

question. The recent acquisition of Texas, which we had heard condemned in the other house as a foul blot on their national policy, was boasted of by him as a glorious triumph of freedom. He drew an animated picture of the aggrandizing spirit of Great Britain with her 150 millions of subjects, spoke of her arrogance and pride, the certainty of a war, if they wished to maintain their just rights, and the necessity of an immediate armament.

“Great Britain,” he said, “might be willing to submit the Oregon question to arbitration, but the crowned heads, whom she would propose as arbiters, would not be impartial, for they would cherish anti-republican feelings.” I thought the style of this oration better than its spirit, and it was listened to with attention; but in spite of the stirring nature of the theme, none of the senators betrayed any emotion.

When he sat down, others followed, some of whom read extracts from the recently delivered speeches of Sir Robert Peel and Lord John Russell on the Oregon affair, commenting freely and fairly upon them, and pointing out that there was nothing in the tone of the British Government, nor in the nature of their demands, which closed the door against an amicable adjustment. I came away from this debate much struck with the singular posture of affairs; for the executive and its functionaries seem to be doing their worst to inflame popular passions, while the legislature, chosen by universal suffrage, is comparatively calm, and exhibits that sense of a dangerous responsibility, which a president and his cabinet might rather have been expected to display.

In reference to one of the arguments in General Cass's speech, Mr. Winthrop soon afterward moved in the House of Representatives (Dec. 19, 1845), “That arbitration does not necessarily involve a reference to crowned heads; and if a jealousy of such a reference is entertained in any quarter, a commission of able and dispassionate citizens, either from the two countries concerned, or from the world at large, offers itself as an obvious and unobjectionable alternative.”

A similar proposition emanated simultaneously, and without concert, from the English Cabinet, showing that they were regardless of precedents, and relied on the justice of their cause.