Matthew L. Davis

Memoirs of Aaron Burr

Publio

Memoirs of Aaron Burr, Complete

Matthew L. Davis

Publio Kiadó

2013

CHAPTER I.

The grandfather of Colonel Aaron Burr, the subject of these memoirs, was a German by birth, and of noble parentage. Shortly after his arrival in North America, he settled in Fairfield, Connecticut, where he purchased a large tract of land, and reared a numerous family. A part of this landed estate remained in the possession of his lineal descendants until long after the revolutionary war. During Colonel Burr's travels in Germany, in the year 1809, various communications were made to him, orally and in writing, by different branches of the Burr family, some of whom were then filling high and distinguished scientific and literary stations.

His father, the Rev. Aaron Burr, was born in Fairfield, on the 4th day of January, 1715, and was educated at Yale College. In a manuscript journal which he kept, and which has been preserved, he says, "In September, 1736, with many fears and doubts about my qualifications (being under clouds with respect to my spiritual state), I offered myself to trials, and was approved as a candidate for the ministry. My first sermon was preached at Greenfield, and immediately after I came into the Jerseys. I can hardly give any account why I came here. After I had preached for some time at Hanover, I had a call by the people of Newark; but there was scarce any probability that I should suit their circumstances, being young in standing and trials. I accepted of their invitation, with a reserve, that I did not come with any views of settling. My labours were universally acceptable among them, and they manifested such great regard and love for me, that I consented to accept of the charge of their souls.

"A.D. 1738-39, January the 25th, I was set apart to the work of the ministry, by fasting, prayer, and imposition of hands. God grant that I may ever keep fresh upon my mind the solemn charge that was then given me; and never indulge trifling thoughts of what then appeared to me of such awful importance. The ministers who joined in this solemn transaction were Mr. Dickinson, who gave the charge, and Mr. Pierson, who preached. Mr. Dickinson, who presided at this work, has been of great service to me by his advice and instruction, both before and since my ordination.

"In November, 1739, I made a visit to my friends in New-England, and again in March, 1740. In the following August gust I was in a declining state of health, and by the advice of my physicians visited Rhode Island. From thence I proceeded to Boston. On the 19th of September I heard Mr. Whitefield preach in Dr. Colman's church. I am more and more pleased with the man. On the 21st, heard him preach in the Commons to about ten thousand people. On Monday, visited him, and had some conversation to my great satisfaction. On the 23d, went to hear him preach in Mr. Webb's church, but the house was crowded before Mr. Whitefield came. The people, especially the women, were put into a fright, under a mistaken notion that the galleries were falling, which caused them to hurry out in such a violent manner, that many were seriously injured and five killed. The same day, Mr. Whitefield preached at Mr. Gee's church. In the evening he preached at Dr. Sewall's church. On Saturday I went to hear him in the Commons; there were about eight thousand hearers. He expounded the parable of the prodigal son in a very moving manner. Many melted into tears. On the 4th of October, being on my return to New-Jersey, I arrived at Fairfield, where I remained two days with my friends."

In the year 1748, Governor Belcher, of New-Jersey, by and with the approbation of his Majesty's Council, granted a charter to the college of New-Jersey, subsequently known as Nassau Hall. This college was opened in Newark, the students living in private families. The Rev. Aaron Burr was appointed the first president. In the year 1754 or 1755, the trustees commenced erecting the college in Princeton; and in 1757 it was so far completed that the students, about seventy in number, were removed to the building.

In, June, 1752, President Burr, being then in his 38th year, was married to Esther Edwards, the daughter of Jonathan Edwards, a distinguished metaphysician and divine. He was the second president of Princeton College, being called to that station on the decease of his son-in-law, President Burr. Thus, the father of Colonel Aaron Burr, and the grandfather on his mother's side, were, in succession, at the head of that seminary of learning.

President Burr was alike celebrated for his eloquence and piety; but, withal, he possessed no inconsiderable degree of eccentricity. His courtship and marriage partook of it. Miss Edwards, after the preliminaries were arranged, was brought to New-Jersey to be married. The occurrence created much conversation, and gave rise to some newspaper commentary. The following is extracted from the New-York Gazette of the 20th of July, 1752.

"A letter to a gentleman from his friend, dated

"July 7th, 1752

"Sir,

"As you are a known and peculiar votary to the state of celibacy, I judged it would do you no disservice to acquaint you of a late occurrence, which sufficiently evidences, that after the most mature consideration, some of our wisest and best men do prefer the endearment of the nuptial bed.

"About eight days since, the Rev. Aaron Burr, president of the College of New-Jersey, was married to a daughter of the renowned Mr. Jonathan Edwards, late of Northampton. She is a young lady of about twenty-one. Her person may be called agreeable; her natural genius seems to be sprightly, and, no doubt, is greatly improved by a very virtuous education. In short, she appears to be one every way qualified to make a man of sense and piety happy in the conjugal relation. As to the courtship or marriage, I shall not descend to particulars; but only observe, in general, that, for some centuries, I suppose there has not been one more in the patriarchal mode.

"I hope, sir, that this instance, both as to matter and form, will have its genuine influence upon you, and as well bear a part in convincing you that wedlock is incomparably preferable to the roving uneasiness of the single state, as to direct you, when you are choosing your mate, that, instead of acting the modern gallant, wisely to imitate this example, and endeavour to restore courtship and marriage to their original simplicity and design.

"PHILOGAMUS."

At different times Colonel Burr received friendly anonymous and other communications, recommending to him the practice of a religious life. It is a remarkable fact, that in almost every such instance he is referred to the letters of his mother. From a communication to him, written by a lady, the following is extracted. If it should meet her eye, as it probably will, it is hoped that she will pardon this freedom. Her name is suppressed, and will not be known, unless through her own instrumentality.

"My Dear Sir,

"I trust the purity of the motives by which I am actuated will find an apology in your bosom for the liberty I assume in addressing you on a subject which involves your eternal interest.

"Here, in the wilds of ——-, I have found an extract of a letter, written by your inestimable mother nearly sixty years ago, of which you are the principal subject; and a transcript of which I shall enclose for your perusal. Perhaps you will think me a weak, presumptuous being; but permit me, dear sir, to assure you, this does not proceed from a whim of the moment. It is not a mere transient gust of enthusiasm. The subject has long been heavy on my mind. I have more than once resolved to converse with you freely; to tell you how my own feelings were affected relative to your situation; but my faltering tongue refused to obey the impulse of my soul, and I have withdrawn abruptly, to conceal that which I had not confidence to communicate. But meeting (I believe providentially) with this precious relic has determined me. I will write, and transmit it to you. I am too well convinced of the liberality of your sentiments; but I still believe you retain an inherent respect for the religion of your forefathers.

"I have often reflected on your trials, and the fortitude with which you have sustained them, with astonishment. Yours has been no common lot. But you seem to have forgotten the right use of adversity. Afflictions from Heaven 'are angels sent on embassies of love.' We must improve, and not abuse them, to obtain the blessing. They are commissioned to stem the tide of impetuous passion; to check inordinate ambition; to show us the insignificance of earthly greatness; to wean our affections from transitory things, and elevate them to those realities which are ever blooming at the right hand of God. When affliction is thus sanctified, 'the heart at once it humbles and exalts.'

"Was it philosophy that supported you in your trials? There is an hour approaching when philosophy will fail, and all human science will desert you. What then will be your substitute? Tell me, Colonel Burr, or rather answer it to your own heart, when the pale messenger appears, how will you meet him—'undamped by doubts, undarkened by despair?'

"The enclosed is calculated to excite mingled sensations both of a melancholy and pleasing nature. The hand that penned it is now among 'the just made perfect.' Your mother had given you up by faith. Have you ever ratified the vows she made in your behalf? When she bade you a long farewell, she commended you to the protection of Him who had promised to be a father to the fatherless." The great Augustine, in his early years, was an infidel in his principles, and a libertine in his conduct, which his pious mother deplored with bitter weeping. But she was told by her friends that 'the child of so many prayers, and tears could not be lost;' and it was verified to her happy experience, for he afterward became one of the grand luminaries of the church of Christ. This remark has often been applied to you; and I trust you will yet have the happiness to find that 'the prayers of the righteous' have 'availed much.'

"One favour I would ask: when you have done with this, destroy it, that it may never meet the eye of any third person. In the presence of that God, before whom the inmost recesses of the heart are open, I have written. I consulted him, and him only,

respecting the propriety of addressing it to you; and the answer he gave was, freedom in writing, with a feeling of the deepest interest impressed upon my heart.

"Z. Y"

"To Col. A. BURR."

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM MRS. BURR TO HER FATHER, PRESIDENT EDWARDS.

"Princeton, Nov. 2, 1757.

"Honoured Sir,

"Your most affectionate, comforting letter, by my brother, was exceedingly refreshing to me, although I was somewhat damped that I should not see you until spring. But it is my comfort in this disappointment, as well as under all my afflictions, that God knows what is best for me and for his own glory. Perhaps I depended too much on the company and conversation of such a near, and dear, and affectionate father and guide. I cannot doubt but all is for the best, and I am satisfied that God should order the affair of your removal as shall be for his glory, whatever comes of me. Since I wrote my mother's letter, God has carried me through new trials, and given me new supports. My little son [1] has been sick with the slow fever ever since my brother left us, and has been brought to the brink of the grave. But I hope, in mercy, God is bringing him up again. I was enabled to resign the child (after a severe struggle with nature) with the greatest freedom. God showed me that the child was not my own, but his, and that he had a right to recall what he had lent whenever he thought fit; and I had no reason to complain, or say God dealt hard with me. This silenced me. But how good is God! He hath not only kept me from complaining, but comforted me, by enabling me to offer up the child by faith. I think, if ever I acted faith, I saw the fullness there was in Christ for little infants, and his willingness to accept of such as were offered to him. 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God,' were comforting words. God also showed me, in such a lively manner, the fullness that was in himself of all spiritual blessings, that I said, Although all streams were cut off, yet, so long as my God lives, I have enough. He enabled me to say—'Although thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee.' In this time of trial I was led to enter into a renewed and explicit covenant with God, in a more solemn manner than ever before, and with the greatest freedom and delight. After much self-examination and prayer, I did give up myself and children to God with my whole heart. Never, until now, had I a sense of the privilege we are allowed in covenanting with God! This act of my soul left my mind in a quiet and steady trust in God. A few days after this, one evening, in talking of the glorious state my dear departed must be in, my soul was carried out in such longing desires after this glorious state, that I was forced to retire from the family to conceal my joy. When alone, I was so transported, and my soul carried out in such eager desires after perfection, and the full enjoyment of God, and to serve him uninterruptedly, that I think my nature would not have borne much more. I think I had that night a foretaste of Heaven. This frame continued, in some good degree, the whole night. I slept but little; and when I did, my dreams were all of heavenly and divine things. Frequently since I have felt the same in kind, though not in degree. Thus a kind and gracious God has been with me in six troubles, and in seven. But, oh! Sir, what cause of deep humiliation and abasement of soul have I, on account of remaining corruption which I see working, especially pride! Oh, how many shapes does pride cloak itself in! Satan is also busy shooting his darts; but, blessed be God, those temptations of his that used to overthrow me, as yet, have not touched me. Oh to be delivered from the power of Satan as well as sin! I cannot help hoping the time is near. God is certainly fitting me for himself; and when I think it will be soon that I shall be called hence, the thought is transporting.

"Your dutiful and affectionate daughter,

"Esther Burr."

Such were the parents of Colonel Aaron Burr. Of the natural guardianship and protection of both he was deprived before he had reached the third year of his age. He was born on the 6th of February, 1756, in Newark, State of New-Jersey. His father died in August, 1757, and his mother the year following, leaving two children, Aaron, and his sister Sarah. She subsequently became the wife of Judge Tappan Reeve, of Connecticut. On the decease of his father, Colonel Burr inherited a handsome estate.

In the year 1760 Aaron was sent to Philadelphia, under the care of an aunt and Dr. Shippen. For the family of the doctor he entertained a high degree of respect. He frequently spoke of them in the kindest terms, and recurred to this early period of his history with emotions of gratitude for their care and protection.

Boswell, in his Life of Johnson, remarks that, "In following so very eminent a man from his cradle to his grave, every minute particular which can throw light on the progress of his mind, is interesting." Johnson himself, in the Life of Sydenham, says "There is no instance of any man, whose history has been minutely related, that did not, in every part of life, discover the same proportion of intellectual vigour."

These high authorities are now quoted in justification of some of the details which will be given in the progress of this work, and which, in themselves, may appear trifling and unimportant. When Aaron was about four years old, he had some misunderstanding with his preceptor, in consequence of which he ran away, and was not found until the third or fourth day after his departure from home;

thus indicating, at a tender age, that fearlessness of mind, and determination to rely upon himself, which were characteristics stamped upon every subsequent act of his life.

