

SPEECH

OF MR. CALHOUN, OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

IN SECRET SESSION. ON

THE BRITISH TREATY.

Mr. CALHOUN said that his object in rising was not to advocate or oppose the treaty, but simply to state the reasons that would govern him in voting for its ratification. The question, according to his conception, was not whether it was all we could desire, or whether it was liable to this or that objection; but whether it was such a one that, under all the circumstances of the case, it would be most advisable to adopt or reject. Thus regarded, it was his intention to state fairly the reasons in favor of and against its ratification; and to assign to each its proper weight, beginning with the portion relating to the Northeastern boundary, the settlement of which was the immediate and prominent object of the negotiation.

He was one of those who had not the slightest doubts that the boundary for which the State of Maine contended was the true one, as established by the treaty of peace in 1783; and had accordingly so recorded his vote, after a deliberate investigation of the subject. But, although such was his opinion, he did not doubt at the time that the boundary could only be settled by a compromise line. We had admitted it to be doubtful at an early period during the Administration of Washington; and more recently and explicitly, by stipulating to submit it to the arbitration of a friendly power, by the treaty of Ghent. The doubt, thus admitted on our part to exist, had been greatly strengthened by the award of the King of Holland, who had been mutually selected as the arbitrator under the treaty. So strong, indeed, was his (Mr. C's) impression that the dispute could only be settled by a compromise or conventional line, that he said to a friend in the then Cabinet, (when an appropriation was made a few years since for a special mission to be sent to England on the subject of the boundary, and his name, among others, was mentioned for the place,) that the question could only be settled by compromise; and for that purpose, some distinguished citizen of the section ought to be selected; and neither he, nor any other Southern man, ought to be thought of. With these previous impressions, he was prepared, when the negotiation opened, to expect, if it succeeded in adjusting the difficulty, it would be (as it has been) on a compromise line. Notwithstanding, when it was first announced that the line agreed on included a considerable portion of the territory lying to the west of the line awarded by the King of Holland, he was incredulous, and expressed himself strongly against it. His first impression was, perhaps, the more strongly against it, from the fact that he had fixed on the river St. John, from the mouth of Eel river, taking the St. Francis branch (the one selected by the King of Holland) as the natural and proper compromise boundary, including in our limits all the portion of the disputed territory lying north of Eel river, and west and south of the St. John, above its junction; and all the other within that of Great Britain. On a little reflection, however, he resolved not to form his opinion of the merits or demerits of the treaty on rumor or imperfect information; but to wait until the whole subject was brought before the Senate official-

ly, and then to make it up on full knowledge of all the facts and circumstances after deliberate and mature reflection; and that he had done with the utmost care and impartiality. What he now proposed was, to give the result, with the reasons on which it rested, and which would govern his vote on the ratification.

He still believed that the boundary which he had fixed in his own mind, was the natural and proper one; but, as that could not be obtained, the question for them to decide was—Are the objections to the boundary as actually agreed on, and the stipulations connected with it, such as ought to cause its rejection? In deciding it, it must be borne in mind that, as far as this portion of the boundary is concerned, it is a question belonging much more to the State of Maine than to the Union. It is, in truth, but the boundary of that State; and it makes a part of the boundary of the United States, only by being the exterior boundary of one of the States of our Federal Union. It is her sovereignty and soil that are in dispute, except the portion of the latter that still remains in Massachusetts; and it belongs in the first place to her, and to Massachusetts, as far as her right of soil is involved, to say what their rights and interests are, and what is required to be done. The rest of the Union is bound to defend them in their just claim; and to assent to what they may be willing to assent to in settling the claim in contest, if there should be nothing in it inconsistent with the interest, honor, or safety of the rest of the Union. It is so that the controversy has ever been regarded. It is well known that President Jackson would readily have agreed to the award of the King of Holland, had not Maine objected; and that to overcome her objection, he was prepared to recommend to Congress to give her, in order to get her consent, one million of acres of the public domain, worth, at the minimum price, a million and a quarter of dollars. The case is now reversed. Maine and Massachusetts have both assented to the stipulations of the treaty, as far as the question of the boundary affects their peculiar interest, through commissioners vested with full powers to represent them; and the question for us to decide is—Shall we reject that to which they have assented? Shall the Government, after refusing to agree to the award of the King of Holland, because Maine objected, now reverse its course, and refuse to agree to that which she and Massachusetts have both assented? There may, indeed, be reasons strong enough to authorize such a course; but they must be such as will go to prove that we cannot give our assent consistently with the interests, the honor, or the safety of the Union. That has not been done; and, he would add, if there be any such, he has not been able to detect them.

It has, indeed, been said that the assent of Maine was coerced. She certainly desired to obtain a more favorable boundary; but when the alternative was presented of another reference to arbitration, she waived her objection, as far as she was individually concerned, rather than incur the risk, delay, uncer-

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