must be permitted to say, "more in sorrow than in anger," I regret, as a friend of the Executive, that he felt himself bound to offer to Great Britain the proposition to divide the territory on the 49th parallel. I think, sir, the error on his part consisted in this: that he did not consider it a *new* question, so far as he and his administration were concerned. In my judgment, sir, so far as he was concerned, it was an entirely new question. And why, sir? Because, at the convention which assembled in May, 1844, to nominate candidates for President and Vice President, to be supported by the party to which he belongs, a delegate of the State of New York offered the following, among other resolutions, which was unanimously adopted, as a principle of action and of union. Here it is, sir:

"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 re-occupation of Oregon, and the re-annexation 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."

Now, sir, on these great "American measures," then for the first time adopted as such, we went before the country. The present Executive was the candidate of the party that avowed this right and title to the whole of the territory of Oregon. Oregon was the watchword throughout the whole length and breadth of the land. It was not confined to the west or south-west, but in the northern, middle, and throughout all the States, it was the rallying cry. Oregon and Texas were one and undivided. The Executive was elected by the aid of this measure; and to what did he pledge himself on the eastern portico, before his assembled fellow-citizens, in his inaugural address to them and to the country? Mark his language, sir:

"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."

Such, sir, was his explicit and frank declaration, in accordance with the public judgment of the country; such was his pledge. He had been elected as friendly to a series of measures, of which the entirety of Oregon was one; and thus it became, in my opinion, as to him and his administration, an entirely new question. It never had before, Mr. President, been an element in any political controversy, and his inaugural address prefigured to his constituents what his course would be when called to act upon the question. In his message delivered to Congress at the present session, he does not depart from the ground he then assumed as to the right, but in "reference alone to what had been done by his predecessors, and the implied obligation which their acts seemed to impose," and not considering it a new question, he made the proposition. Again, I say, sir, I regret the President took that view of the subject, and offered a proposition so well calculated to embarrass his friends in different parts of the country, and who had united in condemning those predecessors in making a similar offer. But the proposition was made and rejected by Great Britain, withdrawn by our government, and is no longer binding. The President tells us, with his conviction that no compromise which the United States ought to accept can be effected, "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." He then recommends giving the notice to terminate the convention, and says: "At the end of the year's notice, should Congress think it proper to make provision for giving that notice, we shall have reached a period when the national rights in Oregon must either be abandoned or firmly maintained. That they cannot be abandoned without a sacrifice of both national honor and interest is too clear to admit of doubt." Again he says, "Oregon is a part of the North American continent, to which it is confidently affirmed *the title of the United States is the best in existence*."

To understand, sir, what is meant by our national rights in Oregon, which cannot be abandoned without a sacrifice of both national honor and interest, we have only to recur to the passage first above quoted. We there find that it is to the whole Oregon territory, our title to which is maintained "by irrefragable facts and arguments." Under these full and patriotic declarations, the country can repose, sir, with perfect confidence; entertaining no apprehensions that their President will swerve from them in the slightest particular, now that the honorary obligation is fully discharged.

The recommendations of the President, sir, should be carried into effect. I hope they will be by the unanimous vote of the Senate. I should rejoice to see entire union upon them. In cases of this kind there should be no party divisions; party should have no existence; it is not now a party question. By reference to the vote in the other House, it will be seen that party lines were not observed, and I hope it may be so here.

Even, sir, if the very objectionable resolutions offered by the Senator from Georgia [Mr. Colquitt] should receive the assent of the Senate, I should still feel assured, having so much confidence in the wisdom and firmness of the Executive, that whatever compromise he might be compelled, under the terms of it, to offer or accept, it would not be such a one as would involve a session of any part of the territory, because, sir, he is fully committed to the nation to maintain its right to the whole territory, and to preserve unsullied the national honor; and he feels the responsibility of that position.

