WILLIAM RUFUS KING:

SOUTHERN MODERATE

by

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PREFACE

Although William Rufus King has been dead for more than one hundred years, he has been neglected by historians. Today, only a few people know that he was elected Vice President of the United States in 1852, and fewer still know about his distinguished congressional career of more than thirty years, or of his diplomatic achievements as Minister to France while the struggle over the annexation of Texas was in progress. Several factors have helped to consign King to this relative obscurity. In the first place, he left few letters or other materials from which a biography could be written. In Congress he generally confined himself to short speeches and often gave up his privilege of making speeches in the Senate by acting as presiding officer. As a consequence, any biographer must seek scattered materials in newspapers, private correspondence, and public documents. Even then, available sources are inadequate to give a full account of his life. Perhaps if King had married and had left children, more of his personal correspondence would have been preserved, but such was not the case. A further deterrent to the study of King's life is the fact that he was overshadowed by such men as Andrew Jackson, John Caldwell Calhoun, Daniel Webster, and Henry Clay. Writers have preferred to write about such men because their careers were more colorful than those of their lesser contemporaries and because they left voluminous materials with which to

work.

Although King attracted less attention than some of his contemporaries, few others in American political life can equal his career of public service in terms of devotion to duty and attention to the interests of his constituents. He served in political office practically all of the time from 1808, when he was twenty-two, until his death in 1853. A study of his life is a study of the work of a moderate Southerner who was willing neither to follow the ultra-Southerners such as John C. Calhoun nor to accept quietly violations of southern rights by northern aggressors. Instead, he occupied a middle ground where he sought, on the one hand, to calm southern agitators, and on the other, to secure better treatment of the South by the North. In the present study, no attempt is made to give a detailed account of King's life because materials are not available for such a study. Rather it is an effort to assemble existing information from newspapers, personal letters, public archives and fugitive sources so that an almost forgotten public figure can be partially restored to his place in the history of his period.

The writer is indebted to many people for aid and encouragement in the writing of the present study. Among these are the library staffs of the University of North Carolina, the University of Alabama, and Duke University; the staffs of the Sampson County, North Carolina, Public Library, and of the Selma, Alabama, Carnegie Library; the staffs

of the Alabama Department of Archives and History, the North Carolina Department of Archives and History, the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. He is especially indebted to Mr. Laurence Tipton of Selma, Alabama, who made available King manuscripts in his possession and opened his home to show the King silver, furniture, and other mementoes in his possession, to Doctor Fletcher M. Green, whose advice and encouragement have been indispensable, to Doctors Allen J. Going and Cornelius O. Cathey, whose advice has been helpful, and to his wife, whose loyalty and assistance have made the work possible.

J. M. M.

CHAPTER I

LAYING FOUNDATIONS: BOYHOOD AND EDUCATION

When William Rufus Devane King was born on April 7, 1786, the United States was still relatively young in the family of nations, but it had already witnessed some of the most momentous events in its history and was destined to witness developments of equal significance during King's childhood and youth. A long period of conflict with England had led to open warfare in 1775 and the Declaration of Independence in 1776. The revolutionary struggle had been brought to a victorious conclusion by the Treaty of Paris in 1783. Meanwhile, the Articles of Confederation had been adopted in 1781 as the first constitution of the United States. Unfortunately, this plan of government was proving unworkable by 1786; and at the time of King's birth, leaders were speaking of the need for revision. Some even doubted the permanence of the union. In the year after King's birth, however, the Constitutional Convention met at Philadelphia and drafted a new frame of government which was adequate for the needs of the country. During his childhood, the new plan of government was put into operation by the Federalist Party; and, during his youth, the Democratic-Republican Party of Thomas Jefferson first came to power. During these years a new generation was born, the leaders of which upon reaching maturity were to dominate the political scene from the War of 1812 to the Compromise of 1850. Not the least of this generation was William R. King whose life extended from 1786 to 1853 and whose active

political career extended from 1808 to his death.

