

## A Voice from the United States.

Mr. Adams's Speech on Oregon.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JANUARY 2, 1846.

Mr. J. Q. ADAMS rose to address the house. He said that he ought perhaps to commence with an apology to the house for addressing it at all on this question. The state of his health was such as to render it impossible for him to enter at all on the many important questions connected with this subject, and whatever observations he might feel it his duty to make upon it, must necessarily be brief. His physical power would not enable him to go at any length into the question. The question now immediately before the house he understood to be, whether the bill making provision for raising two regiments of riflemen should be made the special order for the first Tuesday in January.

The speaker said that that constituted one part of the question, but was not debatable. The other part of the question was on referring this bill to a committee of the whole on the state of the union, and that question was open to debate.

After some further informal conversation, Mr. Adams continued:

Well, then, I will, at the risk of being arrested for irrelevancy, (which seems of late a favorite mode of preventing discussion,) speak in reality and in substance to the question of making the bill a special order—while, in form, my remarks will be on the question of reference.

This measure now proposed to be referred is one, which, for a variety of reasons, is as important as any question which has hitherto come, or will hereafter come, before this house for discussion. It is difficult to speak on one of the bills relating to this subject without a reference to all the others. For example: this is a bill to raise two regiments of riflemen. Now, I find there has been reported in another part of this building a bill providing for one regiment of mounted riflemen. The question then presents itself to me—how are these two bills to go together? and whether they ought not to be considered together? If but one regiment only, of mounted riflemen is necessary to be maintained, then it does not follow that two regiments of unmounted riflemen are needed; the one bill depends in a measure upon the other. I refer to this merely as an illustration, to show the variety of measures which are at the same time in contemplation of the house. I find further, in the same bill to which I have just alluded, an appropriation of — dollars, for the expense of any military defences which the president may deem necessary on the line of our communication with Oregon. Now the importance of that provision depends on the sum which shall be put into the hands of the president. All I infer from this is, that it is contemplated that other expenses (and in my opinion very heavy ones) must be considered as concurrent measures with the raising of these regiments of riflemen. This is not the only measure that will be necessary, and therefore it may be doubtful if there is any necessity for wasting the time of this house in discussing the question whether these two regiments of riflemen shall be raised unless the necessity is made apparent for their employment. Why, what reason is there that two regiments or one regiment shall be raised at this time! We have heretofore gone through some measures which presented a prospect of war: we have gone through them, and there has been no war. We are at profound peace with all the world. Why then increase our military establishment? It must be recollected that the spirit which prevailed in this house two, three, or four years ago, was very different as to this matter of increasing our military force. We who were then here voted not only to prevent the increase of our military establishment, but we reduced it by very nearly one-third. This was four years ago, when the prospect of war was quite as great as now, and I will take this opportunity to say that I do not believe at all in ANY DANGER of war at this time.

I do not see any testimonials of the probability of a war at this time; but, if any danger is apprehended by any gentleman here, it appears to me the very first measure to be taken—that which should precede all military measures of any kind—is to give notice to Great Britain that we mean to terminate the joint occupancy of Oregon. This is the first measure to be taken. How can gentlemen apprehend war otherwise? Does Great Britain tell us that she shall take offence at the continuance of the treaty of joint occu-

pancy? She does not, though I have heard of some question being made in England whether they shall not give us notice of the termination of joint occupancy. Yet it is not joint occupancy, and I have been surprised at the language held by some gentlemen on the subject. The treaty acknowledges no occupation of the territory by either party; it is a commercial convention for free navigation, but it does not admit by either party the occupation of one inch of territory by the other. It is no occupation. But, whatever it is, neither party can permanently occupy the country without notice to the other to terminate the convention of commerce and trade, which would not be permitted without such convention. It is not a treaty of joint occupancy: it is a treaty for the exercise of navigation rights, commercial rights, and trading rights with the Indians. It precludes the occupation of the country by either party. Exclusive occupation cannot be assumed by either without notice. Of all the measures for occupancy and for assuming jurisdiction over citizens of the United States who have gone into Oregon, and are there in actual possession, notice is the first thing. Twelve months after the notice shall have been given, the right will accrue to the United States to occupy any part of the territory they may think proper.

In the bill which passed at the last session I myself moved, as a first section of the bill, that such notice should be given. The house did not think proper to agree to it, and passed the bill without any notice.

Mr. C. J. Ingersoll. No; it was put into the bill at the last moment.