Mr. President, let us enquire what will be the state of things after the notice is given, and the twelve months have expired. What will follow, sir? If British subjects remain in the territory, they will, necessarily, become subject to our laws, as they are now in every other part of the United States in which they may happen to be. That, sir, will be their condition—that will be the effect of the termination of the convention; for we would be at once remitted to our right of possession, which must necessarily be exclusive, placing us in the actual sovereignty of the country. That we can maintain that position is very certain. There need be no apprehension, sir, if notice be given, and the measures recommended by the President carried out, and emigration encouraged, that any act of violence on the part of Great Britain will take place; because, in addition to other considerations, we have her unqualified admission, that we have the right of possession, and any act of encroachment on her part would be entirely unauthorized and unjustifiable, and which she would not hazard, as it would be an act of war. She cannot now gainsay that admission. She cannot abridge it, and while it remains, she would have no right to interfere in our exclusive possession. The question then will be, sir, shall we maintain this right, fortified by the admission of Great Britain herself, and reposing upon a title so clear and unquestionable as ours is shown to be, by force of principles which she has herself established, or shall we abandon it? I cannot think of it for a moment, sir, as it would be a wilful and wicked abandonment "of our own self-respect and our national honor." All we have to do, sir, in this and every other emergency, is, to pursue the path of duty and honor, lead where it may. After all we have said and done, sir, it would, in my judgment, be highly derogatory to our national character to recede a single inch from the position we have assumed, fortified as it is by the clear right of the case, sanctioned by the common judgment of the whole country, and taken with deliberation.

But it is said, sir, Great Britain will not recede—she will not yield her pretensions, and war may come; and this seems to be the opinion of the Senator of Michigan, [Mr. Cass] I cannot undertake to say, Mr. President, what England will do when the crisis comes; but this I think I can say, that her history shows that in almost every case threatening a controversy with us, in which she has been firmly met and resolutely opposed, she has never persisted. To instance no other examples: at the time we acquired Louisiana, did she not object, and protest, and threaten? She was then at war with France, and might, by belligerent capture, have added that rich province to her crown; but we pursued the even tenor of our way, kept our object steadily in view, and in spite of enemies at home and abroad, consummated the act: and what was the result? So in regard to our proceedings towards Spain, before the Florida treaty. She charged us with a desire for territorial aggrandizement; she protested against our right to take possession of that part of it we claimed; yet we pursued the course policy and justice to ourselves dictated—placed at the disposal of the Executive means adequate to the exigency of the case, and we heard no more of British interference or opposition. So in regard to the surrender of this very territory, under the first article of the treaty of Ghent. For three years she raised difficulties, coined objections, and postponed the execution of a positive treaty stipulation; but we were firm and importunate, and were reinstated in our possession. And it is only necessary for us, sir, in this case, to be firm, calm, and prudent, demanding nothing but what is exactly right, and manifesting a disposition to do full justice, and there is no danger of a controversy.

But, sir, if we adopt a timid policy; if we betray a weak and vacillating purpose; if we hesitate—we run the hazard of bringing upon us the very calamity we seek to avoid. Great Britain understands this well. She knows our history. She knows we are as firm and unyielding as any nation can be, with the right on our side, and that we have never persisted in the assertion or maintenance of wrong. All we have to do, then, in this crisis, is, to maintain this firm and decided position; and my life on it, she will not involve her country and this in the calamities of war for Oregon. Sir, Great Britain is not prepared for a war with us. She never was in a more precarious condition than she is at this moment; not from internal decay, perhaps, sir, but from the circumstances of her position, and without a friend in any one of the nations of the earth. She is, too, at this moment embarking in a bold, and to her dangerous, experiment—no less, sir, than a radical change in a policy to which she has adhered, with such pertinacity, since the revolution of 1688. Her success, sir, in this experiment, she must know and feel, depends in a very great degree upon the maintenance of amicable relations with this country. We have been, and now are, her best customer, and it is not to be presumed she would attempt such a change, with her best customer in arms against her. That would be fatal, suicidal.