King was born in Sampson County, North Carolina, the second son of William King and Margaret Devane. According to a family tradition, the King family descended from three brothers who came to Virginia from Ireland in the seventeenth century. Descendants of these brothers are thought to have migrated to North Carolina as part of the great migration to that state which occurred about 1740.[1] In any case the land records of Sampson County show that William King was already the owner of a considerable amount of land in that county at the time of the American Revolution.[2] His father, Michael King, was a resident of nearby Cumberland County.[3] Margaret Devane was descended from a prominent Huguenot family that had migrated first from France to Scotland and later from Scotland to America. Thomas Devane, great-grandfather of William R. King, had married Margaret de Contin while they

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1 Children of Thomas King, Sampson County, North Carolina, Manuscript in Joseph Hamilton Collection, the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina; Lillie Martin Grubbs, ed., Martin and Allied Families Martin Bogan Farrar Truitt Smith Saxon Hay Cheney Grubbs Pope Curry Watson Swann Birch King Pruett Other Branches (Privately published, 1946), pp. 255-259; "King Family of Virginia," William and Mary Quarterly, XVI (October, 1907), 105-110.

2 Sampson County, North Carolina, Deed Book 3, pp. 491-492.

3 Copy of Will of Michael King, Grandfather of William R. King, in William R. King Collection, Alabama Department of Archives and History. (Hereinafter cited as King Collection.)

were still in Scotland and brought her to America. He owned land in New Hanover County, North Carolina, as early as 1735. His two sons, Thomas Devane Jr. and John Devane, settled in Wilmington, where both held public offices and served in the American Revolutionary Army. Margaret Devane was the daughter of the younger Thomas Devane.[4] No records survive of the marriage of William King to Margaret Devane, but the event probably dated from the revolutionary era. To them were born three sons and four daughters: Thomas Devane, William Rufus, John Devane, Tabitha, Helen, Margaret, and Ann.[5]

One of the wealthiest men in his community, William King was able to give his children some of the advantages in life not offered by other fathers of his time to their families. In January, 1774, he bought three tracts of land including 550 acres and throughout the remainder of his life continued to purchase land from time to time.[6] The Sampson County Tax

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4 Julia Forbes Thornton, "North Carolina's Own Huguenot Families," The Huguenot, Publication No. 12 (1943-1945), pp. 113-114.

5 Children of Thomas King, Sampson County, North Carolina, Manuscript in Joseph Hamilton Collection, the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina; Copy of the Will of William King, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina.

6 Sampson County, North Carolina, Deed Books 3, pp. 491-492; 6, p. 371; 7, p. 391; 8, pp. 445-446, 456.

List of 1784 shows that he was already the owner of 1,348 acres of land and seven black polls.[7] In 1790 he was the owner of thirty-one slaves and had added to his landholdings. At this time he was the fifth largest slaveholder in Sampson County and ranked very close to the largest owner of slaves, who had only thirty-seven.[8] Thus at approximately the time of William R. King's birth, his father could lay claim to membership in the upper economic bracket of his community. He maintained a similar standing in his later life. Although he had given tracts of land and slaves to his sons and had sold some of his property, he left 2,197 acres of land at his death, together with 37 slaves.[9] Along with the ownership of substantial property went social distinction in the closing years of the eighteenth century; hence the King family enjoyed high social standing as well as high economic standing in their community. Beneath them were the numerous people who owned only a few slaves or none at all.[10] William King made

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7 Sampson County Tax List (1784), in North Carolina Department of Archives and History.

8 Walter Clark, ed., State Records of North Carolina, 16 volumes (Winston, Goldsboro, 1895-1914), XXVI, 1077-1096. (Hereinafter cited as State Records.)

9 Copy of Will of William King, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina.

10 Francis Grave Morris and Phyllis Mary Morris, "Economic Conditions in North Carolina about 1780," North Carolina Historical Review, XVI (April, 1939), 107-133, (July, 1939), 296-327 give a good description of the economic situation in North Carolina in the late eighteenth century.

certain that his sons were in the planting class by giving to them shortly after they reached their majority lands sufficient to make them planters in their own right. In January, 1808, he gave six hundred acres of land to William Rufus, who at that time was a struggling lawyer of twenty-one.[11]

Not only was William King well-to-do financially, he had taken part in the American Revolution and later became a prominent leader in the political affairs of Sampson County. In the Revolution he fought as a common soldier and made financial contributions to aid in the conduct of the war.[12] Revolutionary accounts show him drawing compensation for militia service with Colonel James Kenan. Where he served and the length of his service are unrecorded, but from the amount of compensation involved, his service must have been brief.[13] In addition to his militia service, King helped to raise supplies for revolutionary troops. In November, 1780, he gave the Commissioner of Duplin County fifty-five beef cattle worth £ 4 specie per head. Although he was promised payment

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11 Sampson County, North Carolina, Deed Book 14, p. 389.