Footnotes:

1. Col. Burr, at that time about twenty months old.

CHAPTER II.

In 1761 he was removed to Stockbridge, in Massachusetts, and placed in the family of Timothy Edwards, his mother's eldest brother. In 1762 his maternal uncle, Timothy, removed to Elizabethtown, New-Jersey. Aaron and his sister Sarah remained in the family until the former entered college, and the latter became the wife of Judge Reeve. A private tutor was employed for them in the house of Mr. Edwards. For a considerable portion of the time, Judge Reeve was engaged in that capacity.

When about ten years old, Aaron evinced a desire to make a voyage to sea; and, with this object in view, ran away from his uncle Edwards, and came to the city of New-York. He entered on board an outward-bound vessel as cabin-boy. He was, however, pursued by his guardian, and his place of retreat discovered. Young Burr, one day, while busily employed, perceived his uncle coming down the wharf, and immediately ran up the shrouds, and clambered to the topgallant-mast head. Here he remained, and peremptorily refused to come down, or be taken down, until all the preliminaries of a treaty of peace were agreed upon. To the doctrine of unconditional submission he never gave his assent.

In 1769 Burr entered Princeton College; where, owing to his extreme youth and smallness of stature, he was forced to commence with the sophomore, although, upon examination, he was found qualified to enter the junior class. This was a source of extreme mortification to him, and especially as he had been prepared, and was every way qualified, to enter the preceding year. From his infancy Burr was of a slender frame, and appeared to be delicately formed; but exhibited great muscular strength, and was able to endure excessive fatigue of body and mind.

Previous to entering college, young Burr had formed extraordinary notions of the acquirements of collegiates; and felt great apprehension lest he should be found inferior to his classmates. He was therefore, at first, indefatigable as well as systematic in his studies. He soon discovered that he could not pursue them after dinner with the same advantage that he could before. He suspected that this was owing to his eating too abundantly. He made the experiment, and the result convinced him that his apprehensions were well founded. He immediately adopted a system of regimen, to which, in some degree, he adhered through life. So abstemious was he during the greater part of the first year after his entrance into college, that it operated powerfully upon him, and he was supposed to be in bad health. He was in the habit of studying sixteen or eighteen hours of the twenty-four, until the period of examination arrived, when he discovered that the progress he had made was so much beyond his associates, that he formed an opinion as contemptuous as it had been exalted of his college friends. The effect of this was ultimately very injurious upon his habits.

During the last year that he remained in college, he passed a life of idleness, negligence, and, in some measure, of dissipation. He applied himself but little to his studies, and was in the constant pursuit of pleasure. He graduated, however, when only sixteen years of age, with a reputation for talents, and receiving the highest academic honours the faculty could bestow.

In the year 1771-72, there was in the college what was termed, in religious phraseology, "an awakening." A large portion of the collegians became converted. It was only a short time before Burr graduated, and in the midst of his hilarity and amusements. He was frequently appealed to by his associates, and threatened with the most terrific consequences if there was not an inward as well as an outward change. From his infancy Burr's education had been strictly moral; and strong impressions had been made upon his mind as to the existence of a Deity, and the accountability of man. Yet this awakening did not seem to him right in all its parts. He determined, therefore, to have a free and full conversation with Dr. Witherspoon, the then president of the college, on the subject. The result of that conversation in some measure tranquillized young Burr. The Rev. Dr. assured him that it was not true and rational religion, but fanaticism, that was operating upon his friends.

Among the papers preserved by Colonel Burr are the originals of a number of essays or orations, written and read by him, in conformity with the regulations of the college, while yet a student. They are without dates; but, as he graduated in 1772, they must have been composed when he was of an age between thirteen and sixteen. A few of them are here inserted, as exhibiting his manner of writing, and the maturity and tone of his mind. The opinions which he formed, while yet in college, as to public speaking and the selection of language, he appears never to have changed. The style which he then recommended seems ever after to have been his model.

* * * * *

Read in College, by Aaron Burr.—On Style.

"I have often observed, that it is very common for those who are ambitious of excelling in composition, to study swelling words, pompous epithets, and laboured periods. This is often practised, especially by young writers. It is, however, generally condemned as a fault, and sometimes too by those who practise it themselves. An elegant simplicity of language is what every one should strive to

obtain. Besides the arguments which are usually offered on this head, there is one very important one, which is commonly not much attended to.

"It is the business of every writer to acquire command of language, in order that he may be able to write with ease and readiness, and, upon any occasion, to form extempore discourses. Unless he can do this, he will never shine as a speaker, nor will he ever make a figure in private conversation. But to do this, it is necessary to study simplicity of style. There never was a ready speaker, whose language was not, generally, plain and simple; for it is absolutely impossible to carry the laboured ornaments of language, the round period, or the studied epithet, into extempore discourses; and, were it possible, it would be ridiculous. We have learned, indeed, partly from reading poetry, and partly from reading vicious compositions, to endure, and too often to admire, such stiff and laboured discourses in writing; but if it were even possible for a man to speak in the same pompous diction in which Browne has written his vulgar errors, he would certainly be very disagreeable. This reason, among others, may be assigned for it; that however such false ornaments may please for a time, yet, when a long and steady attention is required, we are tired and disgusted with every thing which increases our labour, and diverts the attention from the subject before us. A laboured style is a labour even to the hearer. A simple style, like simple food, preserves the appetite. But a profusion of ornament, like a profusion of sweets, palls the appetite and becomes disgusting. A man might as soon think of filling his stomach with sweetmeats, as going through a long debate filled with pompous epithets and sounding language. If we have any doubt of its being ridiculous, let us only suppose a man arguing an abstruse subject in metaphysics, in the blank verse of Milton, or the exact rhymes of Pope. The absurdity is the same, only different in degree. I would not be understood to cut off an extempore speaker from sublime expressions; because I do not suppose these to be inconsistent with simplicity of style. I really doubt if there be any such thing as sublimity of style, strictly speaking. But, indeed, rather believe that the sublime depends upon the thoughts, which are the more sublime by being clearly and simply expressed, This, however, is not material at present. It is certainly impossible for a speaker to carry laboured periods into his extempore discourses: it is no less certain, that in general, a simple style is to be preferred, and that he would be ridiculous and disagreeable if he could do it; and as extempore speaking is a great object, which we ought to have in view in the formation of our style, this may be used as one argument why we should study a simple style."

The Passions.

"Amid the variety of literary pieces which have in all ages been ushered into the world, few, if any, afford greater satisfaction than those that treat of man. To persons of a speculative nature and elegant taste, whose bosoms glow with benevolence, such disquisitions are peculiarly delightful. The reason, indeed, is obvious; for what more necessary to be learned and accurately understood? what more near and interesting? and, therefore, what more proper to engage the attention? Well may I say, with our ethic poet,

"'The proper study of mankind is man.'

"If we take a view of the body only, which may be called the shell or external crust, we shall perceive it to be formed with amazing nicety and art. How are we lost in wonder when we behold all its component parts; when we behold them, although various and minute, and blended together almost beyond conception, discharging their peculiar functions without the least confusion. All harmoniously conspiring to one grand end.

"But when we take a survey of the more sublime parts of the human frame; when we behold man's internal make and structure; his mental faculties; his social propensions, and those active powers which set all in motion—the passions,—what an illustrious display of consummate wisdom is presented to our admiring view! What brighter mark—what stronger evidence need we of a God? The scanty limits of a few minutes, to which I am confined, would not permit me, were I equal to the task, to enter into a particular examination of all man's internal powers. I shall therefore throw out a few thoughts on the passions only.

"Man's mental powers, being in their nature sluggish and inactive, cannot put themselves in motion. The grand design then of the passions is, to rouse them to action. These lively and vigorous principles make us eager in the pursuit of those things that are approved by the judgment; keep the mind intent upon proper objects, and at once awake to action all the powers of the soul. The passions give vivacity to all our operations, and render the enjoyments of life pleasing and agreeable. Without them, the scenes of the world would affect us no more than the shadowy pictures of a morning dream.

"Who can view the works of nature, and the productions of art, without the most sublime and rapturous emotions? Who can view the miseries of others, without being dissolved into compassion? Who can read human nature, as represented in the histories of the world, without burning to chastise the perpetrators of tyranny, or glowing to imitate the assertors of freedom? But, were we of a sudden stripped of our passions, we should survey the works of nature and the productions of art with indifference and neglect. We should be unaffected with the calamities of others, deaf to the calls of pity, and dead to all the feelings of humanity. Without generosity, benevolence, or charity, man would be a groveling, despicable creature. Without the passions, man would hardly rank above the beasts.

"It is a trite truth, that the passions have too much influence over our sentiments and opinions. It is the remark of a late author, that the actions and sentiments of men do as naturally follow the lead of the passions, as the effect does the cause. Hence they are, by some, aptly enough, termed the principles of action. Vicious desires will produce vicious practices; and men, by permitting themselves to think of indulging irregular passions, corrupt the understanding, which is the source of all virtue and morality. The passions, then, if properly regulated, are the gentle gales which keep life from stagnating; but, if let loose, the tempests which tear every thing before them. Too fatal observation will evince the truth of this.

"Do we not frequently behold men of the most sprightly genius, by giving the reins to their passions, lost to society, and reduced to the lowest ebb of misery and despair? Do we not frequently behold persons of the most penetrating discernment and happy turn for polite literature, by mingling with the sons of sensuality and riot, blasted in the bloom of life? Such was the fate of the late celebrated Duke of Wharton, Wilmot, earl of Rochester, and Villers, duke of Buckingham, three noblemen, as eminently distinguished by their wit, taste, and knowledge, as for their extravagance, revelry, and lawless passions. In such cases, the most charming elocution, the finest fancy, the brightest blaze of genius, and the noblest burst of thoughts, call for louder vengeance, and damn them to lasting infamy and shame.

"A greater curse cannot, indeed, befall community, than for princes and men in eminent departments to be under the influence of ill-directed passions. Lo Alexander and Cesar, the fabled heroes of antiquity, to what lengths did passion hurry them? Ambition, with look sublime, bade them on, bade them grasp at universal dominion, and wade to empire through seas of blood! But why need I confine myself to these? Do not provinces, plundered and laid waste with fire and sword; do not nations, massacred and slaughtered by the bloody hand of war; do not all these dreadful and astonishing revolutions, recorded in the pages of history, show the fatal effects of lawless passions?

"If the happiness of others could not, yet surely our own happiness should induce us to keep our passions within the bounds of reason; for the passions, when unduly elevated, destroy the health, impair the mental faculties, sour the disposition, embitter life, and make us equally disagreeable to others and uneasy to ourselves. Is it not, then, of moment, that our passions be duly balanced, their sallies confined within proper limits, and in no case suffered to transgress the bounds of reason? Will any one deny the importance of regulating the passions, when he considers how powerful they are, and that his own happiness, and perhaps the happiness of thousands, depends upon it? The regulation of the passions is a matter of moment, and therefore we should be careful to fix them upon right objects, to confine them within proper bounds, and never permit them to exceed the limits assigned by nature. It is the part of reason to sooth the passions, and to keep the soul in a pleasing serenity and calm: if reason rules, all is quiet, composed, and benign: if reason rules, all the passions, like a musical concert, are in unison. In short, our passions, when moderate, are accompanied with a sense of fitness and rectitude; but, when excessive, inflame the mind, and hurry us on to action without due distinction of objects.

"Among uncivilized nations, the passions do, in general, exceed all rational bounds. Need we a proof of this? Let us cast our eyes on the different savage tribes in the world, and we shall be immediately convinced that the passions rule without control. Happy it is, that in polished society, the passions, by early discipline, are so moderated as to be made subservient to the most important services. In this respect, seminaries of learning are of the utmost advantage, and attended with the most happy effects. Moreover, the passions are attended with correspondent commotions in animal nature, and, therefore, the real temper will, of course, be discovered by the countenance, the gesture, and the voice. Here I might run into a pleasing enumeration of many instances of this; but, fearing that I have already trespassed upon your patience, shall desist. Permit me, however unusual, to close with a wish. May none of those unruly passions ever captivate any of my audience."

An Attempt to search the Origin of Idolatry.

"It is altogether impossible to fix exactly the period when idolatry took its rise. Adam, coming immediately from the hands of God, had experienced too many manifestations of his power and goodness to be unacquainted with him, and must have preserved the purest idea of him in his own family, which, most probably, continued in the branch of Seth till the deluge. The posterity of Cain, on the contrary (the pure idea of God gradually wearing away, and by loose men being connected with sense), fell into idolatry, and every other crime, which brought on the deluge; a period about which Moses has said but little, and from what he has said we can draw no just conclusion with respect to the idolatry of those times.