The controversy will never be prosecuted to a war by Great Britain, under the circumstances in which she is placed, unless we manifest timidity and indecision; and if it should, sir, I cannot think she could do us any very great injury. I have reflected a good deal upon the subject, and I cannot for my life, sir, see how she can inflict upon us any permanent injury, while she is exposed to that hazard from us by the very nature of her system. We might lose some merchant ships, and a vessel of war or so; but her own commerce would be more crippled than ours. We could carry on a war of ten years with less injury to us than to her. Our condition is vastly different now from what it was when the war of 1812 was declared. Then our population was small, our internal commerce nothing. Now we have facilities of approach from the seaboard into every part of the country, near 20,000 000 of people, and an internal commerce fifteen times as great as our foreign, which we could fall back upon, and verify the fact, that we can live and flourish without any foreign commerce. These make our position more favorable for a war than that of Great Britain; besides, so far as the great staple of her manufactures, cotton, is concerned, she is almost wholly dependent on us. She cannot procure from India and Egypt enough to keep her spindles employed three months; and unless she draws her supply from us through neutral ports, she must be broken up. Taking this single consideration into the account, the prospect of inevitable ruin to her, keeping her condition in other respects in view, is alarming indeed. This great staple contributes so much to the support of her population; and is so important an element of her commercial and internal prosperity, that it will always operate, whilst we control its production, as bond and security from her that *she* will keep the peace. It is most manifestly, sir, her interest not to go to war, and she will make great sacrifices to avoid it—every sacrifice short of national honor, which, so far as she is concerned, is not involved in this question. Seeing, as she does, this territory filling up by our own citizens; that it is contiguous territory, and the only outlet westward for the great valley of the Mississippi to the markets of Asia, and entirely detached from all her colonies in either hemisphere, and that it can be to her but a barren possession, the sacrifice in yielding peaceably her pretensions to any part of it, accompanied by those friendly arrangements to which I have alluded, will bear no comparison to that we should encounter by an abandonment on our part.

And, sir, it will not be England alone which will be engaged in this war, should one befall us. The people of Europe have the spirit of revolution and reform raging within them, only suppressed by the strong arm of power. It is the policy of thrones and dynasties to prevent a war with us. If a war does come it will be a war of systems—not for Oregon; and in such a war, so sure as the red man fades away before the advance of civilization, so sure will those thrones and dynasties fall before the advance of republican principles. No, sir; Europe will not suffer England to war for Oregon with us. The great free-trade interest alone, now promising to be in the ascendant in England, will have power sufficient to prevent a war, and will prevent it at every sacrifice.

I have not been able to see, sir, how a nation so politic as England is, can hazard a war, in her present condition, provided the matter is managed by us, as it should be, (we doing nothing calculated to irritate, and manifesting a just and liberal spirit towards her,) with becoming firmness. If war does grow out of this question, Mr. President, it must be commenced by England—we will not take the initiative in that. But, it is said, sir, we must so manage the matter by negotiation, compromise, and acquiescence, in the demands of Great Britain, as not to force her to this alternative; for it is said, sir, if war does ensue, we will lose our foreign trade, be visited by all its accumulated horrors and calamities, and that we would be broken down in our finances, as the Senator of South Carolina [Mr. Calhoun] said a few days since. If these are proper considerations, sir, and to be used as arguments on such a topic, the duty of maintaining national rights would be at an end. Such arguments persuade us to surrender them up quietly to any arrogant demand or baseless pretension, if made by a formidable Power, lest, by resisting, we should be subjected to loss and injury. Such reasoning, sir, puts a stop at once, to the assertion and maintenance of any right, no matter how important. Much as I detest war, sir, and would earnestly seek to avoid its consequences, could it be done honorably; much as I should deprecate an increase of the paper system which might ensue,—I would greatly prefer them all, to a surrender, under existing circumstances, of any portion of the Oregon territory. There is nothing that can grow out of war that my State would not be willing to endure, in preference to the surrender of any part of it—nothing, whatever, sir. For, so far as *we* are concerned, the point of honor is involved. We have been told, sir, time and again, if we do assert our title, and take measures to maintain it, war will follow; and again and again are we reminded of the magnitude of England's power, and of our own unprepared and defenceless condition. Sir, I have said I did not believe a war could do us much injury—certainly not so much as it would England. She has no internal commerce to fall back upon to sustain her—no internal resources—all is scattered over the face of the earth. With us, it is wholly different. We possess all the varieties of soil and climate, well adapted to the most profuse production of all necessary articles of consumption; a population possessing every kind and degree of skill, enterprise, and pursuit; with an internal commerce spreading over more than three thousand miles of territory—amounting annually to many hundred millions of dollars, with the most perfect facilities by railroads and canals to accommodate it, which would not only sustain, but enrich the whole country, and verify the fact, as I have before said, that we could live and prosper, independent of all foreign nations. We would discover that our prosperity does not depend on the accidents of foreign commerce, or on the unruly politics of Europe. This commerce between the States, sir, is without its restrictions, like that between so many foreign and distinct nations. Compare our situation in this regard, with those European States having but little foreign commerce, and none internal, estimated by ours; they seem to prosper, sir, under burdens and exactions far heavier and greater, even in time of peace, than ours could be in war. Situated as we are now, sir, if we have not the ability to sustain a war, it seems to me that no nation on the face of the earth ever had or ever will have that ability.