12 Sketches of the Lives of Franklin Pierce and Wm. R. King, Candidates of the Democratic Republican Party for the Presidency of the United States (n. p., 1852), p. 33.

13 North Carolina Revolutionary War Accounts, in North Carolina Department of Archives and History, V, part 43, p. 3; part 65, p. 4.

in a short time, he was not paid.[14] Later he petitioned the state legislature for reimbursement, but a Senate committee rejected his petition in 1784 with the comment that his case should not be considered in a different light from those of others who had furnished provisions. Said the report, "They are put off with a certificate and we humbly conceive that Mr. King shall share the same fate."[15] Another Senate committee gave him a favorable hearing in 1785,[16] but, apparently, he was never paid. The loss of over £ 200 specie was a considerable sacrifice on his part for the good of the war effort.

William King served Sampson County in various political capacities: as a justice of the peace until his resignation in 1791, as a member of the state legislature for several sessions and as a delegate to the Fayetteville Convention called in 1789 for the ratification of the constitution. His election to these positions of responsibility was a recognition of his place in the community. According to a leading student of the period, the average citizens, who knew little about political affairs, "trusted and clothed with power those few in each community who by character, knowledge, or experience

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14 Petition of William King, Papers of the North Carolina Senate (1785), North Carolina Department of Archives and History; State Records, XX, 56.

15 State Records, XIX, 477.

16 Ibid., XX, 56.

were best fitted to direct the fortunes of the state."[17] King was such a man. As a justice of the peace he had great responsibility over local affairs, and in the other offices he made his influence felt on a wider scale.

As a member of the Fayetteville Convention, King proved an exception to the assumption by some that the constitution was supported by the upper classes and opposed by the lower classes. Despite his large landholding and his numerous slaves, he joined the majority of the Sampson County delegates in voting against ratification.[18] Prior to his vote against ratification, he had joined a group who unsuccessfully sought to secure the adoption of a series of suggested amendments before voting on ratification.[19] In spite of strong opposition from some quarters, the constitution was adopted by a vote of 194-77. At that time and in succeeding years, the Sampson County area was one of the strong Anti-Federalist strongholds.[20]

William King served in the 1788, 1790, 1791, and 1792

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17 Henry McGilbert Wagstaff, "Federalism in North Carolina," James Sprunt Historical Publications, IX (1910, No. 2), 22.

18 Journal of the Convention of the State of North Carolina held at Fayetteville in November, 1789, pp. 12-13.

19 Ibid., 6-7.

20 William C. Pool, "An Economic Interpretation of the Ratification of the Federal Constitution in North Carolina," North Carolina Historical Review, XXVII (October, 1950), 438-440.

sessions of the North Carolina House of Commons. During these sessions he seems to have taken little part in debate, but gave his vote on significant issues that came before the legislature. In 1788 he helped defeat a move calling for a convention to reconsider the vote of the Hillsboro Convention which had rejected the constitution.[21] This vote foreshadowed his vote against ratification in the Fayetteville Convention of 1789. He was not re-elected to the House of Commons in 1789 but returned to that body and served from 1790 through 1792. During these sessions he took no part in recorded debates, but his votes show that he generally followed a policy of strict construction and little government interference in the lives of North Carolinians.[22] He apparently chose to retire from political life in the early 1790's because he resigned as justice of the peace in 1791,[23] and he did not return to the House of Commons after 1792. During the years in which his father was in politics, young William Rufus must have heard him express his constitutional views. Later, when he grew to manhood, he accepted the strict-construction viewpoint of his father.

About young William R. King little has been discovered,

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21 State Records, XXI, 51.