"A certain author, being persuaded that idolatry did not take its rise till after the deluge, gives a very singular account of its origin. According to him, atheism had spread itself over the world. This disposition of mind, says he, is the capital crime. Atheists are much more odious to the Divinity than idolaters. Besides, this principle is much more capable of leading men into that excessive corruption the world fell into before the deluge. The knowledge of a God, of whatever nature he is conceived, and the worship of a Deity, are apt, of themselves, to be a restraint upon men. So that idolatry was of some use to bear down the corruption of the world. It is therefore probable, that the horrid vices men were fallen into before the deluge, proceeded only from their not knowing nor serving a God. I am even of opinion (continues he) that the idolatry and polytheism after the deluge derived their origin from the atheism and impiety that reigned before it. Such is the temper of men, when they have been severely punished for any crime, they run into the opposite extreme. I conjecture (concludes the same author) this was the case with men after the deluge. As they reckoned that this terrible judgment, which carried such indications of Divine wrath, was sent for the punishment of atheism, they ran into the opposite extreme. They adored whatever seemed to deserve their worship.

"It is true, indeed, that idolatry is capable of furnishing a curb against irregularity of manners; but this author has conjectured, without foundation, that atheism reigned universally before the deluge. He ought, at least, to have excepted the posterity of Seth.

"However idolatry might have reigned before the deluge, it is certain that the knowledge and worship of the true God were again united in the family of Noah; and as long as the children and grandchildren of that patriarch made but one family, in all probability, the worship of the true God was little altered in its purity. Noah being at the head of the people, and Shem, Ham, and Japheth witnesses of God's vengeance on their contemporaries, is it probable that they, living in the midst of their families, would suffer them to depart from the truth? We read of nothing that can incline us to this belief. Various have been the conjectures concerning the authors of idolatry. Some believe it was Serug, the grandfather of Terah, who first introduced idolatry after the deluge. Others maintain it was Nimrod, and that he instituted the worship of fire among his subjects, which continues even to this day in some places

in Persia. Others assert that Ham was the author of it, and then his son Canaan; and it is most probable that the unfortunate sons of an accursed father were the first who, following the propensity of their own heart, sought out sensible objects to which they might offer a superstitious worship. As the two sons of Ham, Canaan and Mizraim, settled, the one in Phoenicia, and the other in Egypt, it is probable that these were the first nurseries of idolatry; and the sun, being looked upon as the purest image of the Creator, was the first object of it. It is not probable that men would choose beings like themselves for the first objects of their adoration. Nothing could be more capable of seducing than the beauty and usefulness of the sun, dispensing light and fertility all around. But, to conclude, we must not imagine that all idolatry sprang from the same country. It came by slow degrees, and those who made the first advances towards this impiety, did by no means carry it to that extravagant height to which it afterwards arrived."

CHAPTER III.

In college, young Burr formed intimacies which ripened into lasting friendship. The attachment between him and Colonel Matthias Ogden, of New-Jersey, was both ardent and mutual; and, it is believed, continued during the life of the latter. Colonel Knapp says, "Samuel Spring, D. D., late of Newburyport, was in college with Colonel Burr, and part of their college life was his chum. The doctor was a student of mature age, and had a provisitorial power over Burr in his daily duties. He has often spoken of his young friend with more than ordinary feeling. He, in fact, prophesied his future genius, from the early proofs he gave of intellectual power in the course of his college life."

At Princeton, Burr enjoyed the counsel and advice of the late William Paterson, subsequently one of the judges of the Supreme Court of the United States. To be thus early in life honoured with the respect and esteem of such a man as Judge Paterson, was highly flattering. Their correspondence commenced in 1772, and continued until the decease of the judge. Extracts from his letters to Colonel Burr will be given occasionally. He says, in a letter dated

"Princeton, January 17th, 1772.

"Dear Burr,

"I am just ready to take horse, and therefore cannot have the pleasure of waiting on you in person. Be pleased to accept of the enclosed notes on *dancing*. If you pitch upon it as the subject of your next discourse, they may, perhaps, furnish you with a few hints, and enable you to compose with the greater facility and despatch. To do you any little services in my power will afford me great satisfaction, and I hope you will take the liberty (it is nothing more, my dear Burr, than the freedom of a friend) to call upon me whenever you think I can.

"When I shall be here again is uncertain—perhaps not before vacation. Forbear with me while I say *that you cannot speak too slow*. Your good judgment generally leads you to lay the emphasis on the most forcible word in the sentence; so far you act very right. But the misfortune is, that you lay too great stress upon the emphatical word. Every word should be distinctly pronounced; one should not be so highly sounded as to drown another. To see you shine as a speaker would give great pleasure to your friends in general, and to me in particular. I say nothing of your own honour. The desire of making others happy will, to a generous mind, be the strongest incentive. I am much mistaken if such a desire has not great influence over you. You are certainly capable of making a good speaker. Exert yourself. I am in haste.

"Dear Burr, adieu.

"WM. PATERSON"

Another letter, dated

"Princeton, October 26th, 1772.

"Dear Burr,

"Our mutual friend, Stewart, with whom I spent part of the evening, informed me you were still in Elizabethtown. You are much fonder of that place than I am, otherwise you would hardly be prevailed upon to make so long a stay. But, perhaps, the reason that I fear it, makes you like it. There is certainly something amorous in its very air. Nor is this a case any way extraordinary or beyond belief. I have read (and it was in point, too) that a flock of birds, being on the wing, and bending their flight towards a certain town in Connecticut, dropped down dead just as they were over it. The people were at first fairly at a loss to account for this phenomenon in any natural way. However, it was at length agreed on all hands that it was owing to the noisomeness of the atmosphere, the smallpox at that time being very rife in the place. I should never have given credit to the report, had it not come from so good a quarter as that of New-England. For my part, I always drive through Elizabethtown as quickly as possible, lest the soft infection should steal upon me, or I should take it in with the very air I breathe.

"Yesterday I went to hear Mr. Halsey, and there, too, I saw his young and blooming wife. The old gentleman seems very fond of his rib, and, in good sooth, leers very wistfully at her as she trips along by his side. Some allowance, however, must be made; he is in the vale of life; love is a new thing to him, and the honey-moon is not yet over. 'They are amorous, and fond, and billing, Like Philip and Mary on a shilling.' I have promised to pay him a visit; Stewart, or some of the tutors, I believe, will accompany me, and I hope you will too.

"Since commencement I have been at a Dutch wedding, and expect to be at one or two more very shortly. There was drinking, and singing, and fiddling, and dancing. I was pleased extremely. Every one seemed to be in good-humour with himself, and this naturally led them all to be in good-humour with one another.

"When the itch of scribbling seizes me, I hardly know when to stop. The fit, indeed, seldom comes upon me; but when it does, though I sit down with a design to be short, yet my letter insensibly slides into length, and swells perhaps into an enormous size. I know not how it happens, but on such occasions I have a knack of throwing myself out on paper that I cannot readily get the better of. It is a sign, however, that I more than barely esteem the person I write to, as I have constantly experienced that my hand but illy performs its office unless my heart concurs. I confess I cannot conceive how I got into so scribbling a vein at present. It is now past eleven o'clock at night, and besides being on horse the greater part of the day, I intend to start early to-morrow for Philadelphia. There I shall see the races, and the play, and, what is of more value far than all, there, too, I shall see Miss ——-, you know who.

"The enclosed letter to Spring I commit to your care. I should have sent it before, as I wrote it immediately after you left this place, but I really thought you were in New-England long ere now. I know not his address; perhaps he is at Newport, perhaps he is not. If, on inquiry, you find that the letter is wrongly directed, pray give it an envelope, and superscribe it anew. If he is still at Newport, it would, perhaps, more readily reach him from New-York than from any part of New-England that you maybe at. I have said that if I am mistaken in directing the within letter, you should cover it and give it the proper address. Do, dear Burr, get somebody who can write at least a passable hand to back it, for you give your letters such a sharp, slender, and lady-like cast, that almost every one, on seeing them, would conclude there was a correspondence kept up between my honest friend Spring and some of the female tribe, which might, perhaps, affect him extremely in point of reputation, as many people suppose that nothing of this kind can be carried on between unmarried persons of the two sexes without being tinged with love; and the rather so, since the notion of Platonic love is, at the present day, pretty generally, and I believe justly too, exploded. Platonic love is arrant nonsense, and rarely, if ever, takes place until the parties have at least passed their grand climacteric. Besides, the New-England people, I am told, are odd, inquisitive kind of beings, and, when pricked on by foolish curiosity, may perhaps open the letter, which I do not choose should be common to every eye.

"You gave me some hopes that you would see my good friend Reeve before you returned. If you do, make him my respectful compliments, and tell him that I fully designed to write him, but that business prevented, that laziness hindered, that—in short, tell him any thing, so it does not impeach my affection, or lead him to think I have entirely forgotten him. I am,

"Dear Burr yours sincerely,

"WM. PATERSON."

In a letter to Dr. Spring, dated October 5, 1772, speaking of the commencement, Judge Paterson says:—"The young gentlemen went through their exercises in a manner passable enough. The speakers were all tolerable—none of them very bad nor very good. Our young friend Burr made a graceful appearance; he was excelled by none, except perhaps by Bradford. Linn, too, was pretty generally approved; but, for my part, I could not forbear thinking that he took rant, and rage, and madness for true spirit—a very common mistake."

For some months after Burr graduated (1772), he remained in college, reviewing his past studies, and devoting his time to general literature. Possessed of an ample income, having access to the college library, and continuing, from time to time, as his correspondence shows, to supply himself with scientific and literary productions, his mind was greatly improved during this period. It is true he continued to indulge in amusements and pleasures; but, sleeping little, seldom more than six hours, he found ample time for study.

In the college there was a literary club, consisting of the graduates and professors, and still known as *The Clio-Sophic Society*. Dr. Samuel S. Smith, subsequently president of the college, was then (1773) a professor. With him young Burr was no favourite, and their dislike was mutual. The attendance of the professors was expected to be regular. The members of the society in rotation presided over its deliberations. On a particular occasion it was the duty of young Burr to take the chair. At the hour of meeting he took his seat as president. Dr. Smith had not then arrived; but, shortly after the business commenced, he entered. Burr, leaning on one arm of the chair (for, although now sixteen years of age, he was too small to reach both arms at the same time), began lecturing Professor Smith for his non-attendance at an earlier hour, remarking that a different example to younger members was expected from him, and expressing a hope that it might not again be necessary to recur to the subject. Having finished his lecture, to the great amusement of the society, he requested the professor to resume his seat. The incident, as may well be imagined, long served as a college joke.

FROM TIMOTHY DWIGHT.

New-Haven, March, 1772.

DEAR AARON,

By a poor candle, with poor eyes and a poorer brain, I sit down to introduce a long wished-for correspondence. You see how solicitous I am to preserve old connexions; or, rather, to begin new ones. Relationship, by the fashionable notions of those large towns, which usurp a right to lead and govern our opinions, is dwindled to a formal nothing—a mere shell of ceremony. Our ancestors, whose honesty and simplicity (though different from the wise refinements of modern politeness) were perhaps as deserving of imitation as the insincere coldness of the present generation, *cousin'd* it to the tenth degree of kindred. Though this was extending the matter to a pitch of extravagance, yet it was certainly founded upon a natural, rational principle. Who are so naturally our friends as those who are born such? I defy a New-Yorker, though callous'd over with city politeness, to be otherwise than pleased with a view of ancient hospitality to relations, when exercised by a person of good-breeding and a genteel education.

Now, say you, what has this to do with the introduction of a correspondence? You shall know directly, sir. The *Edwardses* have been always remarkable for this fondness for their relations. If you have the least inclination to prove yourself a true descendant of that respectable stock, you cannot fail of answering me very soon. This (were I disposed) I could demonstrate by algebra and syllogisms in a twinkling; but hope you will believe me without either. I never asked for many connexions in this way; and was never neglected but once, and that by a Jersey gentleman, to whom I wrote and received no answer. I hope the disease is not epidemical, and that you have not determined against any communication with the rest of the world. It was a mortification, I confess; for I am too proud to be denied a request, though unreasonable, as many of mine are—therefore, I insist upon an answer, at least, and as many more as you can find in your heart to give me; promising, in return, as many by tale, though without a large profit. I shall not warrant their quality.

Your sincere friend,

TIMOTHY DWIGHT, JUNR.

FROM SAMUEL SPRING.

Newport, May 15th, 1772.