As to "breaking down our finances," sir, and the evils of the paper-system, which, it is thought, will necessarily follow a war, this will be but temporary, and can be greatly modified by wise legislation. There is nothing, sir, in this view of the subject calculated to inspire alarm, or make us hesitate in defending all our rights. We have now, sir, in the country about $100,000,000 of specie, which, in the event of war, would remain in the country, as there would be no use for it to pay balances abroad, there being no foreign trade. This would be a basis for safe issues, according to the modern science of banking, of three hundred millions of dollars. Treasury notes, bearing no interest, and receivable by the government for all dues, would be at par for all government payments, and being in demand to pay taxes, would not fluctuate very much in value in the market. Such a system might be made to work quite safely, sir, during a war, but should terminate with it, or before our revived commerce created a balance of trade against us. As to the taxes, sir, do the people not pay now, indirectly, through the operation of our tariff laws, more than they would have to pay directly by taxation? If they have no taxes to pay in the shape of duties, as they would not in case of war, they would be better enabled to pay those which should be levied by taxation to support a war waged in defence of national rights and national honor. A war with all the calamities attendant upon it, such as they may be, would not be barren of benefit. It would unite our people more closely than they are now united, would increase their energies, and, by calling into exercise the sterner virtues, lead, in the end, to a vast increase of our power. We are becoming, sir, too effeminate, luxurious, and extravagant; all these tendencies would be checked by a war;

"Sweet are the uses of adversity!
Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in its head."

And as a speedy recovery from the ill effects of a war, sir, no nation on the globe possesses half the recuperative energy that ours possesses. This our history proves. Who believes, sir, that the late war was of any injury to us? Though many fell—though much blood was spilt—our foreign commerce broken up, and all industrial pursuits crippled and deranged, and not one object attained for which the war was declared and waged at so much expense of blood and treasure, who can doubt that it was of immense service to us, weighing all these against that one item which it gained for us—the respect of all other powers, and the high exaltation of our national character? And we recovered from its effects in a few years, and with renewed life and vigor have since pursued our glorious and successful career.

The Senator from Delaware, sir, [Mr. J. M. Clayton,] took occasion, in his remarks upon these resolutions, to contrast our naval force with that of Great Britain, and read to the Senate a prepared statement of her military and commercial marine. But the Senator did not seem to recollect that the number of vessels of war possessed by a nation is no criterion by which to estimate its power. England has many ships of war, sir—she has the wooden walls, but has she the sinew and muscle with which to man them? Can she get the men? I recollect reading last summer, sir, in a British magazine, an article upon the defences of Great Britain, and, among other things, the condition of her navy, both as to the *materiel* and *personnel*, in which it was stated that Captain Lushington, one of the most popular officers in her navy, had great difficulty, and had been unable up to that time, to ship a crew for the steamer "Retribution." Now, sir, with this fact in view, I would ask that Senator, how it is in the power of Great Britain, to man one half of the vessels on that formidable list he presented to the Senate, even by resorting—as she certainly would resort—to the press-gang? She cannot man them, sir. The Senator showed, sir, by his statement, that in proportion to our commerce, as compared with that of England and some of the minor Powers of Europe, we had fewer guns for its protection than any of them; but the Senator did not seem to consider the capacity of this nation to arm itself on an emergency, and he left the inference very fair that he believed ours was the weakest naval power on the globe. I think, sir, a little consideration of, and examination into, elements of naval power will serve to satisfy every Senator that we have the capacity to put afloat, in a very short time, a more powerful navy than Great Britain ever possessed. It cannot be denied, sir, that we are capable of constructing vessels with more rapidity, and with better equipment and sailing qualities, than any other nation; and if war comes, instead of finding us unprepared in this arm of annoyance and defence, we should be found in a few months, the best prepared nation in the world. It is true, sir, of national vessels, we have but seventy-six, all told, but we have a commercial marine unsurpassed by any. All our packet ships, sailing from the ports of New York and Philadelphia, are larger, better fitted, stauncher, better sailers, and capable of carrying more guns and sustaining their recoil, and resisting an enemy's broadside, than our second class frigates were in the last war, or could soon be made so by additional bulwarks, the work of a few weeks. These, with our whale ships armed and fitted, to say nothing of our steamboats with armaments on board, will enable us to put afloat a more efficient navy than Great Britain ever possessed; and for shipping crews, patriotism would supply the place of the press-gang.