22 State Records, XXI, 930; North Carolina Journal of the House of Commons (1791), pp. 28, 30, 44, 63-64.

23 North Carolina House Journal (1791), p. 48.

but fragmentary testimony by a descendant of one of his sisters shows that he was a normal boy enjoying games with boys of his age and riding stick horses.[24] In the absence of more dependable information one can probably accept the statement of one of King's eulogists that he grew up much as "other boys born to a reasonable share of the world's comforts and surrounded by friends to encourage and instruct him."[25] He enjoyed the companionship of the moderately large King family of seven children: his older brother Thomas, an early graduate of the University of North Carolina and always a close confidant of King; his younger brother John Devane, who lived with King after his move to Alabama and managed the latter's property while he was in Washington; and the four sisters, who also remained closely attached to King in his later life. That the family tie was strong is evidenced by the close relationship which existed between the family members after their move to Alabama many years later. Some evidence of the family influence on King can be obtained from his writings in later years. For example, explaining his religious views to a niece in 1826, he wrote: "My Father was for a great portion of a tolerably long life, an Episcopalian, and I am proud to say sustained throughout the character of an honest man, a sincere

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24 Kornegay Hill, The King Family, Manuscript in King Collection.

25 Robert Strange, Eulogy on the Life and Character of William Rufus King, Delivered in Clinton, on the 1st day of June, 1853 (Raleigh, 1853), p. 6. (Hereinafter cited as Strange, Eulogy.)

Friend, a good citizen, and a pious Christian." From instruction and from "an involuntary & early attachment" to the religion of his father, he had come to accept the Episcopal faith.[26] On another occasion, he spoke of the relatives of his "fondest love," who had watched over his tender years with "the most affectionate, and unremitted attention."[27] King, then, must have enjoyed to the full the rural pleasures offered by the Sampson County of his day and the kind attentions of his parents.

He received his earliest education at Grove Academy in Duplin County and at Fayetteville Academy in Cumberland County. Both of these schools were relatively close to his Sampson County home. Grove Academy had been chartered in 1785 in "the first attempt" that had ever been made to provide a school in that part of the state. A promoter of the school wrote in 1786 that it was fixed in the heart of a Presbyterian settlement and that from "the pleasantness and agreeableness of the situation and the country adjacent around it," he had hopes that it would succeed. Nestled in a grove of stately oaks near Kenansville, the academy offered instruction to students

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26 King to Eliza Beck, February 16, 1826, in King Collection.

27 Private Journal of William R. King, in King Collection, p. 1.

from all over North Carolina.[28] Its sponsors advertised in 1791 that the Greek and Latin languages were being taught, along with the sciences, and that boarding could be procured on moderate terms. The "order and regulations here observed" and the progress made by those attending the academy, said the advertisement, were "equal to any which have been made in any private institution."[29] Fayetteville Academy, founded somewhat later than Grove Academy, was located in a "very pleasant part" of Fayetteville near the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches. Here, a great deal of the teaching was done by Presbyterian ministers. The school, like Grove Academy, contributed an important part to the educational life of the state.[30] No records exist today to show the quality of work that King did at these schools, but in view of the record he made at the University of North Carolina Preparatory School, to which he transferred in 1800, he must have received good training at the two academies.

The Preparatory School had been set up in Chapel Hill in December, 1795, in order to take care of the diverse needs of

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28 Grove Academy Bulletin (1907), pp. 9-11; see also Charles L. Coon, North Carolina Schools and Academies, a Documentary History (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1915), pp. 74-76.

29 The North Carolina Chronicle; or, Fayetteville Gazette, January 3, 1791.

30 John A. Oates, The Story of Fayetteville and the Upper Cape Fear (Fayetteville: Privately published, 1950), pp. 291-292.

"raw, mostly untaught youths of diverse ages and acquirements." A house had been erected some distance from the University so as to separate the younger students from the older students and to relieve congestion in the building formerly occupied by the entire student body. Here students were taught the English language, writing, reading, arithmetic, the Latin language, the French language, the rudiments of geography, and an optional course in the Greek language. Those passing approved examinations on the studies of the Preparatory School were admitted "upon the general establishment of the University." Two able tutors had charge of the school while King was in attendance. Archibald DeBow Murphey, honor graduate of the class of 1799 and later a lawyer and leader in the public school movement in North Carolina, was his first tutor; Richard Henderson, nephew of Chief Justice Henderson and later a prominent lawyer, was the second, replacing Murphey when he joined the staff of the University. The French teacher, P. Celestine Molie, was apparently a refugee from Haiti.[31]

King's name first appears on University records on March 1, 1800, as a student of Tutor Murphey. In commenting on the performance of a class in Erasmus, Murphey noted: "In this class James Battle & William King are the best; and bid fair

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31 Kemp Plummer Battle, History of the University of North Carolina from Its Beginning to the Death of President Swain, 1789-1868, 2 volumes (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1907), I, 71, 93-95, 162-164, 166. (Hereinafter cited as Battle, History of the University of North Carolina.)