DEAR BURR,

It is a little strange to me that I have not heard any thing of you since your examination. I don't know but you are dissatisfied, since you are so backward to write; however, I will, if possible, keep such thoughts out of my mind till I hear from you in particular. If you are let down a peg lower, you may tell me of it. If you are permitted to live in college, you may tell me of it; and if you are turned out, you may tell me of it. If you passed examination, and have a syllogism to speak at commencement, *if you are able to make it*, I suppose you may tell me of that likewise; or, if you are first in the class, you may tell me, if you will only do it softly; indeed, you may tell me any thing, for I profess to be your friend. Therefore, since you can trust me so far, I expect you will now write, and let me know a little how matters are at present in college. In particular, let me know the state of the society (Cliosophic); and if I owe any thing to it, do you pay it, *and charge it to your humble servant*.

I hope you will write the first opportunity, as I trust you have got some very good news to tell me concerning the college in general, and yourself in particular. I have nothing particular to write. It is very pleasant to me where I am at present.

The study of divinity is agreeable;—far more so than any other study whatever would be to me. I hope to see the time when you will feel it to be your duty to go into the same study with a desire for the ministry. Remember, that was the prayer of your dear father and mother, and is the prayer of your friends to this time—that you should step forth into his place, and make it manifest that you are a friend to Heaven, and that you have a taste for its glory. But this, you are sensible, can never be the case if you remain in a state of nature. Therefore, improve the present and future moments to the best of purposes, as knowing the time will soon be upon you when you will wish that in living you had lived right, and acted rationally and like an immortal.

Your friend,

SAMUEL SPRING.

In 1806-7 great excitement was produced, in consequence of Colonel Burr writing in cipher to General Wilkinson, In this particular he seems to have had peculiar notions. However innocent his correspondence, he was, apparently, desirous at all times of

casting around it a veil of mystery. The same trait was conspicuous in his political movements and intercourse. This has been one of the weak points in Colonel Burr's character. He was considered a mysterious man; and what was not understood by the vulgar, was pronounced selfish or ambitious intrigue. Even his best friends were, often dissatisfied with him on this account. Acting upon this principle of mystery at every period of his life, he has corresponded with one or more individuals in cipher. While yet a student in college, the letters between his sister and himself are frequently written in cipher. So, also, much of his correspondence with his most intimate friend, Matthias Ogden, and with others in 1774 and 1775, is in cipher. Many of these letters, thus written, are now in existence. To those, therefore, acquainted with the character and peculiarities of Colonel Burr, the fact of his writing a letter in cipher would not be considered as any thing extraordinary; because it was a habit which he had adopted and pursued for more than thirty years preceding the period when this excitement was thus produced.

Before Burr left Princeton, and while lie was indulging himself in pleasures and amusements, he accidentally visited a billiard-table. He engaged in play, and, although he had never before seen the game, he was successful, and won about half a Joe. On returning home with his gains, he reflected on the incident with great mortification, and determined never again to play; which determination he adhered to through life. Colonel Burr not only abstained from playing at billiards, but with equal pertinacity he refused to play at any game for the purpose of acquiring money.

Although he had been somewhat tranquillized by his conversation with Dr. Witherspoon on the subject of the awakening in college in 1772, yet he was not entirely at ease. In consequence of which he came to a resolution not to enter upon the concerns of life until this point was more satisfactorily settled in his own mind. He concluded, therefore, to visit and consult the Rev. Joseph Bellamy, a venerable and devoted friend of his late father, and to whom he was known by reputation.

Joseph Bellamy, D.D., was an eminent preacher and theological writer of Connecticut, and intimate friend of Colonel Burr's relative, the famous Jonathan Edwards, with whose particular opinion he fully agreed. He was celebrated in his days, before the establishment of theological seminaries, as an instructor of young men preparing for the ministry. The late Governor Wolcott used to speak of him with the highest respect for his talent and moderation. He died in 1790.

In the autumn of 1773, Burr visited him at Bethlehem, in Connecticut, and was received by his aged friend in a most kind and affectionate manner. His advice, and the use of his library, were promptly tendered. Burr commenced a course of reading on religious topics, and was thus occupied from sixteen to eighteen hours a day. His habits were those of great abstinence, and a recluse. His conversations with the reverend divine were encouraged and indulged in with freedom, and his inquiries answered. Here he remained until the spring of 1774, when, to use his own language, he "came to the conclusion that the road to Heaven was open to all alike." He, however, from that time forward, avoided most studiously all disputation on the subject of religion.

An impression has been created that Côlonel Burr was placed by his guardian under Dr. Bellamy, for the purpose of studying divinity. This is an error. His visit to the Rev. Dr. was not the result of a conference or communication with any person whatever; but the volition of his own mind, and for the purpose already stated. In fact, after Burr entered college, his studies and his future pursuits in life appear to have been left entirely under his own control. Whether this arose from indolence on the part of his guardian, or from pertinacity in young Burr, is uncertain; perhaps a little of both, united with the great confidence which his uncle reposed in his judgment and talents.

In the spring of 1774, while he yet resided at Dr. Bellamy's, he contemplated studying law; but was undecided whether he should read with Pierpont Edwards, or with his brother-in-law, Tappan Reeve, and upon this subject he wrote his guardian, who replies, in a letter dated

"Stockbridge, February 11th, 1774.

"Whether you study law with Mr. Reeve or your uncle Pierpont is a matter of indifference with me. I would have you act your pleasure therein. I shall write to your uncle upon it, but yet treat it as a matter of doubt. Your board I shall settle with Dr. Bellamy myself. I will send you cash to pay for your horse very soon. You may expect it in the forepart of March. If I had known of this want of yours sooner, I would have paid it before this.

"Your affectionate uncle,

"TIMOTHY EDWARDS"

CHAPTER IV.

In May, 1774, he left the Rev. Mr. Bellamy's, and went to the house of his brother-in-law, Tappan Reeve, where his time was occupied in reading, principally history; but especially those portions of it which related to wars, and battles, and sieges, which tended to inflame his natural military ardour. The absorbing topics of taxation and the rights of the people were agitating the then British colonies from one extreme to the other. These subjects, therefore, could not pass unnoticed by a youth of the inquiring mind and ardent feelings of Burr. Constitutional law, and the relative rights of the crown and the colonists, were examined with all the acumen which he possessed, and he became a Whig from reflection and conviction, as well as from feeling.

At this period, Burr's most intimate and confidential correspondent was Matthias Ogden, of New-Jersey, subsequently Colonel Ogden, a gallant and distinguished revolutionary officer. He writes to Burr, dated

"Elizabethtown, August 9th, 1774.

"DEAR AARON,

"I received yours by Mr. Beach, dated Sunday. I am not a little pleased that you have the doctor (Bellamy) so completely under your thumb. Last Saturday I went a crabbing. Being in want of a thole-pin, I substituted a large jackknife in its stead, with the blade open and sticking up. It answered the purpose of rowing very well; but it seems that was not the only purpose it had to answer; for, after we had been some time on the flats, running on the mud, as the devil would have it, in getting into the boat I threw my leg directly across the edge of the knife, which left a decent mark of nearly four inches long, and more than one inch deep. It was then up anchor and away. Our first port was Dayton's ferry, where Dr. Bennet happened to be, but without his apparatus for sewing, to the no small disadvantage of me, who was to undergo the operation. Mrs. Dayton, however, furnished him with a large darning-needle, which, as soon as I felt going through my skin, I thought was more like a gimlet boring into me; but, with the help of a glass of wine, I grinned and bore it, until he took a few stitches in the wound. So much for crabbing.

"I was at New-York about a fortnight since, on my way to Jamaica, Long Island. The object of this journey you understand. I stayed at Mr. Willett's three days, and then went to Colonel Morris's, and spent two days there very agreeably. Nothing occurred worth relating, unless it be some transactions of the greatest fool I ever knew.

"Mr. Elliot, collector of New-York, Mr. and Mrs. Delancey and daughter, dined there on Sunday. Witherspoon [1] was led in with a large bag tied to his hair, that reached down to the waistband of his breeches, and a brass locket hanging from his neck below his stomach. He was turned round and round by each of the company: was asked where he got that very neat bag, and the valuable locket? He readily answered, they were a present from Lady Kitty, who was violently in love with him, and he expected to marry her in a short time. He is so credulous that any child might impose on him. I told him that I came from Lord Stirling's, and that he might write by me to Lady Kitty. Accordingly, he wrote a long letter and gave me, which I opened there, and, by desire of Colonel Morris, answered it, when I got to New-York, in Lady Kitty's name, informing him that he must tell Mr. Morris to provide himself with another tutor, as she intended marrying him without fail the first of September, which I suppose he will as sincerely believe as he does his existence.

"Yours affectionately,

"MATT. OGDEN."

TO MATTHIAS OGDEN.

Litchfield, August 17th, 1774.

DEAR MATT.,

Before I proceed any further, let me tell you that, a few days ago, a mob of several hundred persons gathered at Barrington, and tore down the house of a man who was suspected of being unfriendly to the liberties of the people; broke up the court, then sitting at that place, &c. As many of the rioters belonged to this colony, and the Superior Court was then sitting at this place, the sheriff was immediately despatched to apprehend the ringleaders. He returned yesterday with eight prisoners, who were taken *without resistance*. But this minute there is entering the town on horseback, with great regularity, about fifty men, armed each with a white club; and I observe others continually dropping in. I shall here leave a blank, to give you (perhaps in heroics) a few sketches of my unexampled valour, should they proceed to hostilities; and, should they not, I can then tell you what I would have done.

The abovementioned *sneaks all gave bonds for their appearance*, to stand a trial at the next court for committing a riot.

Yours affectionately,

A. BURR.

On the 11th of September, 1774, he again writes Ogden:—

I wrote you last Thursday, and enclosed one of the songs you desired, which was all I could then obtain. Miss ——-, the fountain of melody, furnished me with it. I knew that she, and no one else, had the notes of the enclosed song. I told her I should be glad to copy

them for a most accomplished young gentleman in the Jerseys. She engaged to bring them the first time she came in town, for she lives about two miles from here. I this day received it, precisely as you have it. You may depend upon its being the work of her own hands. If this don't deserve an acrostic, I don't know—sense, beauty, modesty, and music. Matter plenty.

Pray tell me whether your prayers are heard, and a good old saint, though a little in your way, is yet in Heaven. But remember, Matt., you can never be without plague, and when one gets out of the way, a worse, very often, supplies its place; so, I tell you again, be content, and hope for better times.

I am determined never to have any dealings with your friend Cupid until I know certainly how matters will turn out with you: for should some lucky devil step in between my friend and——, which kind Heaven grant may never be; in such a case, I say, I would choose to be untied, and then, you know, the wide world is before us.

Yours sincerely,

A. BURR.

Burr again writes him, dated

Litchfield, February 2d, 1775.

I sent you a packet by N. Hazard, and from that time to this I have not had the most distant prospect of conveying a letter to you. However, I have written a number of scrawls, the substance of which you shall now have.

The times with me are pretty much as usual; not so full of action as I could wish; and I find this propensity to action is very apt to lead me into scrapes. T. B. has been here since I wrote you last; he came very unexpectedly. You will conclude we had some confab about Miss ——-. We had but little private chat, and the whole of that little was about her. He would now and then insinuate slyly what a clever circumstance it would be to have such a wife, with her fortune.

T. BURR, [2] by his kindness to me, has certainly laid me under obligations, which it would be the height of ingratitude in me ever to forget; but I cannot conceive it my duty to be in the least influenced by these in the present case. Were I to conform to his inclination, it could give him pleasure or pain only as the consequence was good or bad to me. The sequel might be such as would inevitably cause him the most bitter anguish; and, in all probability, would be such if I should consult his fancy instead of my judgment. And who can be a judge of these consequences but myself? But even supposing things could be so situated that, by gratifying him, I should certainly be the means of his enjoying some permanent satisfaction, and should subject myself to a bare probability of misery as permanent, would it not stagger the most generous soul to think of sacrificing a whole life's comfort to the caprice of a friend? But this is a case that can never happen, unless that friend has some mean and selfish motive, such as I know T. Burr has not. I can never believe that too great deference to the judgment of another, in these matters, can arise from any greatness of soul. It appears to me the genuine offspring of meanness. I suppose you are impatient for my reply to these importunities. I found my tongue and fancy too cramped to say much. However, I rallied my thoughts and set forth, as well as I was able, the inconveniences and uncertainty attending such an affair. I am determined to be very blunt the next time the matter is urged.

I have now and then an affair of petty gallantry, which might entertain you if you were acquainted with the different characters I have to deal with; but, without that, they would be very insipid.