If you will look, sir, at the list of the British navy, you will find that many ships named in it are not seaworthy, and cannot be made so; many of them are old ships, ships engaged in the battles of Trafalgar and the Nile; they are now old hulks, unfit for service.

Mr. J. M. Clayton desired to correct the honorable Senator in one or two particulars. He did not say that we were the weakest nation, nor had he endeavored to place the strength of Great Britain in a striking light before the Senate. He had merely stated the relative naval power of this country and England, in reply to the remarks of the Senator from Ohio, [Mr. Allen.] He had said nothing to disparage our own naval force, but he had thought it proper to correct some statements of the gentleman from Ohio in regard to the naval power of England. And he had done so from facts then in his possession. Since he had made that statement, he had seen a still later authority, disclosing more particular information as to the naval power of Great Britain than he had been in possession of at the time he had the honor to address the Senate. He stated at that time that England had 671 ships, carrying an armament of 16,272 guns. By the latest official documents received by the last steamer, I perceive, so much has she increased her naval power within the last quarter, that she has now 17,772 guns in her navy. This is a great increase, and this has been effected in the last quarter of the last year. The number of her war steamers, according to the account we were in possession of when he last addressed the Senate, was 98. He perceived by the documents lately received that there were now 121. He had also stated that her military marine amounted to 40,000, and he did say too, in reference to the commercial marine, to which the Senator from Illinois had now alluded, that ours was about equal, or perhaps a little inferior to that of England. But the recent information showed that that estimate was somewhat erroneous, or at least that their commercial marine had increased since the former statement.

The tonnage, foreign and coastwise, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain, at the close of the year 1838, was 2,420,759 tons. The same statement is made by McCulloch, title "British Empire" and by Baron Charles Dupin, in his "*Paralle des Trois Principales Marines de l'Univers*."

A rare work, very recently published, and received within a few days past at the Treasury, (McGregor's Commercial Tariffs, &c.,) referred to and relied upon in the Secretary's report this day, brings down the information on the subject as late as the 31st December, 1844, at which time it appears that the whole tonnage, foreign and coastwise, of the United Kingdom, was 2 994,166 tons; which added to that of Guernsey, Jersey, and Man, (50,226 tons,) makes the whole tonnage of all, by the latest returns received within the last week at the Treasury, 3,044 392 tons.

The Secretary's report states the tonnage of the United States, on the 30th June, 1845, at 2 416,999 tons. This was the amount stated by Mr. C. in his speech of the 12th ultimo, on the Oregon question. He then estimated the tonnage of the United Kingdom, &c., at 2,420,759 tons, which was according to the latest returns to be relied on at the time.

By the latest "List of the British Navy," it appears that there has been a very extraordinary increase of the naval power of England within the last quarter of the year 1845. He (Mr. C.) stated in the debate on the 12th ultimo, from the best information to be then had, the whole number of guns in the British navy at 16,242. That statement was founded on the then latest returns of the British navy. The official list received by the last steamer now shows the number of guns to be 17,772, exclusive of the armament of the sailing packets. It is certain that the British navy has greatly increased of late. Mr. C. stated, on the same occasion, the number of English war steamers, by the only official list then to be consulted on this side of the water, at 98. The late intelligence shows that this number has been increased, within the last quarter to 121. Mr. C. observed, in his speech of the 12th ultimo, in reply to Mr. Allen, that he had carefully avoided overrating the British power. His estimates were correctly predicated on the very best information to be had at the time he spoke, and he had rather underrated the British and slightly overrated our own naval power. He stated the number of guns in our navy at 2,352, the number is, I now learn, precisely 2,329. The important result of this interesting inquiry into the relative naval and commercial power of the two countries is almost precisely the same as stated by Mr. C. Great Britain appears, by the Secretary's report, to have about 600 guns for every 100,000 tons of commerce; we have only 96; while France has 1,046; Holland [illegible]; Sweden and Norway 394; Turkey 1,223; Denmark 708; Portugal, 798; Austria, 321; and Russia far more than any other nation, in proportion to the amount of her commerce to be protected. We are behind all other civilized nations in this respect. We have less protection for the same amount of commercial wealth than any other people, and we must double our navy before we can stand on a respectable peace establishment, if we are to measure our own by the standard which regulates the other navies of the world.

