

Historical Note.

1844, 1845.

Mr. Calhoun then presented a paper (dated September 20), in which he said he had read with attention the counter-statement of the British Plenipotentiary, but without weakening his confidence in the validity of the title of the United States, and, after arguments, concluded thus:—

"The Undersigned cannot consent to the conclusion to which, on a review of the whole ground, the counter-statement arrives, that the present state of the question is, that Great Britain possesses and exercises, in common with the United States, a right of joint occupancy in the Oregon Territory, of which she can be divested only by an equitable partition of the whole between the two Powers. He claims, and he thinks he has shown a clear title on the part of the United States, to the whole region drained by the Columbia, with the right of being reinstated and considered the party in possession, while treating of the title, in which character he must insist on their being considered in conformity with positive Treaty stipulations. He cannot, therefore, consent that they shall be regarded, during the negotiation, merely as occupants in common with Great Britain, nor can he, while thus regarding their rights, present a counter-proposal based on the supposition of a joint occupancy, merely until the question of title to the territory is fully discussed. It is, in his opinion, only after a discussion which shall fully present the titles of the parties respectively to the territory, that their claims to it can be fairly and satisfactorily adjusted. The United States desire only what they may deem themselves justly entitled to, and are unwilling to take less. With their present opinion of their title, the British Plenipotentiary must see that the proposal which he made at the second Conference, and which he more fully sets forth in his counter-statement, falls far short of what they believe themselves justly entitled to.

"In reply to the request of the British Plenipotentiary that the Undersigned should define the nature and extent of the claims which the United States have to the other portions of the territory, and to which allusion is made in the concluding part of Statement A, he has the honour to inform him in general terms that they are derived from Spain by the Florida Treaty, and are founded on the discoveries and exploration of her navigators, and which they must regard as giving them a right to the extent to which they can be established, unless a better can be opposed."

In various informal conversations between Mr. Pakenham and Mr. Calhoun, when Mr. Calhoun insisted on the parallel of 49° as the very lowest terms which the United States would accept, Mr. Pakenham told him that, if he wished Her Majesty's Government even to take into consideration a proposal founded on that basis, it must be accompanied by some indications of a desire on the part of the United States' Government to make some corresponding sacrifice to accommodate the interest and convenience of Great Britain; that Her Majesty's Government had already gone very far in the way of concession, while the United States' Government had as yet shown no disposition to recede from their original proposal. To which Mr. Calhoun replied, on one occasion, that for his part he should have no objection to give up absolutely the free navigation of the Columbia, which had before been offered only conditionally; on another occasion, he said that if Great Britain would consent to the parallel of 49° on the Continent, perhaps the United States might be willing to leave to Great Britain the entire possession of Vancouver's Island, Fuca's Inlet and the passage northwards from it to the Pacific remaining an open sea to both countries; but he never said that he would be ready to yield both these points. In fact, he said that he was not authorized to make any proposal of the kind, nor should he until he had ascertained that such an arrangement would find favour with the Senate.

1845.

In January 1845, in answer to a proposal, made by Mr. Pakenham, to submit the question to arbitration, Mr. Calhoun said that, while the President united with Her Majesty's Government in the desire to see the question settled as early as might be practicable, he could not accede to the offer; adding this:—