I have lately engaged in a correspondence of a peculiar nature. I write once, and sometimes twice a week, to a lady who knows not that she ever received a line from me. The letters, on both sides, are mostly sentimental. Those of the lady are doubtless written with more sincerity, and less reserve, than if she knew I had any concern with them. Mr. ——- received a letter from Miss ——-. He is very little versed in letter-writing, and engaged, or rather permitted, me to answer it, not thinking thereby to embark in a regular correspondence, but supposing the matter would thus end. I have had many scruples of conscience about this affair, though I really entered into it not with any sinister view, but purely to oblige——. I should be glad to know your opinion of it. You will readily observe the advantage I have over ——-. He is of an unsuspicious make, and this gives me an opportunity (if I had any inclination) to insert things which might draw from her secrets she would choose I should be ignorant of. But I would suffer crucifixion rather than be guilty of such an unparalleled meanness. On the contrary, I have carefully avoided saying any thing which might have the least tendency to make her write what she would be unwilling I should see.

Adieu.

A. BURR.

On the 12th of March, 1775, Burr writes Ogden:—

I have received your and Aaron's [3] letters. I was a little disappointed that you did not send an acrostic; but I still entertain some secret hope that the muse (who, you say, has taken her flight) will shortly return, and, by a new and stricter intimacy, more than repay the pains of this momentary absence. Your happiness, Matt., is really almost the only present thing I can contemplate with any satisfaction; though I, like other fools, view futurity with partiality enough to make it very desirable; but I must first throw reason aside, and leave fancy uncontrolled. In some of these happy freaks I have endeavoured to take as agreeable a sleigh-ride as you had to Goshen; but I find it impracticable, unless you will make one of the party; for my imagination, when most romantic, is not lively or delusive enough to paint an object that can, in my eyes, atone for your absence. From this you will conclude that the news you heard of me at Princeton is groundless. It is so far from being true, that scarce two persons can fix on the same lady to tease me with. However, I would not have you think that this diversity of opinion arises from the volatility of my constitution, or that I am in love with every new or pretty face I see. But, I hope, you know me too well to need a caution of this nature. I am very glad to hear of ——-'s downfall. But, with all that fellow's low-lived actions, I don't more sincerely despise him than I do certain other narrow-hearted scoundrels you have among you. Mean as he is, he appears to me to have (or rather to have had) more of something at bottom that bordered on honour, than some who will pass through life respected by many. I say this, not so much to raise him above the common standard of d—ls, as to sink them below it. My idea of a d—l is composed more of malice than of meanness.

Since I commenced this letter I have passed through a scene entirely new. Now, as novelty is the chief and almost only ingredient of happiness here below, you'll fancy I have had some lucky turn. I think it quite the reverse, I assure you. I have serious thoughts of leaving the matter here, that you may be on the rack of curiosity for a month or so. Would not this be truly satanic? What would be your conjectures in such a case? The first, I *guess*, that I was sadly in love, and had met with some mortifying rebuff.

What would you say if I should tell you that ——- had absolutely professed love for me? Now I can see you with both hands up—eyes and mouth wide open; but don't be over scrupulous. Trust me, I tell you the whole truth. I cannot at present give you any further particulars about the matter, than that I felt foolish enough, and gave as cautious a turn to it as I could, for which I am destined to suffer her future hostility.

Last week I received a letter from T. Edwards, which I fear may prove fatal to the dear project of the 15th of April. He intends to be hereabout the middle of that month. Supposing he should come here the 13th of April, what could I do? Run off and leave him? Observe the uncertainty of all sublunary things. I, who a few months ago was as uncontrolled in my motions as the lawless meteors, am now (sad reverse!) at the beck of a person forty miles off. But all this lamentation, if well considered, is entirely groundless, for (*between you and me*) I intend to see you at Elizabethtown this spring. But even supposing I should fail in this—where is this sad reverse of fortune?—this lamentable change? Is it not a very easy matter to fix on another time, and write you word by T. Edwards?

I have struck up a correspondence with J. Bellamy (son to the famous divine of that name). He has very lately settled in the practice of the law at Norwich, a place about seventy miles S. E. of this. He is one of the cleverest fellows I have to deal with. Sensible, a person of real humour, and is an excellent judge of mankind, though he has not had opportunity of seeing much of the world. Adieu.

A. BURR.

FROM JONATHAN BELLAMY

Norwich, March 14th, 1775.

To do justice to circumstances, which you know are of the greatest importance in order to form a true estimate of what a person either says or does, it is indispensably necessary for me to tell you that it not only rains very generously, but that it is as dark as it was before light was created. It would be ridiculous to suppose that you need information that nothing but the irresistible desire of writing could possibly keep me at home this evening.

I had received your February favour only just time to laugh at it once, when the melancholy news that Betsy Devotion, of Windham, was very dangerously sick, banished every joyous thought from my heart. This Betsy you may remember to have heard mentioned near the name of Natty Huntington, who died last December; and a very angel she was too, I assure you. You see I speak of her in the *past* sense, for she has left us; and her friends are sure she is not less an angel *now* than she was ten days ago. Very certain I am, that if a natural sweetness of disposition can scale Heaven's walls, she went over like a bird. But I believe we must leave *her* and all the rest of our departed friends to be sentenced by a higher Board.

"Transports last not in the human heart;
But all with transports soon agree to part."

If nature, in spite of us, did not take care of herself, we could not but be perfectly wretched. Philosophy is the emptiest word in the dictionary. And you may observe, wherever you find them, that those persons who profess to place all their reliance upon it, under every affecting circumstance of life, do but make use of the term as a mask for an iron heart. "But" (as the devil said on another occasion) "put forth thine hand, and touch his bone, and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." They have as little fortitude as anybody when sufferings pinch home upon them.

Thus have I relieved a heart that perhaps felt a little too full; and if it is at the expense of my *head*, I have nevertheless the consolation that it will be received only as the overflowings of my present feelings.

"When and where shall I see you again?" somebody once asked me. The Lord only knows. Perhaps at the election at Hartford. If we can meet *there*—there will be time for notice. But, happen as it may, be assured that I am your most sincere friend,

JONATHAN BELLAMY.

"Stick my compliments in for him," says Hannah Phelps, a jolly girl of fourteen.

FROM MATTHIAS OGDEN.

Elizabethtown, March 18th, 1775.

Since we last saw each other, the 15th of April has been my mark, but the receipt of yours of the 12th has blotted it from my memory, for which nothing could atone but the expectation of seeing you here nearly as soon.

I read with pleasure your love intrigues; your anonymous correspondence with Miss ——-, &.c., and, with as much seriousness, the part relative to ——, Thaddeus Burr's overtures, &c.

Steadily, Aaron. Money is alluring, and there is a pleasure in gratifying a friend; but let not a fortune buy your peace, nor sell your happiness. Neither be too much biased by a friend, or any one's advice, in a matter of so great consequence to yourself. Perhaps she is worthy your love, and, if I could think she was, I would not say a single thing to discourage you. Be cautious, Aaron; weigh the matter well. Should your generous heart be sold for naught, it would greatly hurt the peace of mine. Let not her sense, her education, her modesty, her graceful actions, or her wit, betray you. Has she a soul framed for love? For friendship? But why need I advise a person of better judgment than myself? It is not advice, my friend; it is only caution. You have a difficult part to act. If you reject, she curses: if you pity, she takes it for encouragement. Matters with me go on smoothly.

I am now making up a party to go to the Falls, to be ready against you come. My best regards to Mr. and Mrs. Reeve. I remain happy in the enjoyment of ——-'s love, and am,

Your unfeigned friend,

MATT. OGDEN.

After the decease of President Burr, Lyman Hall was intrusted by the executors with the collection of sundry debts due to the estate. A removal, and his various avocations, prevented his performing that duty with the necessary promptitude. In consequence, the heirs were exposed to loss. A friend of the family, the Rev. James Caldwell, of New-Jersey, wrote him on the subject, and his answer is so honourable, that it is deemed only an act of justice to an upright man to record it here. It is another instance of the integrity in private life of those patriots that planned and accomplished the American Revolution. It will be seen that Mr. Hall was a member of the Congress of 1775 from the State of Georgia.

Philadelphia, 17th May, 1775.

REV. SIR,

Since I saw you, and afterwards Mr. Ogden, in Georgia, I have written to my attorneys and correspondents in Connecticut, to give me all the information they could obtain respecting the affairs and concerns of the late President Burr, left in my hands; which I had delivered over, before I left that colony in 1759, into the hands of Thaddeus Burr, of Fairfield; but no satisfactory answer can as yet be obtained. One debt, indeed, has been discovered, of about forty pounds New-York currency; but the bond on which it is due is as yet concealed.

On the whole, I find that it is not in my power to redeliver those securities for moneys which I was once in possession of; nor have I received the moneys due on those which were good; but am determined that I will make just satisfaction to the claimant heirs (orphans) of the late President Burr. It is, I know, my indispensable duty, and I have for that purpose brought a quantity of rice to this city, the avails of which, when sold, shall be appropriated to that use. I should be glad that you, or Mr. Ogden, the executor, could be here to transact the business, and, on a settlement, give me a power of attorney, properly authenticated, to recover any part of those moneys I can find due when I shall arrive in Connecticut, to which I propose going as soon as the Congress rises. As I am in Congress, I cannot see you directly; but, if liberty can be obtained, shall wait on you or Mr. Ogden, or both, in my way to New-York, in a few days; but I think Mr. Ogden, the executor, if it will suit, had better come here and settle it. I mention him because I suppose he is the proper person to discharge me, and give me a power of attorney.

I am, reverend sir,

With esteem, yours,

LYMAN HALL.

The Rev. JAS. CALDWELL, *Elizabethtown*

Footnotes:

1. A relative of President Witherspoon.

2. Uncle to Colonel Aaron Burr.

3. Subsequently Governor Ogden, of New Jersey, and brother of Matthias

CHAPTER V.

In his retirement at the house of his brother-in-law (Judge Reeve), Burr was aroused by the shedding of his countrymen's blood at Lexington on the 19th of April, 1775. Immediately after that battle, he wrote a letter to his friend Ogden, requesting him to come on to Litchfield and arrange for joining the standard of their country. Ogden wrote for answer that he could not make the necessary arrangements. The battle of Bunker's Hill (on the 16th of June, 1775) followed in rapid succession; whereupon he started for Elizabethtown, New-Jersey, to meet Ogden, and aid him in preparations for the journey to Cambridge, where the American army was encamped.

Burr had been reading those portions of history which detailed the achievements of the greatest military men and tacticians of the age in which they lived. His idea of discipline and subordination was formed accordingly. With the most enthusiastic feelings, and under the influence of such opinions, Burr, in company with his friend Matthias Ogden, left Elizabethtown, in July, 1775, for Cambridge, with the intention of tendering their services in defence of American liberty. He had now entered his twentieth year, but, in appearance, was a mere stripling.

It has been seen that, whatever were Burr's pursuits or studies, his habits were those of intense application. He had already imbibed a military ardour equalled by few—surpassed by none. Panting for glory on the battle-field, information and improvement as a soldier were now the objects that absorbed all his thoughts. On his joining the army, however, he was sadly disappointed in his expectations. The whole was a scene of idleness, confusion, and dissipation. From the want of camp-police, the health of the men was impaired, and many sickened and died. Of the officers, some were ignorant of their duty, while others were fearful of enforcing a rigid discipline, lest it should give offence to those who were unaccustomed to restraint. Deep mortification and disappointment preyed upon the mind of young Burr.

The following original letters are found among the papers of Colonel Burr, and, as casting some light upon the history of those times, are deemed of sufficient interest (and not inapplicable) to be inserted in this work. The patriotic reply of General Montgomery is above all praise.

ROGER SHERMAN TO GENERAL DAVID WOOSTER.

Philadelphia, June 23d, 1775.

DEAR SIR,

The Congress, having determined it necessary to keep up an army for the defence of America at the charge of the United Colonies, have appointed the following general officers:—George Washington, Esq., commander-in-chief. Major-generals Ward, Lee, Schuyler, and Putnam. Brigadier-generals Pomeroy, Montgomery, yourself, Heath, Spencer, Thomas, Sullivan (of New-Hampshire), and one Green, of Rhode-Island.

I am sensible that, according to your former rank, you were entitled to the place of a major-general; and as one was to be appointed in Connecticut, I heartily recommended you to the Congress. I informed them of the arrangement made by our assembly, which I thought would be satisfactory to have them continue in the same order. But, as General Putnam's fame was spread abroad, and especially his successful enterprise at Noddle's Island, the account of which had just arrived, it gave him a preference in the

opinion of the delegates in general, so that his appointment was unanimous among the colonies; but, from your known abilities and firm attachment to the American cause, we were very desirous of your continuance in the army, and hope you will accept of the appointment made by the Congress.