Mr. Breese.—The Senator's statement confirms what I said, sir; for it does represent his own country as the weakest naval power on earth: it shows that even the minor powers of Europe have more guns in proportion to their commerce than we have. And it confirms another statement I made, sir: that Great Britain cannot man her guns. She has, sir, it seems, by the Senator's showing, 17,722 guns in her navy; and as ten men are required to each gun, she should have 177,220 men; whereas, the fact is, she has but 40,000.

But, sir, this inequality is not the point. The question is as to the capacity of this nation to arm for a contest; and in this particular, that of Great Britain, vast as it may be, is still inferior to ours. She does not possess the elements of preparation and combination we do, and in these respects we are the strongest naval power on the globe. Look at one fact, sir, in proof of what individual enterprise can do, in building steam-vessels. In 1834, when the whole steamboat tonnage of the British empire did not exceed 82,000 tons, that in the Mississippi valley alone amounted, two years ago, to 125,000 tons, or one-third more than that of the whole British empire. Compare the capacity of Great Britain with that of the United States to prepare a military marine. Sir, there is no comparison. We have forests, which she does not possess—we have all the *materiel*, the *personnel*, and the skill. Our skill in naval construction is unequalled. She has never possessed such ships as our line packets; she has never yet approached us in the construction of steam-vessels in beauty, swiftness, and capability. We have constructed them to run twenty-seven miles in the hour—a speed never yet attained by any British steamers, and never will be, unless our models are adopted. In ever particular—I have not the ability now to go into the details—in every particular, we have immense advantages over her, in the possession of the elements of defence and assault, which can soon be worked up into effective means. Our capacity, sir, to put the country in a state of naval defence is decidedly greater than hers.

But, sir, as signs of approaching war, the great military and naval preparations in which Great Britain is engaged, and of which we have heard so much, are referred to; and to what do they all amount? I have said, sir, I did not believe Great Britain would go to war for Oregon, and I consider these preparations no indication of such a purpose. She makes periodically a survey of her marine, examines and repairs her dock-yards, cuts down large vessels into razees; and it is a part of her system. She has been, and is now, busily engaged in fortifying the more exposed points of her coast, but the reason of that was well known. All this activity, to which the attention of Senators and the country has been directed, commenced before the Oregon question had assumed its present important and interesting aspect; at least before it had become such a prominent question between the two governments, as it now is. Before the President's Inaugural was delivered, sir, the British Premier, on the 14th of February, 1845, in presenting the annual estimate of expenses, declared he should ask a vote to increase the navy; and the reason he assigned was, that Great Britain had then three additional naval stations to maintain: one on the coast of Africa, one in China, and one in the Pacific; and that they would require an increase in the naval force of four thousand men, and for the navy and ordinance an additional sum of £1,000 000 He also proposed an increase of the steam navy, and, as he declared, not for any purpose of a war of aggression, but in consequence of the extension of their commerce in all parts. He said, "We do not propose this increase from any apprehension of war, [hear, hear,] or with any view whatever, to aggression. [Loud cries of hear.]