Mr. Adams. But that bill did not pass the senate, and so the insertion was immaterial. But it is a material fact to me, because I proposed it as constituting the first section of the bill. I declared myself ready then, and I am ready now, to give such notice. [Great sensation.] I hope it will be given, and that we shall do it as the first measure to be taken—to be followed afterwards by a real occupation of the whole territory. [Great sensation in the house, and an incipient clap, which, however, was promptly arrested by the speaker, who called loudly to order.] But it is indispensable that we shall first give notice.

The gentleman from Illinois, (Mr. Douglass,) says that it appears to him there is a game playing here—a remark which is quite incomprehensible to me. I shall not inquire to what the gentleman alluded, but I confess I was very much surprised to hear that the committee on foreign affairs will not report to the house such notice.

Mr. C. J. Ingersoll. I know of no member of that committee who has said so. Mr. Douglass. I said so, because I had heard that such was their determination.

Mr. Adams resumed, I have heard it from various quarters; and, if the report is delayed much longer I shall believe it. [A laugh.] If it is so I shall deplore it; I shall deeply regret if a majority of that committee shall not be ready to give that notice. All the other measures must depend on that. While we sit talking here about regiments of riflemen, and regiments of infantry, and stockade forts, and sappers and miners, and pontoniers, Great Britain is arming her steam-vessels, equipping her frigates and line-of-battle ships, and sending troops over here to be ready. I would press a resolution giving notice THIS DAY, if I hoped that a majority of the house could be obtained to effect the measure.

Mr. Wentworth here moved that the rules be suspended to afford an opportunity for such a motion; but the motion was pronounced to be out of order.

Mr. Adams resumed. I feel myself scarcely authorized to hope that I should be successful should I make the motion. But for this I should have moved it on the first day of the session. Because I have so profound a sense of the duty of adhering to treaties, I feel debarred from the least act of hostility, or even from meeting hostility manifested elsewhere, till notice shall have been given. While our convention remains, I will vote no increase of the army and navy, no fort or stockades, no riflemen, no infantry, no sappers, or miners. All must depend on that. If this bill shall be made the special order for Tuesday, I hope it will be arranged by the gentlemen who manage the business of this house, that the question of giving notice shall come up on the same day, and shall be taken up before any thing else. It is mere wasting of time, and whistling to the wind, to talk about raising a military force until our conscience

is clear from the obligation of the convention.

And it does not follow that, if we give notice, there must of necessity be war; nor does it even follow that we shall then take possession. It will only be saying to Great Britain: After negotiating twenty years about this matter, we do not choose to negotiate any longer; we shall take possession of what is our own; and then, if to settle the question what is our own, you wish to negotiate, we will negotiate as long as you please. *We may negotiate after we take possession.* [Much laughter.] That is the military way of doing business. [Increased merriment.] When the great Frederick came to the throne of Prussia, his father had prepared and equipped for him an army of an hundred thousand men. Meeting shortly after the Austrian minister, the latter said to him: "Your father has given you a great army, but our troops have seen the wolf: yours have not." "Well, well," said Frederick, "I will give them an opportunity to see the wolf." Frederick then added in his memoir, "I had some excellent old pretensions to an Austrian province which some of my ancestors had owned one or two hundred years before, and I sent an ambassador to the court of Vienna stating my claim, and presenting a full exposition of my right to the province. The same day my ambassador was received in Vienna I entered Silesia with my army." [A laugh.] So you see that, on the very day his army entered Silesia, he gave notice to the court of Vienna that the convention for the joint occupation of Silesia was ended. [Loud and prolonged laughter.]

I say, therefore, that I hope the first measure adopted by congress will be to give, in the most solemn manner, the notice to Great Britain which the treaty requires; then the coast will be clear for us to do what we please. It does not, I repeat, it does not follow as a necessary consequence that, because we give this notice, we must take possession, though it is my hope that we shall. It does not necessarily draw after it a war; and if Great Britain chooses to take such notice as an act of hostility on our part, and forthwith commence hostilities on hers, we have been told that we shall all be but one party, and God Almighty grant that it may be so! If it shall be so, the war will have less of those very extraordinary terrors which my friend from South Carolina (Mr. Holmes) has now just discovered, notwithstanding the extreme military propensities which he manifested on this floor last year.