to be good Scholars; as they are diligent in their Studies, and punctual in the performance of all their duties." Murphey, however, was dissatisfied with the reading of most of his students, including King; most seemed "entirely ignorant of the Art of reading" and would require long training before old habits could be rooted out and replaced with better ones.[32] King must have made rapid improvement in his reading because he was considered one of the better readers in a class of eight when another report was made two months later. This report also noted that Preparatory School students showed "a disposition to be trifling and impertinent."[33] The Examination Committee of the University, in their March examinations, found King and James Battle "praise worthy for their Industry and the accuracy they discover[ed]" in a class in Erasmus; and when the yearly examination was given to his class on June 23, 1800, in Erasmus, Eutropius, French grammar, and other subjects, King was found "distinguished" in Eutropius and Erasmus.[34] In August, 1800, King was studying French, Latin, reading, and other subjects. His teacher noted that

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32 Reports of the Tutor, March 1, 1800, in University Student Records, 1795-1809, Manuscript volume in Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina. (Hereinafter cited as University Student Records.)

33 Ibid., May 1, 1800.

34 Reports of the Examination Committee, March 27, 1800, University Student Records; Raleigh Register, July 15, 1800.

he was doing well in French, which he had been studying for a long time. By this time Richard Henderson had replaced Murphey and was teaching all subjects except French. Henderson singled King out as one of the best students in Latin, English grammar, and reading.[35] In October Henderson reported that in Nepos King was "highly distinguished for his Scholarship and diligent attention to his Studies."[36] The faculty examining committee, at its November examination, found King to be "particularly distinguished" in Latin studies and praiseworthy in his other subjects.[37] In the following months he seems to have taken a considerable interest in his study of French. King's French teacher reported in February, 1801, that he and another student were reading in Gil Blas about a "handsome lady in distress." It was "full of virtuous sentiments," and King seemed "more sensible to them" than the other student. Both students were "tractable & assiduous." At the same time Henderson called King the best student in Caesar's Commentaries and Latin grammar, and praised his work in English grammar and reading.[38] In May King was reading

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35 Reports of the Tutors, August 10, 1800, University Student Records.

36 Ibid., October 10, 1800.

37 Reports of the Examination Committee, November 15, 1800, University Student Records.

38 Reports of the Tutors, February 25, 1801, University Student Records.

Marmontel and Voltaire with French teacher Molie, "almost as well as if they were written in his native language,[39] and was among the leaders of his class in all of his other studies. When the Board of Trustees conducted their examination of his class on June 22, 1801, in spelling, reading, English grammar, arithmetic, Latin grammar, Caesar's Commentaries, Marmontel and Voltaire, they found King outstanding in most of the subjects, and "distinguished" in English grammar, arithmetic, and Latin grammar.[40] Although he was only fifteen years old, he had now concluded his preparatory work and was eligible for entrance into the freshman class of the University. From the sketchy records still available, one can only conclude that King did well in his preparatory work.

During King's college career, which extended from the summer of 1801 to the summer of 1804, the recently founded University was troubled by a lack of funds and by the unruliness of students. The trustees complained in 1803 of the roofless walls of some of the buildings and the almost empty shelves of the library. Correctly foreseeing the future, they stressed the need for support of the University for the good of "those youths who are shortly to succeed us on the stage of life as men, and on whom the character and fate of

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39 Ibid., May 15, 1801.

40 Raleigh Register, July 14, 1801.

our country must consequently devolve."[41] In King's class alone were a future Vice President of the United States, King, and a future Cabinet member, John Eaton. On the University faculty were Joseph Caldwell, honor graduate at Princeton and Professor of Mathematics (later President of the University); William Bingham, honor graduate of the University of Glasgow and Professor of Ancient Languages; and Archibald D. Murphey, who was promoted to Bingham's place in 1800 from his post as tutor in the Preparatory School.[42] But not all of the time of the students was spent in serious work. School records show the numerous escapades in which they took part. Among other things they put a calf in the chapel, stoned the house of the steward, stole beehives and daubed honey on classroom floors, cut down corn in the neighborhood, put frogs and terrapins in the room of an instructor, and fired pistols in the buildings.[43] Whether King took part in these affairs is unrecorded, but his name does appear among a list of students who admitted to Professor Caldwell that he had been oppressed by

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41 Raleigh Minerva, July 18, 1803.