All this was before Oregon had become a prominent topic, and may be traced to the pamphlet "On the State of the Naval Force of France," put forth in May preceding, by the Admiral Prince de Joinville, and the publication of Thiers, going to show that a descent by Napoleon upon the English coast was seriously contemplated from Boulogne, and would have been carried into effect but for accidental causes. This pamphlet pointed out the weakness of the defences of the British coast opposite France, and insisted, in case of a war, an army from France might easily make a sudden descent upon England, and this through the agency of steam. Steam, sir, has placed those great powers on more equal ground. Brest, capable of containing fifty war steamers of the first class, is only one hundred miles—a few hours run—from the coast of Cornwall. Dieppe, Boulogne, Calais, and Dunkirk, though smaller ports are from sixty to twenty-four miles only from the shores of Sussex, Kent, and Essex. With that immense control of men which France possesses, and with war steamers, what is to prevent her from repaying the visit England made to her capital thirty years ago, or of ravaging her coasts, unless adequate fortifications, either fixed or floating, and a sufficient military force, be raised to prevent a landing? The Duke of Wellington, himself, in his evidence before the Committee on Shipwrecks, raised by the House of Commons, says: "In the event of a war, I should consider that the want of protection and of refuge, which now exist, would leave the coast of England opposite to those of France in a very precarious situation." These forts, now erecting, might protect the points where they shall be built; but they do not insure the safety of England, because the power, certainty, and celerity of steam, enables France to choose her own point of debarkation and attack. Wind and tide are not to be waited on. Steam has revolutionized the science of naval warfare, rendering comparatively ineffective the immense sail-navy of England for defence; at the same time increasing the effectiveness of a small steam-navy at least fourfold—it unfits, sir, the tactics and strategy of past times for the present, and makes France, by her proximity, a most dangerous neighbor. When it is considered, sir, that she has, in addition to her force of 80,000 men in Algiers, a standing army, well disciplined and equipped, of 350,000, with magazines and arsenals filled to repletion, and all munitions of war on hand, besides nearly a million of militia, and a well-drilled national guard in all her provincial cities and towns, it is very easy to believe, in the present state of improvement in the means of warfare and approach, Great Britain would be alarmed; hence, her past and present activity. Her insular position, sir, is no longer her sure protection. Her popular national air—

"Britannia needs no bulwarks,
No towers along the steep;
Her march is o'er the mountain wave,
Her home is on the deep,"

is now no longer true, sir. She does need those "bulwarks," and at a vast expense she is building "towers along the steep;" and they all had reference—not to us, sir, but to her dangerous neighbor and hereditary foe. She has to oppose to this tremendous power of France, a standing army of 130,000 men; 80 000 of whom are scattered abroad over the world—22,000 are in Ireland, to keep down the commotions of a people waiting their "opportunity." When England's "necessity" shall have arrived; and the remainder, most of them raw recruits, are scattered over England and Scotland. Well might she be alarmed, sir, at the prospect before her.

The Senator from Delaware, sir, [Mr. J. M Clayton.] when exhibiting to the Senate the immense naval power of Great Britain, forgot to say, or at least he did not say, that much of it had to be spread, for the protection of her colonies, over the globe; and, without leaving these colonies and posts exposed to the attack of a hostile force—and they are the most inviting points of attack—she could not concentrate a fleet upon our coast that need give us the slightest alarm. With the aid of our vast and unexcelled commercial marine, such national ships and steamers as we could soon supply, instead of being blockaded, as we have been told, we could blockade our enemy—I have no sort of doubt about it. So far as naval superiority is concerned—and to be tested, let the energies of this nation and this people be roused—and all doubts on that subject would soon be put to flight. It is not our policy to keep up, in time of peace, and no war-cloud impending, a cumbrous and expensive naval force—it will not, I trust, ever be our policy. I am, sir, among the warmest and best friends to the navy; and because I am so, I shall expose its increase, in time of peace, to any great extent, lest that should break it down. It is sufficient for us, sir, that we have the capacity, whenever an emergency shall arise, to make it more formidable than that of any other power on the face of the globe, let that arrive to-day, or at any time. I am confident, sir, should the emergency occur to-morrow, the energy, the alacrity, the means and capacity of the country to meet it, would be so displayed as to astonish ourselves. Should a war come, sir, in the prosecution of our right, I believe all parties would cordially unite in carrying it on with vigor. There would not be, as in the last war, "a peace party," aiding the enemy, preventing capitalists from loaning money to the Government to carry it on, and rejoicing over our defeats. There would be no domestic traitors. We should all be Americans in deed; and heart and hand, in cordial union, rally as one man around our country's standard. A war, sir, will not proceed from us. It must come from the other quarter; and if it does come, it will be a war of aggression, unsustained by the sense of justice, or the sympathies of other nations. We never will, we cannot become an aggressive power; but when an assault is made upon us, sir, the whole land will rise as the mighty man armed, and with a vigorous and united effort, overwhelm the aggressor. Sir, I have done.

Reader—thank God.

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