

PREFACE

IN presenting to the public a life of Robert Y. Hayne, a word of explanation seems appropriate. Few, if any, of the public men of the United States have been so neglected by students of history; and it is astonishing to note how many writers, some of whom are otherwise quite careful, have been guilty of repeating the statement that, save for the fact that on the floor of the United States Senate he drew from Daniel Webster his greatest oratorical effort, Hayne would not be known to our national history. Yet it is undeniable that, within five months of his connection with that distinguished body, the senator from South Carolina was the undisputed leader of his faction. This position he held throughout the constantly recurring struggle which culminated in the great crisis, nullification. During this period Mahlon Dickerson gave way to Webster, and Webster in turn to Clay, as the leader of the opposing faction, the Protectionists.

Of the carelessness which has in great measure brought about the low estimate of Hayne, evidence is found in allusions to the South Carolinian in recent works. For example, in one history of the United States which on the whole deserves praise for its fairness and liberality, we find the statement, "Senator Hayne was a man of finished education." The facts are that he never received any college instruction, was forced by his necessities to prepare himself for, and to apply for admission to, the bar before he had attained his majority, and was in possession of a lucrative practice at an age when most men who enjoy the opportunity are still in college.