I think the pay of a brigadier is about one hundred and twenty-five dollars per month. I suppose a commission is sent to you by General Washington. We received intelligence yesterday of an engagement at Charlestown, but have not had the particulars. All the Connecticut troops are now taken into the continental army. I hope proper care will be taken to secure the colony against any sudden invasion, which must be at their own expense.

I have nothing further that I am at liberty to acquaint you with of the doings of the Congress but what have been made public. I would not have any thing published in the papers that I write, lest something may inadvertently escape me which ought not to be published. I should be glad if you would write to me every convenient opportunity, and inform me of such occurrences, and other matters, as you may think proper and useful for me to be acquainted with. The general officers were elected in the Congress, not by nomination, but by ballot.

I am, with great esteem,

Your humble servant,

ROGER SHERMAN.

DAVID WOOSTER, Esq.

JAMES DUANE, OF NEW-YORK, TO GENERAL MONTGOMERY.

Philadelphia, July 21st, 1775.

DEAR SIR,

I am directed by the Congress to acquaint you of an arrangement in the Massachusetts department, and the reason which led to it, lest, by misunderstanding it, you might think yourself neglected.

When brigadiers-general were to be appointed, it was agreed that the first in nomination should be one of the Massachusetts generals. The gentlemen from that province recommended General Pomeroy, who was accordingly fixed upon; but, before his commission arrived at the camp, he had retired from the army. Under these circumstances the Congress thought it just to fill up the commission designed for Mr. Pomeroy with the name of General Thomas as first brigadier. You, consequently, hold the rank to which you were elected.

I sincerely hope this may not give you any displeasure, as I am confident no disrespect was intended.

Be pleased to accept my sincere wishes for your honour and happiness, and particularly in the discharge of the important trust which you have undertaken.

I am, with regard,

Dear sir, your most obedient servant,

JAS. DUANE.

General MONTGOMERY.

GENERAL MONTGOMERY'S ANSWER.

DEAR SIR,

I have been honoured with your letter of the 21st inst. My acknowledgments are due for the attention shown me by the Congress.

I submit, with great cheerfullness, to any regulation they, in their prudence, shall judge expedient. Laying aside the punctilio of the *soldier*, I shall endeavour to discharge my duty to society, considering myself only as the *citizen*, reduced to the melancholy necessity of taking up arms for the public safety.

I am, &c., R. M.

Answer.

The preceding is endorsed, in the handwriting of General Montgomery, on the back of Mr. Duane's letter.

The laxity of the discipline which pervaded the camp at Cambridge, the inexperience of the officers, and the contests and petty squabbles about rank, all tended to excite great jealousy and discontent in the army. As yet, Burr was attached to no particular corps. He mingled indiscriminately with conflicting factions, until, disgusted with the scene which he daily witnessed, he was violently attacked with a nervous fever, by which he was confined to his bed.

One day he heard Ogden and some young men of the army conversing, in an apartment adjoining that in which he was lying, on the subject of an expedition. He called Ogden to his bedside, and inquired what was the nature of the expedition of which they were speaking. Ogden informed him that Colonel Arnold, with a detachment of ten or twelve hundred men, was about to proceed through the wilderness for the purpose of attacking Quebec. Burr instantly raised himself up in the bed, and declared that he would accompany them; and, so pertinacious was he on this point, that he immediately, although much enfeebled, commenced dressing himself. Ogden expostulated, and spoke of his debilitated state—referred to the hardships and privations that he must necessarily endure on such a march, &c. But all was unavailing. Young Burr was determined, and was immoveable. He forthwith selected four or five hale, hearty fellows, to whom he proposed that they should form a mess, and unite their destiny on the expedition through the wilderness. To this arrangement they cheerfully acceded. His friend Ogden, and others of his acquaintance, were conveyed in carriages from Cambridge to Newburyport, distant about sixty miles; but Burr, with his new associates in arms, on the 14th of September, 1775, shouldered their muskets, took their knapsacks upon their backs, and marched to the place of embarcation.

FROM J. BELLAMY.

Litchfield, August 17th, 1775.

MY DEAREST SOLDIER,

I was infinitely surprised to hear from you in the army. I can hardly tell you what sensations I did not feel at the time. Shall not attempt to describe them, though they deprived me of a night's sleep. But that was not spent altogether unhappily. My busybody, *Fancy*, led me a most romantic chase; in which, you may be sure, I visited your tent; beheld you (unnoticed) musing on your present circumstances, apparently agitated by every emotion which would naturally fill the heart of one who has come to the resolution to risk his life for his country's freedom. You will excuse my mentioning, that from a deep, absent meditation, partly expressed by half-pronounced soliloquies, I beheld you start up, clap your hand upon your sword, and look so fiercely, that it almost frightened me. The scene, on your discovering me, immediately changed to something more tender; but I won't waste paper.

If you should happen to find Dr. James Cogswell, who is in Colonel Spencer's regiment, please to give my best love to him, and tell him he is a lazy scoundrel.

It rains, my boy, excessively. Does it not drop through your tent?
Write often to

JONA. BELLAMY.

To A. BURR.

As soon as the guardian and relatives of young Burr heard of his determination to accompany Arnold in his expedition against Quebec, they not only remonstrated, but they induced others, who were friendly to him, to adopt a similar course. While he remained at Cambridge, he received numerous letters on the subject. The two following are selected:—

FROM DR. JAMES COGSWELL.

Camp in Roxbury, 9th September, 1775.

I am extremely sorry to hear that you are determined on the new expedition to Quebec. I am sorry on my own account, as I promised myself much satisfaction and pleasure in your company: but I am not altogether selfish; I am right-justified sorry on yours. The expedition in which you are engaged is a very arduous one; and those who are engaged in it must unavoidably undergo great hardships. Your constitution (if I am not much mistaken) is very delicate, and not formed for the fatigues of the camp. The expedition, I am sensible, is a glorious one, and nothing but a persuasion of my inability to endure the hardships of it would have deterred me from engaging in it. If this excuse was sufficient for me, I am persuaded it is for you, and ought to influence you to abandon all thoughts of undertaking it. I have no friend so dear to me (and I love my friends) but that I am willing to sacrifice for the good of the grand—the important cause, in which we are engaged; but, to think of a friend's sacrificing himself, without any valuable end being answered by it, is painful beyond expression. *You will die; I know you will die in the undertaking; it is impossible for you to endure the fatigue.* I am so exercised about your going, that I should come and see you if I had not got the Scriptural excuse,—a wife, and cannot come.

My dear friend, you must not go: I cannot bear the thoughts of it.
'Tis little less melancholy than following you to your grave.

Your affectionate friend,

JAMES COGSWELL.

FROM PETER COLT.

Watertown, 11th September, 1775.

I cannot retire to rest till I have written you a few lines, to excuse my casting so many discouragements in the way of your journey to Quebec. At first I did not think it so hazardous; but, upon inquiring of those who had more knowledge of the country, thought it too fatiguing an undertaking for one of your years; and I find it altogether against the sentiments of your friends. I think you might be fairly excused, without the risk of being reported as timid, as the hopes of your family depend in a great degree upon you. I should have rejoiced to see you relinquish this expedition; but, as you are determined to pursue it, must beg you not to let any thing we have said to you depress your spirits, or damp your resolution, as it may otherwise have a fatal effect. We have held up the dark side of the picture, in order to deter you from going. You must now think only on the bright side, and make the least of every disagreeable circumstance attending your march. Let no difficulty discourage you. The enterprise is glorious, and, if it succeeds, will redound to the honour of those who have planned and executed it.

May God give you health and strength equal to the fatigue of the march, and preserve you safe from every danger you may encounter. Make Quebec a safe retreat to the forces. I hope to have a particular description of Canada from you when you return.

Don't turn Catholic for the sake of the girls. Again I beg you to forget what I have said to discourage you. It proceeded from love to you, and not a desire of rendering you ridiculous. Adieu, my dear friend.

Yours,

PETER COLT.

A day or two after Burr's arrival at Newburyport, he was called upon by a messenger from his guardian, Timothy Edwards, with instructions to bring the young fugitive back. A letter from his uncle (T. Edwards) was delivered to him at the same time. Having read the letter, and heard the messenger's communication, he coolly addressed him, and asked, "How do you expect to take me back, if I should refuse to go? If you were to make any forcible attempt upon me, I would have you hung up in ten minutes." After a short pause the messenger presented a second letter from his guardian, and with it a small remittance in gold. It was couched in the most affectionate and tender language, importuning him to return; and depicting, in the darkest colours, the sufferings he must endure if he survived the attempt to reach Quebec. It affected young Burr very sensibly, insomuch that he shed tears. But his destiny was fixed. He wrote, however, a respectful letter to his uncle, explanatory of his reasons for accompanying the army, and expressive of his gratitude for the kindness he had experienced.

On or about the 20th of September, 1775, the troops under the command of Arnold embarked at Newburyport. This detachment was to penetrate Canada about ninety or one hundred miles below Montreal, proceeding by the Kennebec river, and thence through the wilderness between the St. Lawrence and the settled parts of Maine. In this route, precipitous mountains, deep and almost

impenetrable swamps and morasses, were to be passed. Arnold, in a letter to General Washington, dated *Fort Weston*, September 25th, 1775, says: "I design Chaudiere Pond as a general rendezvous, and from thence proceed in a body. I believe, from the best information I can procure, we shall be able to perform the journey in twenty days; the distance from this being about one hundred and eighty miles."

During the march through the wilderness, no regard whatever was paid to order or discipline. Every man was left to take care of himself, and make the best of his way through the woods. The sufferings of this detachment from wet, and cold, and hunger, were excessive. From the latter, however, Burr suffered less than any of his companions. His abstemious habits in regard to eating seemed peculiarly calculated for such an expedition. Both Burr and Ogden had been accustomed, in small boats, to aquatic excursions round Staten Island and in its vicinity. They were skilful helmsmen, and in this particular, in passing the rapids, were frequently useful. Notwithstanding this qualification, however, Burr, with some soldiers in a boat, was carried over a fall of nearly twenty feet. One man was drowned, and much of the baggage lost. The weather was cold, and it was with great difficulty that he reached the shore.

"Arnold, who, at the head of the two first divisions, still prosecuted his march, was thirty-two days traversing a hideous wilderness, without seeing a house or any thing human. The troops were under the necessity of hauling their bateaux up rapid streams; of taking them upon their shoulders, with all their provisions, across carrying-places; and of traversing, and frequently repassing, for the purpose of bringing their baggage, deep morasses, thick woods, and high mountains. These impediments, notwithstanding the zealous and wonderfully persevering exertions of his men, so protracted his march, that, though he had expected certainly to enter Canada about the middle of October, he did not reach the first settlements on the Chaudiere, which empties itself into the St. Lawrence near Quebec, until the third of November.

"On the high grounds which separate the waters of the Kennebec from those of the St. Lawrence, the scanty remnant of provisions was divided among the companies, each of which was directed, without attempting to preserve any connexion with another, to march with the utmost possible celerity into the inhabited country. While those who gained the front were yet thirty miles from the first poor and scattered habitations which composed that frontier of Canada, their last morsel of food was consumed. But, preceded by Arnold, who went forward for the purpose of procuring for them something which might satisfy the first demands of nature, the troops still persevered in their labours, with a vigour unimpaired by the hardships they had encountered, until they once more found themselves in regions frequented by human beings." [1]

On the arrival of Arnold's detachment at Chaudiere Pond, Burr was despatched with a verbal communication to General Montgomery. He disguised himself as a young Catholic priest. In this order of men he was willing to repose confidence. He knew that the French Catholics were not satisfied with their situation under the provincial government; but especially the priesthood. Feeling no apprehension for his own safety from treachery, he proceeded to a learned and reverend father of the church, to whom he communicated frankly who he was, and what was his object. Burr was master of the Latin language, and had an imperfect knowledge of the French. The priest was an educated man, so that a conversation was held with but little difficulty. He endeavoured to dissuade Burr from the enterprise. Spoke of it as impossible to accomplish. He represented the distance as great, and through an enemy's country. The boyish appearance of Burr induced the reverend divine to consider him a mere child. Discovering, however, the settled purpose of the young adventurer, the priest procured him a confidential guide and a cabriolet (for the ground was now covered with snow), and, thus prepared, he started on his journey. Without interruption, he was conducted in perfect safety from one religious family to another, until he arrived at Three Rivers. Here the guide became alarmed in consequence of some rumours as to the arrival of Arnold at the Chaudiere, and that he had despatched messengers to Montgomery to announce to him the fact. Under strong apprehensions, the guide refused to proceed any farther, and recommended to Burr to remain a few days until these rumours subsided. To this he was compelled to accede; and, for greater security, he was secreted three days in a convent at that place. At the expiration of this period he again set off, and reached Montgomery without further detention or accident.