The gentleman was a most valiant man when Texas was in question. But I shall draw no comparison as to what we witnessed then and what we see now; but this I will say, that I hope, if war shall come—which God forbid, and of which I entertain no fears at all—the whole country will have but one heart and one united hand. And of this I am very sure, that in that case Great Britain will not long occupy Oregon, or any thing else north of the Canada line. [Great sensation, and incipient indications of applause.] But if you will agree to give notice, strong as is my horror of war, and of all military establishments, if there should then be the breath of life in me, I hope I shall be willing to go as far as any in making any sacrifice to render that war successful and glorious. I can say no more. But, till notice is given, I am not prepared to vote any preliminary measure of a military kind. I suppose, however, that we may, without giving notice, extend our laws and our protection to our brethren who have settled at least in that part of Oregon which is not claimed by Great Britain: but there can be no need of increasing our army and our navy in order to do that. I hope that such an act will not be offensive to Great Britain, and that she will not think of going to war about it.

But, if we are going to take actual occupation of the country, then some additional force will be needed to our army, and in that case, however unwilling I have ever been to increase our military establishment, I think I should get over my difficulties, especially if a disposition should be manifested by Great Britain to take offence at the measure I have just mentioned. All our military preparation must depend on notice to Great Britain; we must not have our hands and feet bound; the obligations of joint occupancy must be dissolved, and we left free to act according as the interests of our country may require.

I believe it will not be necessary for me to refer to any other part of this subject. There have been, as I understand, two applications made to this house by fellow-citizens of ours, settled beyond the Rocky mountains, for the

protection of this government. The chairman of the committee on foreign affairs (Mr. C. J. Ingersoll) presented, as I think, one memorial, while another from a different quarter is also before the territorial committee—possibly it is a copy of the same.

Mr. C. J. Ingersoll. No; they are different memorials, from different persons.

Mr. Adams. I think it is time this house should consider what are our duties to our countrymen there. I confess that I know them very imperfectly. I have of course seen the reports of Lieutenants Wilkes and Fremont; they contain much valuable information; but that sort of information which we now want, it was not the object of those expeditions to obtain. I am in favor of protecting these persons as far as we can.

I believe I have now said all that is at present necessary. I have said perhaps more than I should, and certainly more than I intended; I am not able to go further. The most important point I wished to state is, that to give notice should be our first measure. Then let us protect our emigrating citizens, and our own frontier, by stockade forts and such an increase of our military establishment as may be necessary; but I am against all other measures unless that is done first.

NEW WORK ON OREGON.—A new work in regard to Oregon is about to be published at Washington. The first part will contain every official document that has been put forth by the executive and legislative branches of the U. S. government, in the form of messages, reports of committees, &c., from 1803 to the commencement of the present session of congress. The second part will contain all the laws enacted at the June and December sessions of the legislature of Oregon, A. D. 1844; with the journals of the house and messages of the executive committee, public records, &c. Compiled and brought from Oregon by Charles Saxton. It is expected to be published by the 1st of next month; price \$3 per copy.—*N. Y. Mercury*, January 23, 1846.

FROM TEXAS.—We have the Texas National Register of Dec. 6. It announces the election of Gen. Henderson to the office of governor, by a large majority. A new paper has been commenced somewhere in Texas, called the Soda Lake Herald.—*N. Y. Merc.*

Extract from the Report of the Secretary of the Navy.

The Pacific squadron, under commodore Sloat, has consisted of the Savannah, the Levant, the Warren, and the Shark. The three first will return in 1846, and will be relieved by the Congress, the Portsmouth, and the Cyane. The difficulty of communicating with our ships in the Pacific makes it proper to suggest the advantage of a public mail through our own territory to a convenient port in the straits of Juan de Fuca. Arrangements should also be made, at the earliest day that is proper, for getting supplies for our Pacific squadron from our own soil and our own citizens in that region.

RELIGIOUS GEMS.—It is no great matter to live lovingly with good-natured, humble and meek persons; but he that can do so with the immoral, with the wilful and the ignorant, with the peevish and perverse, he only hath true charity.

Temporal crowns and kingdoms could not make a rest for saints. As they were not redeemed with so low a price, neither are they endowed with so low a nature.

Religion is equally the basis of private virtue and public faith; of the happiness of the individual, and the prosperity of the nation.

TRUE COURTESY.—"Manners," says the eloquent Edmund Burke, "are of more importance than laws. Upon them, in a great measure, the laws depend. The laws touch us here and there—now and then. Manners are what vex or soothe, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarize or refine, by a constant, steady, uniform, insensible operation, like that of the air we breathe in. They give their whole form and color to our lives. According to their quality, they aid morals; they supply them or they totally destroy them."

COULDN'T KICK AT NOTHING.—It is stated that a shrewd farmer in the Vermont legislature declined answering the speech of a member who was remarkable for nothing but his frothy and pugnacious impudence and self-conceit, thus: "Mr. Speaker, I can't reply to that speech, for it always wrenches me terribly to kick at nothing."