

len defiance from British forts upon every continent of the earth, and almost every isle of the sea. These are not the arguments which ought to control the action of a representative of the American people on this floor.

Sir, the time has been when inactivity (on this question) was masterly, was wisdom. But it is not now. That day has passed. It is, perhaps, to be regretted that it has passed, and that a different direction had not been given to it. It is deeply to be regretted that a grave and difficult question of territorial rights should have been dragged into the arena of party politics. The nation may have other and abundant reasons to regret the conduct of this question. But my business is not now with the past; the present position of the question must be the basis of our action upon it. The current of events has brought us to a point where we must act, and act wisely and promptly; where, if we cannot advance with safety, we cannot retreat with honor or advantage to the nation. "Masterly activity," is now demanded by the crisis. By this course alone can we retrieve the errors of the past and secure success for the future. What shall that action be? Perhaps the fate of a magnificent empire may depend upon your answer. But it must be decided, decided now, and for the nation, and not only for the nation of to-day, but for the nation throughout all time, for future ages and unborn millions. Let us, then, elevate ourselves, as near as may be, to the magnitude of the question. Let us pity, (if we can repress the uprising of more natural, but less charitable feelings,) the imbecile attempt which has been made to embitter this discussion by the introduction of questions of sectional interest and sectional strife, and bring whatever of virtue, whatever of wisdom, whatever of knowledge, whatever of patriotism, we may command, to its consideration and decision. Then, whatever may be the consequences of our action to ourselves or the country, we can stand erect, with consciences "void of offence towards God and towards man."

The question of title has been vaguely and unsatisfactorily treated of in this debate. The "pressure from without" has been evidently felt and acknowledged in this part of the discussion. A manifest disposition to evade it, to shun it, has exhibited itself on all sides of the House. I would content myself, if I believed the position to be true, with the general acquiescence in the goodness of our title to 54° 40' north. It would greatly strengthen my position on the second proposition I have laid down for discussion. I prefer waiving that advantage, and giving my own opinions upon the title, however unpalatable they may be to the House or the country. Our title to the whole of Oregon has certainly not been denied by any gentleman who has preceded me in this debate. Those gentlemen of the Demo-