On his arrival at headquarters, he explained to the general the character of the re-enforcement he was about to receive; the probable number of effective men, and the time at which their arrival might be anticipated. General Montgomery was so well pleased with the details which had been given him, and the manner in which young Burr had effected his journey after leaving Arnold, that he invited him (Burr) to reside at headquarters, assuring him that he should receive an appointment as one of his aids. At this time Montgomery was a brigadier, and not entitled to aids, only in virtue of his being commander-in-chief of the army. Previous to his death, however, he was appointed a major-general, but the information did not reach him.

As soon as Burr had joined the family of the general, he entered upon the duties of an aid; but no formal annunciation was made until the army arrived before Quebec, when his appointment was announced in general orders. Arnold arrived at Point Levi, opposite to Quebec, on the 9th of November, 1775. He paraded for some days on the heights near the town, and sent two flags to demand a surrender, but both were fired upon as rebels with whom no communication was to be held. The true reason, however, was, that Colonel M'Clean, the British commandant, a vigilant and experienced officer, knowing the weakness of his own garrison, deemed it impolitic, if not unsafe, to receive a flag from Arnold.

The first plan for the attack upon the British works was essentially different from that which was subsequently carried into execution. Various reasons have been assigned for this change. Judge Marshall says, "that while the general (Montgomery) was making the necessary preparations for the assault, the garrison received intelligence of his intention from a deserter. This circumstance induced him to change the plan of his attack, which had been originally to attempt both the upper and lower towns at the same time. The plan now resolved on was to divide the army into four parts; and while two of them, consisting of Canadians under Major Livingston, and a small party under Major Brown, were to distract the attention of the garrison by making two feints against the upper town of St. Johns and Cape Diamond, the other two, led, the one by Montgomery in person, and the other by Arnold, were to make real attacks on opposite sides of the lower town." [2]

Colonel Burr says, that a change of the plan of attack was produced, in a great measure, through the advice and influence of Mr. Antill, a resident in Canada, who had joined the army; and Mr. Price, a Montreal merchant of property and respectability, who had also come out and united his destiny with the cause of the colonies. Mr. Price, in particular, was strongly impressed with the opinion, that if the American troops could obtain possession of the lower town, the merchants and other wealthy inhabitants would have sufficient influence with the British commander-in-chief to induce him to surrender rather than jeopard the destruction of all their property. It was, as Colonel Burr thought, a most fatal delusion. But it is believed that the opinion was honestly entertained.

The first plan of the attack was agreed upon in a council, at which young Burr and his friend, Matthias Ogden, were present. The arrangement was to pass over the highest walls at Cape Diamond. Here there was a bastion. This was at a distance of about half a mile from any succour; but being considered, in some measure, impregnable, the least resistance might be anticipated in that quarter. Subsequent events tended to prove the soundness of this opinion. In pursuance of the second plan, Major Livingston, with a detachment under his command, made a feint upon Cape Diamond; but, for about half an hour, with all the noise and alarm that he and his men could create, he was unable to attract the slightest notice from the enemy, so completely unprepared were they at this point.

While the first was the favourite plan of attack, Burr requested General Montgomery to give him the command of a small forlorn hope, which request was granted, and forty men allotted to him. Ladders were prepared, and these men kept in constant drill, until they could ascend them (standing almost perpendicular), with their muskets and accoutrements, with nearly the same facility that they could mount an ordinary staircase. In the success of this plan of attack Burr had entire confidence; but, when it was changed, he entertained strong apprehensions of the result. He was in the habit, every night, of visiting and reconnoitring the ground about Cape Diamond, until he became perfectly familiarized with every inch adjacent to, or in the vicinity of, the intended point of assault.

When the attack was about to be commenced, Captain Burr, and other officers near General Montgomery, endeavoured to dissuade him from leading in the advance; remarking that, as commander-in-chief, it was not his place. But all argument was ineffectual and unavailing. The attack was made on the morning of the 31st of December, 1775, before daylight, in the midst of a violent snow-storm. The New-York troops were commanded by General Montgomery, who advanced along the St. Lawrence, by the way of Aunce de Mere, under Cape Diamond. The first barrier to be surmounted was at the Pot Ash. In front of it was a block-house and picket, in charge of some Canadians, who, after making a single fire, fled in confusion. On advancing to force the barrier, an accidental discharge of a piece of artillery from the British battery, when the American front was within forty paces of it, killed General Montgomery, Captain McPherson, one of his aids, Captain Cheeseman, and every other person in front, except Captain Burr and a French guide. General Montgomery was within a few feet of Captain Burr; and Colonel Trumbull, in a superb painting recently executed by him, descriptive of the assault upon Quebec, has drawn the general falling in the arms of his surviving aid-de-camp. Lieutenant Colonel Campbell, being the senior officer on the ground, assumed the command, and ordered a retreat.

Footnotes:

1. Marshall's Life of Washington

2. Marshall's Life of Washington, vol. i., p. 329.

CHAPTER VI.

To evince the high sense entertained by his country for the services of General Montgomery, Congress directed a monument to be erected, with an inscription sacred to his memory. They "*Resolved*, That, to express the veneration of the United Colonies for their late general, Richard Montgomery, and the deep sense they entertained of the many signal and important services of that gallant officer, who, after a series of successes, amid the most discouraging difficulties, fell, at length, in a gallant attack upon Quebec, the capital of Canada, and to transmit to future ages, as examples truly worthy of imitation, his patriotism, conduct, boldness of enterprise, insuperable perseverance, and contempt of danger and death, a monument be procured from Paris, or other part of France, with an inscription sacred to his memory, and expressive of his amiable character and heroic achievements; and that the continental treasurer be directed to advance a sum, not exceeding three hundred pounds sterling, to Dr. Benjamin Franklin, who is desired to see this resolution properly executed, for defraying the expenses thereof."

This resolve was carried into execution at Paris by that ingenious artist, M. Caffieres, sculptor to Louis XVI., king of France, under the direction of Dr. Benjamin Franklin. The monument is of white marble, of the most beautiful simplicity and inexpressible elegance, with emblematical devices, and the following truly classical inscription, worthy of the modest but great mind of Franklin.

TO THE GLORY OF

RICHARD MONTGOMERY,

MAJOR-GENERAL OF THE ARMIES OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

SLAIN AT THE SIEGE OF QUEBEC,

THE THIRTY-FIRST OF DECEMBER, 1775,

AGED 38 YEARS.

This monument was erected in front of St. Paul's Church, in the city of New-York, in the spring of 1789.

General Arnold temporarily became commander-in-chief of the American army near Quebec, and was accordingly removed to headquarters. Young Burr was now called upon to perform the duties of brigade major. Arnold's plan was, by a close blockade, to starve out the enemy; but, from the weakness of his force, he soon discovered that this was impracticable; and he knew that, on the opening of the spring, he could not retain his present position, but must retreat. He therefore resolved to send in a flag of truce, and demand a surrender. He informed Captain Burr that he was about to send him with a communication to General Carlton, the British commander. Captain Burr required that he should be made acquainted with its contents. Arnold objected; whereupon Burr remarked that, if the general wished it, he would resign; but that he could not consent to be the bearer of the communication without possessing a knowledge of its character. At length, it was exhibited to him. It was demanding a surrender of the fortress, but in terms that Captain Burr considered unbecoming an American officer, and he so stated to the general; adding, that the bearer of such a message, if he were permitted to deliver it, would be treated by the British with contumely and contempt; and therefore declined the mission. Another officer was selected, and met the fate Burr anticipated. Shortly after (April 1st, 1776), General Wooster arrived from Montreal and took the command. He was succeeded by General Thomas about the 1st of May; and, on the 5th of May, it was determined in council to raise the blockade of Quebec, and that the sick and wounded should be immediately removed, with the artillery and stores, by boats, to Three Rivers, preparatory to a retreat.

Burr's perseverance and zeal during the march through the wilderness with Arnold, his subsequent boldness in joining Montgomery, and his intrepidity at the assault on Quebec, had acquired for him great reputation in the army, and had drawn towards him the attention of some of the most distinguished Whigs in the United Provinces. From every quarter he received highly complimentary letters. From a few of them extracts are made. Colonel Antill, a resident of Montreal, who had joined the American army, thus addresses him, five days after the fall of Montgomery:—

"La La Chine, 5th January, 1776.

"DEAR BURR,

"I have desired Mr. Price to deliver you my pistols, which you will keep until I see you. They are relics from my father's family, and therefore I cannot give them to you. The general (Wooster) has thought proper to send me to the Congress, where I shall have an opportunity of speaking of you as you deserve.

"Yours,

"EDWARD ANTILL."

On the 4th of January, General Wooster writes from Montreal to General Arnold:—

"Give my love to Burr, and desire him to remain with Colonel Clinton for the present. [1] Not only him, but all those brave officers who have so nobly distinguished themselves. I shall ever remember with gratitude and the highest degree of approbation, and shall not fail to represent them accordingly.

"DAVID WOOSTER."

From a college-chum of great merit, he received a letter, dated

"Philadelphia, January 24th, 1776.

"DEAR BURR,

"I am informed a gentleman is just setting off for Quebec, and snatch the opportunity of at once condóling with you for the loss of your brave general, and congratulating you on the credit you have gained in that action. 'Tis said you behaved well—you behaved gallantly. I never doubted but you would distinguish yourself, and your praise is now in every man's mouth. It has been my theme of late. I will not say I was perfectly disinterested in the encomiums I bestowed. You were a son of Nassau Hall, and reflected honour on the place of *my* education. You were my classmate and friend, and reflected honour on me. I make no doubt but your promotion will be taken care of. The gentlemen of the Congress speak highly of you.

"Your affectionate,

"WILLIAM BRADFORD, Jun."

Judge Tappan Reeve writes—

"Stockbridge, January 27th, 1776.

"DEAR BURR,

"Amid the lamentations of a country for the loss of a brave, enterprising general, your escape from such imminent danger, to which you have been exposed, has afforded us the greatest satisfaction. The news of the unfortunate attack upon Quebec arrived among us on the 13th of this month. I concealed it from your sister until the 18th, when she found it out; but, in less than half an hour, I received letters from Albany, acquainting me that you were in safety, and had gained great honour by your intrepid conduct. It gave us a kind of happiness that I should be very loath ever again to enjoy; for it never can be the case until you have again been exposed to the like danger, and have again escaped it, which I hope may never happen. To know that you were in safety gave great pleasure. It was heightened by hearing that your conduct was brave. Could you have been crowned with success, it would have been complete.

"It was happy for us that we did not know that you were an aid-de-camp, until we heard of your welfare; for we heard that Montgomery and his aid-de-camps were killed, without knowing who his aid-de-camps were.

"Your sister enjoys a middling state of health. She has many anxious hours upon your account; but she tells me that, as she believes you may serve your country in the business in which you are now employed, she is contented that you should remain in the army. It must be an exalted public spirit that could produce such an effect upon a sister as affectionate as yours.

"Adieu.

"T. REEVE."

His friend, Jonathan Bellamy, writes, "Norwich, March 3d, 1776.

"MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

"Be you yet alive? I have been infinitely distressed for you; but I hope it is now as safe with you as glorious. Doctor Jim Cogswell has left the army. A few days ago I received a letter from him. 'I doubt not,' he says, 'you have most sensible pleasure in the applauses

bestowed on our friend Burr; when I hear of his gallant behaviour, I feel exquisite delight.'

"Curse on this vile distance between us. I am restless to tell you every thing; but uncertainty whether you would ever hear it bids me be silent, till, in some future happy meeting, I may hold you to my bosom, and impart to you every emotion of my heart.

"Yours sincerely,

"JONA. BELLAMY."

Immediately after the repulse of the Americans at Quebec, his friend Ogden returned to New-Jersey, but spent much of his time with the army in the city of New-York. He writes to Burr, dated

New-York, 20th March, 1776.

Some weeks have elapsed since I saw Walker and Price. To-day I met with Hopkins at this place. My first inquiry was for letters from you. I mean not to upbraid you. This is the third time of my writing since I left you. I shall continue it, with the hope of giving you some small satisfaction. Miss Dayton is well, and will soon be mine. Barber is appointed major in the third Jersey battalion, of which Dayton is colonel, and Walton White lieutenant-colonel. Hancock was particular in his inquiry after you, and was disappointed in not receiving a line from you. I was kindly received on my arrival at Philadelphia. The Congress have since appointed me lieutenant-colonel in the first Jersey battalion, in the room of Lieutenant-colonel Winds, who has the regiment in the stead of Lord Stirling, who is advanced to a brigadier-general.

Colonel Allen, who hands you this, is much of a gentleman, and worthy your attention. Melcher has hobbled himself. Inquire of Colonel Allen. General Thompson commands. To-morrow my appointment will be announced in general orders, whereupon I shall join my regiment, but shall obtain leave of absence for a week or two. Elizabethtown swarms with girls, among which is Miss Noel. I have not seen Miss Ricketts.

