

which Great Britain has already threatened the quarter of territory. The establishment of a chain of posts to the Rocky Mountains wholly within our own territory, invades the right of others. It has been inferred, from an expression in a public document, that there is danger of immediate war, and that a sudden blow may be struck. Sir, I do not believe it. A war waged against us on account of any one or all of the measures referred to, would be a war of plain, unadorned aggression. No nation, in the present age, could embark in such a contest, without drawing down upon herself the condemnation of all civilized communities. She would find herself opposed and restrained by public opinion, which, in our day, rules the conduct of nations more powerfully than the arm of force. I hold, therefore, immediate war to be out of the question. Nor can eventual war take place, unless the assertion of our just rights shall be forcibly resisted. I do not pretend to pass judgment on what the future may bring forth. Collisions may grow out of these measures—collisions ripening, through influences and events which we may be unable to control, into open warfare. I should deeply deplore such a result. The interests of humanity, great principles of political right, self-government, freedom, individual rights, all suffer when the voice of the law is silenced by the tumult of war. "Inter arma silent leges," is an adage, of the truth of which history has furnished too many fatal proofs. I would do much to avert such a calamity. I would do anything not inconsistent with the public honor, to avoid a contest which would be disastrous to both parties, no matter what should be its final issue. But beyond this I can never go. And if exemption from war can only be purchased by a surrender of our just rights, I cannot consent to make the purchase. But if war cannot be averted, I trust we shall not commit the great error of undervaluing our adversary. With some opportunity of observing the condition of Great Britain near at hand, I have no hesitation in saying that she was never capable of greater efforts than she is at the present moment. I know that her inordinate distension contains within itself an element of vital weakness. It is not in the order of human society that so extended a dominion should remain long unbroken. But I have not yet been able to detect, in the condition of her body politic, the menacing symptoms of that decay which precedes and works out the dissolution of empires. She has great abuses to struggle against. The senator from Ohio has well and graphically described them. She has enormous burdens to sup-

port, but she has resources enough to bear them. She will not give up her empire of slaves in her hands, nor, I am sure, will she surrender in vigor and majesty to despotism. You will find that, in every quarter of the globe, under the fiery blast of the cannon, and amid the fumes of the hostile ships, braving the elements, and meeting danger and toil, in every form, at sea. But, sir, I pretend not, with my narrow strength, to look into the future. It is possible that her hour may be near at hand. But we know that the last struggle of the strong man is always the most desperate, and sometimes the most dangerous to the antagonist, who has brought him to the ground.

I say this in no spirit of timidity. I say it in a spirit of prudent forecast—with the desire that we may go into the contest, if it shall come, with the assurance that we have to deal with a strong adversary and not a weak one; and that our preparation may be commensurate with the means of offence to which we shall be exposed. I have no doubt of our ability both to defend ourselves, and to give back effective blows in return. We were never so strong as we are at the present moment—strong in our position, strong in our means, strong in the spirit and energy of our people. Our defenceless condition has been greatly overstated. We have been told that our coast is denuded. I have heard, whether on this floor or elsewhere I do not know, that there is scarcely a gun mounted for the defence of the commercial metropolis of my own State. There cannot be a greater error. There are hundreds of guns, of heavy calibre, in the city of New York, ready, at the very hour in which I speak, to receive an assailant, and as many more, which can be placed in position in an emergency—and this independently of guns afloat. In thirty days I believe the city might be rendered, with a skilful engineer, and with the means which might be placed at his command, prepared—well prepared—against a maritime assault. But, sir, I turn away from all these forebodings of evil. I have confidence in the continuance of peace. The good sense of both countries will revolt at a contest which can bring no good to either, and secure an adjustment of existing difficulties on terms honorable to both. Such is my conviction. But, sir, if I am deceived, then I have only to say, that while I would be constrained by nothing but overruling necessity to take up the sword, yet if the necessity shall come, I trust we shall never consent to lay it down until the rights and the honor of the country have been fully vindicated.

When Mr. Dix resumed his seat,