42 Battle, History of the University of North Carolina, I, 108-110, 166-167, 170.

43 Transactions at the University, in Faculty Record [of the University of North Carolina] 1799-1814, in Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina; see also Battle, History of the University of North Carolina, I, 194-200.

youthful pranks, and apologized for incidents that had occurred on the campus.[44] Records of the Philanthropic Society show that he was fined from time to time for infraction of the rules of the group while he was a member,[45] and he probably engaged in and enjoyed the pranks played by students upon the faculty and fellow students.

The Philanthropic Society and the Dialectic Society furnished recreation for the students of the University and gave them valuable training in public speaking. Shortly after he entered the freshman class, William R. King became a member of the Philanthropic Society.[46] From the yellowed pages of its records, one learns that he stood high in scholarship, debate, and executive ability and that he was very popular among his fellows. Members of the societies took turns at reading, composing and correcting speeches, and debating significant issues.[47] King took part in these programs regularly and was, during the period of his membership, elected to almost every office in the gift of the society. Within a few weeks after he entered the group, he was elected treasurer and

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44 Students to Reverend Joseph Caldwell, undated, in Faculty Record 1799-1814, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

45 Minutes of the Philanthropic Society, List of Fines 1802-1803, in Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina. (Hereinafter cited as Minutes of the Philanthropic Society.)

46 Minutes of the Philanthropic Society, July 14, 1801.

47 Battle, History of the University of North Carolina, I, 77.

during the next three years served many times in the offices of corrector, councillor, supervisor, and president.[48] Six times he was chosen to preside over the organization. On one occasion he addressed the group "on the propriety of strict adherence to the laws and regularities of the Society" and "injoined the members to make every exertion that would tend to make them perfect in their collegiate studies."[49] In the post of president of the Philanthropic Society he acquired valuable practice in parliamentary proceedings which helped to make him one of the greatest presiding officers that the Senate of the United States has ever had.

In debate King was pitted against John Eaton, later famous in Tennessee politics and the Jackson administration, and other future leaders of less importance. On one occasion Eaton and King defended opposite sides of the question "Whether has Washington or Franklin done greater services for their Country." Eaton, in defending Washington, was able to defeat King.[50] Other subjects on which King spoke included "Whether is a standing army or a militia the best diffence for a country?"; "Are the Studies of the Latin and Greek languages

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48 Minutes of the Philanthropic Society, August 18, 1801, January 8, 1802, February 15, 1802, March 30, 1802, May 12, 1802, June 22, 1802. See also note 49.

49 Ibid., March 30, 1802, August 10, 1802, August 23, 1803, January 10, 1804, March 27, 1804, June 12, 1804. The address quoted was recorded in the minutes of the April 24, 1804, meeting.

50 Ibid., July 26, August 2, 1803.

necessary for the attainment of a liberal education?"; "Does knowledge increase the happiness of mankind?"; "Whether it be advantageous to the United States to promote agriculture or to encourage the mechanical arts of manufacturing?"; and "Whether should a representative act agreeable to his own will or the will of his constituents?"[51] The debate of such questions served a useful purpose in acquainting the members of the society with important issues and in giving them an opportunity to speak publicly. On at least two occasions King was chosen as one of the speakers to represent the society when the Trustees made their annual examinations. In 1802 the Trustees reported that the three speakers from each society, including King, deserved to be highly applauded.[52] Again in 1803 King spoke before the group, along with John Eaton.[53] What King said on such occasions might be highly instructive to one tracing the development of his thinking, but none of his speeches have survived. Certainly he acquired practice in clear, logical, and concise speaking that he put to good use in his later congressional career.

Throughout his life King remembered with pleasure and gratitude his work with the Philanthropic Society. In 1838

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51 Ibid., August 25, October 13, 1801, October 12, 1802, March 18, 1803, January 17, 1804.

