





R. BARNWELL RHETT.



R. BARNWELL RHETT.

**BHETT, Robert Barnwell**, politician, b. in  
Beaufort, S. C., 24 Dec., 1800; d. in St. James par-

ish, La., 14 Sept., 1876. He was the son of James and Marianna Smith, but in 1837 adopted the name of Rhett, which was that of a colonial ancestor. He studied law, was elected to the legislature in 1826, and in 1832 became attorney-general of South Carolina. During the nullification controversy he was an ardent advocate of extreme state-rights views. He served six successive terms in congress, from 1837 till 1849, having been elected as a Democrat, and on the death of John C. Calhoun he was chosen to fill the latter's seat in the U. S. senate, which he took on 6 Jan., 1851. In congress he continued to uphold extreme southern views, and in 1851-'2, during the secession agitation in South Carolina, he advocated the immediate withdrawal of his state from the Union, whether it should be accompanied by others or not. On the defeat of his party in the latter year, he resigned from the senate, and after the death of his wife in the same year he retired to his plantation, taking no part in politics for many years. He was an active member of the South Carolina secession convention of December, 1860, and prepared the address that announced its reasons for passing the ordinance. Subsequently he was a delegate to the provisional Confederate congress at Montgomery, Ala., in 1861, and presided over the committee that reported the Confederate constitution. He was afterward a member of the regular Confederate congress. Mr. Rhett was for some time owner of the Charleston "Mercury," the organ of the so-called "fire-eaters," in which he advocated his extreme views. During the war it was conducted by his son, Robert Barnwell Rhett, Jr. After the civil war Mr. Rhett removed to Louisiana, and was seen no more in public life, except as a delegate to the Democratic national convention in 1868.

**Rhett**, ROBERT BARNWELL, legislator; born in Beaufort, S. C., Dec. 24, 1800; was a son of James and Mariana Smith, and adopted the name of Rhett in 1837. Receiving a liberal education, he chose the law as a profession. In 1826 he was a member of the South Carolina legislature, and was attorney-general of the State in 1832, acting at that time with the most ultra wing of the nullification or State supremacy party. From 1838 to 1849 he was a member of Congress, and in 1850-51 United States Senator. It is said that he was the first man who advocated on the floor of Congress the dissolution of the Union. Rhett took a leading part in the secession movements in 1860-61, and was chairman of the committee in the convention at Montgomery by whom the constitution of "The Confederate States of America" was reported. He owned the *Charleston Mercury*, of which his son was the editor. He died in St. James parish, La., Sept. 14, 1876.