52 Raleigh Register, July 13, 1802.

53 Raleigh Minerva, July 18, 1803.

he wrote the group as follows:

> To sustain the honor and advance the prosperity of that Institution, constituted at one period of my life, the strongest feeling of my nature; it entwined itself around every fiber of my heart, and stimulated my energies. Time and diversified pursuits have weakened, but have not extinguished that feeling. I still exult in the success of the White Badges; never in the palmy days of Roman power did the "I am a Roman Citizen" command more confidence or respect, than "I am a member of the Philanthropic Society" does for me.[54]

On at least two occasions King was invited to address joint meetings of the two literary societies, but was unable to attend on either occasion. The press of legislative business caused him to decline an invitation for the spring of 1838, and his duties as President of the Senate kept him away from the 1852 meeting of the societies.[55]

As a student of the University from 1801 to 1804, King had a commendable record. His course of study included a continuation of subjects he had taken in the Preparatory School and new subjects. In the fall of 1801 he was working on Greek grammar and English composition. As a member of the freshman class, King "rather excel/led/" in scholarship.[56]

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54 William R. King to Philanthropic Society, April 4, 1838, Philanthropic Society Papers, in Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina. (Hereinafter cited as Philanthropic Society Papers.)

55 William R. King to Philanthropic Society, October 10, 1837, September 29, 1851, Philanthropic Society Papers.

56 Reports of the Examination Committee, September 15, 1801, University Student Records.

On July 1, 1802, the Board of Trustees of the University gave its approval to the class after giving it an examination in Virgil, the Greek Testament and Webster's Grammar.[57] As a sophomore, King studied Horace, the Orations of Cicero, arithmetic, and geography. He seems to have done especially well in geography.[58] In the annual examination of the sophomore class, no student was singled out for honors, but the entire class was approved.[59] The following year, the junior class studied algebra, geometry, plane trigonometry, English grammar, and Ewing's Synopsis. In these subjects, King was considered by the Board of Trustees one of the four best students among eight that were examined in the summer examination of 1804.[60]

No records exist to show that King returned to the University for his senior year nor does his name appear among the graduates of 1805. A certificate, dated June 10, 1805, and signed by President Caldwell, seems to offer rather conclusive evidence that he attended the school only through his junior year and that he left of his own accord. In it Caldwell wrote that "William King passed through the studies of the

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57 Raleigh Register, July 13, 1802.

58 Reports of the Examination Committee, November 9, 1802. University Student Records.

59 Raleigh Minerva, July 18, 1803.

60 Ibid., July 30, 1804.

University in a regular order according to the plan of education, till the expiration of his junior year on the eleventh day of july 1804" and that while he was at the University, he was "generally deemed by the faculty to be regular in his conduct."[61] One wonders why he left school without taking a degree. In all likelihood, he was simply in a hurry to begin the study of law and felt that he was well-enough prepared to begin. Although his college record had not been brilliant, he had at least ranked as one of the superior students of his class alongside John Eaton, a future senator and cabinet member.

King began the study of law under William Duffy shortly after the end of the school year in 1804 and continued his study into the year 1805. A resident of Fayetteville, North Carolina, and one of the leading lawyers in the state, Duffy had a reputation that made him worthy to instruct such a pupil as King.[62] He had begun the practice of law at New Bern but had moved to Hillsboro in 1792 and to Fayetteville in 1802. Among his students had been Archibald D. Murphey, King's old tutor at Chapel Hill, through whose influence King may have contacted Duffy. Murphey gave Duffy credit for

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61 Copy of certificate signed by Joseph Caldwell, June 10, 1805, in Faculty Record 1799-1814.

62 Strange, Eulogy, p. 7.

teaching him "in the science of law, in the art of managing courses at the bar, and in the still more difficult art of reading books to advantage."[63] King probably derived benefits from his contact with Duffy similar to those mentioned by Murphey. In any case, King completed his law study in the fall of 1805 and obtained a license to practice law in the superior courts of North Carolina.[64] Although he was only nineteen, he set up a law office at Clinton and began the practice of his profession. The degree of success which attended his efforts is unrecorded, but it is certain that he developed friendships which endured to his death.[65] Before many years had passed, he had entered another field that occupied most of his life, the field of politics.

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63 William Henry Hoyt, ed., The Papers of Archibald D. Murphey. (Raleigh: Uzzell, 1914), I, 1, 6; II, 351-352.

64 Albert James Pickett, History of Alabama and Incidentally Georgia and Mississippi from the Earliest Period. Owen's Edition (Birmingham: Webb Book Co., 1900), p. 642.

65 Obituary Addresses on the Occasion of the Death of the Hon. William R. King, of Alabama, Vice-President of the United States Delivered in the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States and in the Supreme Court of the United States, Eighth and Ninth December, 1853 (Washington: Armstrong, 1854), p. 52.