When I was in Philadelphia, Colonel Reed expressed a desire of serving me. He said there was a vacancy in General Washington's family, and doubted not his recommendation would procure it for me. I declined it, hoping to get a more active office, but desired he would procure it for you. If any thing offers at Quebec, accept it, as it will not hinder your appointment here. Washington is expected in New-York, when I shall have a better chance of bringing it about. The pay and rank are equal to a full major. I shall write you by Price. Miss Dayton is particular in her inquiries after you.

Yours sincerely,

MATT. OGDEN.

In the spring of 1776, the army moved from Montreal to the mouth of the Sorel. Major Burr yet remained with it. While at Montreal, he became disgusted with General Arnold, on account of his meanness and other bad qualities. On the march through the wilderness, he was far from being satisfied with the general. Burr thought he provided too carefully for himself; and that he did not sufficiently share the fatigues and privations of the march in common with the troops. Immediately after arriving at the Sorel, he informed the general of his desire to visit his friends, and to ascertain what was doing, as he wished more active employment. General Arnold objected somewhat petulantly. Burr remarked courteously, but firmly, "Sir, I have a boat in readiness. I have employed four discharged soldiers to row me, and I start to-morrow morning at six o'clock." He then designated the point at which he should embark. Arnold forbade his departure, whereupon Burr reiterated his determination.

The next morning, at the specified hour, he repaired to his boat, and shortly after discovered the general approaching. "Why, Major Burr," says he, "you are not going?"—"I am, sir," replied the major. "But you know, sir, it is contrary to my wish and against my orders."—"I know, sir, that you have the *power* of stopping me, but nothing short of force shall do it." The general then changed his tone and manner, and endeavoured to dissuade; but, after a few minutes' conversation, Burr wished him great success, then embarked, and took his departure without interruption.

On the Sorel an incident occurred which gave some alarm to the voyagers. Burr had taken into his boat, as a kind of companion, a young merchant. On the borders of the river they suddenly discovered a large brick house, with wings, having loopholes to fire through, and in view, at the door, stood an Indian warrior, in full costume. The oarsmen were for attempting to retreat. Burr said it was too late, as they were within the reach of the Indians' rifles. The passenger was about to stop the men from rowing, when Burr threatened to shoot him if he interfered. The inquiry was then made—"What are we to do?" The major replied, "Row for the shore and land; I will go up to the house, and we shall soon learn what they are." By this time several other Indians had made their appearance. On reaching the shore, Burr took his sword and proceeded to meet the red men. An explanation ensued, and it was ascertained that they were friendly. The stores were landed from the boat, and a merrimaking followed.

Major Burr continued his route to Albany. On his arrival, and while there, he was notified verbally that it would be agreeable to the commander-in-chief (General Washington) that he should visit New-York. He forthwith proceeded down the river, and arrived in the city about the 20th of May, 1776. He immediately reported himself to the commander-in-chief, who invited him to join his family at headquarters until he received a satisfactory appointment. The quarters of General Washington were at that time in the house subsequently owned by Colonel Burr, and known as Richmond Hill. This invitation was accepted, and Major Burr occasionally rode out with the general, but very soon became restless and dissatisfied. He wrote to John Hancock, then president of Congress, and who had been an intimate friend of his father, that he was disgusted, and inclined to retire from the service. Governor Hancock objected, and asked him whether he would accept the appointment of aid-de-camp to Major-general Putnam, then in command in the city of New-York. Burr consented, and removed from the headquarters of the commander-in-chief to those of Major-general Putnam. About this period Burr received a letter from his friend, now Lieutenant-colonel M. Ogden, who had proceeded to the north with his regiment. He writes,

Fort George, 5th June, 1776.

DEAR BURR,

I this evening experienced the greatest disappointment I have met with since my memory. I yesterday saw Mr. Price; he informed me that you were on your way, in company with the commissioners, who, I was this day informed, were coming by the way of Skeenesborough. I altered my course, and went that way, till I met them on the road. They informed me you were coming by Lake George. I then turned about, very much afraid you would pass me before I came into the lake road. But what necessity for enumerating all these circumstances? I have missed you. D—n the luck. I never so much desired, nor had occasion so much for an interview. I have not received a single line from you since I left Canada. Perhaps you have not written, or perhaps they have miscarried. If they have miscarried, withered be the hand that held them back. Tell me you omitted through carelessness, neglect, hurry of business, or any thing, rather than want of friendship.

General Washington desired me to inform you that he will provide for you, and that he expects you will come to him immediately, and stay in his family. I should have acquainted you of this by letter, had I not expected to have seen you. You will now want your horse. I have sold him, and spent the money, and expect I shall not be able to refund it until my return.

I am, if I ever was,

Yours sincerely,

MATTHIAS OGDEN.

Before the preceding letter was received by Major Burr, he felt piqued at what he supposed the coldness and neglect of his friend Ogden, and, under the influence of such feelings, wrote the following:—

New-York, New-York, 18th Jane, 1776,

DEAR OGDEN,

A correspondence, which I flattered myself in former times was mutually agreeable, has of late somehow strangely found an end. You may remember, when you left Canada, I engaged to answer your first letter immediately, and to continue writing from that time, by every opportunity, as usual. I concluded your letters must have miscarried, and wrote you a line by Mr. Avery. I had no direct intelligence from you, till a verbal message by Mr. Duggan, the beginning of May. A few days after, I received a letter from *Colonel Ogden* by *Colonel Allen*. I should have answered it, but had determined to visit my native colony, and expected, by personal interview, to answer purposes which I scarce hoped the cold medium of ink and paper could effect.

That I unfortunately missed you on my way hither, I need not relate. At Albany I first heard you had passed me. I was upon the point of following you; but the character of troublesome fool struck me in so disagreeable a light, that, in spite of myself, I continued my journey.

There is in man a certain love of novelty; a fondness of variety (useful, indeed, within proper limits), which influences more or less in almost every act of life. New views, new laws, new *friends*, have each their charm. Truly great must be the soul, and firm almost beyond the weakness of humanity, that can withstand the smiles of fortune. Success, promotion, the caresses of the great, and the flatteries of the low, are sometimes fatal to the noblest minds. The volatile become an easy prey. The fickle heart, tiptoe with joy, as from an eminence, views with contempt its former joys, connexions, and pursuits. A new taste contracted, seeks companions suited to itself. But pleasures easiest tasted, though perhaps at first of higher glee, are soonest past, and, the more they are relied upon, leave

the severer sting behind. One cloudy day despoils the glow-worm of all its glitter.

Should fortune ever frown upon you, Matt.; should those you now call friends forsake you; should the clouds gather force on every side, and threaten to burst upon you, think then upon the man who never betrayed you; rely on the sincerity you never found to fail; and if my heart, my life, or my fortune can assist you, it is yours.

I go to-morrow to Elizabethtown, where I shall see the best of women—your wife. Whatever letters or commands she may have for you, I shall be careful to forward by the safest hands.

Your friend,

AARON BURR.

In the beginning of July, 1776, Major Burr was appointed aid-de-camp to General Putnam. At this time the headquarters of the general were in the large brick house, yet standing, at the corner of Broadway and the Battery. Burr continued occasionally to correspond with his friends, but was much occupied with his military duties, and those studies which were calculated to render him scientifically master of his profession. During the short period that he remained in the family of General Washington, he was treated with respect and attention; but soon perceived, as he thought, an unwillingness to afford that information, and those technical explanations of great historical military movements, which an inquiring and enlightened mind, like Burr's, sought with avidity and perseverance. He therefore became apprehensive, if he remained with the commander-in-chief, that, instead of becoming a scientific soldier, he should dwindle down into a practical clerk—a species of drudgery to which his pecuniary circumstances did not render it necessary for him to submit, and for which neither his habits, his education, nor his temperament in any degree qualified him. He therefore determined promptly on a change, and was willing to enter the family of Major-general Putnam, because he would there enjoy the opportunities for study, and the duties which he would be required to perform would be strictly military. There is no doubt the short residence of Major Burr with General Washington laid the foundation for those prejudices which, at a future day, ripened into hostile feelings on both sides.

Judge Paterson thus writes him:—

New-Brunswick, July 22d, 1776.

MY DEAR BURR,

I did myself the pleasure of writing you by my brother, who is in General Sullivan's brigade, and who was in expectation of seeing you, as he was destined for the Canada department. Indeed, from the friendship which subsisted between us, I was in expectation of hearing frequently from you, and, to tell the truth, was not a little mortified that I was passed over in silence. Why, Burr, all this negligence? I dare not call it forgetfullness, for I cannot bear the thought of giving up my place in your esteem. I rejoice at your return, and congratulate you on your promotion. I was attending the convention at Burlington when you passed on to Philadelphia, and was full of the pleasing hope of having an interview with you. The Delaware, indeed, ran between us—a mighty obstacle, to be sure! I inquired when you designed to return, that I might plant myself at Bristol, and intercept you on your way. The inquiry was of no avail. I have at times been violently tempted to write you a railing letter, and for that purpose have more than once taken up the pen. But I can hardly tell how, on such occasions, the Genius of Friendship would rise up to view, and soften me down into all the tenderness of affectionate sorrow—perhaps because I counted you as lost. I find I must e'en forgive you—but, remember, you must behave better in future. Do write me now and then. Your letters will give me unfeigned pleasure, and, for your encouragement, I promise to be a faithful correspondent. In the letter-way you used to be extremely careless; you know I am, in that respect, of a different turn.

This will be handed you by Mr. Hugg and Mr. Leaming, members of our convention, whom curiosity partly, and partly business, have impelled to New-York. As men, they are genteel, sensible, and deserving. As politicians, they are worthy of your regard, for they possess the genuine spirit of whiggism. They have no acquaintance in York. They are desirous of seeing the fortifications, and other things in the military line. Pray take them by the hand; and be assured 'that any kindness shown them will be acknowledged as an additional obligation conferred upon

Your affectionate

WM. PATERSON.

A. Burr replies to this letter:—

New-York, July 26th, 1776.

MY DEAR PATERSON,

I this day received your kind letter. It gave me a pleasure I seldom experience. Can it be that you have still in memory the vagrant Burr? Some fatality has ever attended our endeavours to meet. Why I have not written to you I cannot tell. It has not been for want of friendship, of inclination, or always of opportunity; but some unavoidable accidents prevented so long, that I began to fear a letter from me must be ushered in by some previous introduction, some anecdotes of the writer, which might renew your remembrance, and authorize a freedom of this nature. But your frank and kind epistle precludes fulsome apologies, which; though sometimes necessary, I esteem, at best, but a drug in letters.

I am exceedingly pleased with your friends, Messrs. Hugg and Learning, but was unfortunate enough to be from home the day they came in town, and had not the pleasure of seeing them till this afternoon. I felt myself so nearly interested in the welfare of the province whose constitution you are now framing, that I did not urge their stay with the warmth my inclination prompted. If any other of our Jersey friends should be coming this way, I should be happy in showing them every civility in my power.

As to promises of writing, I shall make you none, my dear Bill, till those already on hand, and of long standing, are discharged. I am no epistolary politician or newsmonger; and as to sentiments, a variety of novelties and follies has entirely dissipated them. This, however, is only a new apology for an old misfortune. But why this to you, who know me better than I know myself? This epistolary chat, though agreeable, is by no means satisfactory. The sincerity of my long-smothered affections is not to be thus expressed. I must contrive to shake you by the hand. Perhaps I may, ere long, be sent to Elizabethtown or Amboy on business, and will, undoubtedly, take Brunswick in my way. I have, or had once, an agreeable female acquaintance with Miss S. D., now Mrs. S., and with Miss S. was on tolerable terms of intimacy. Could I but reconnoitre a while, and find how the land lay, I might, perhaps, be able to graduate my compliments with some propriety, from cold respects to affectionate regards. I think I must leave you discretionary orders on this head, begging you to make use of all the policy of war. There is no knowing of what importance it may be to

Your affectionate

A. BURR.

Footnotes:

1. James Clinton, afterwards general, brother of Governor George Clinton.

CHAPTER VII.

From the year 1780 until the year 1795, Mrs. Margaret Coghlan made no inconsiderable noise in the court and fashionable circles of Great Britain and France. She was the theme of conversation among the lords, and the dukes, and the M. P.'s. Having become the victim, in early life, of licentious, dissolute, and extravagant conduct, alternately she was revelling in wealth, and then sunken in poverty. At length, in 1793, she published her own memoirs. Mrs. Coghlan was the daughter of Major Moncrieffe, of the British army. He was Lord Cornwallis's brigade major. Her father had three wives. She was a daughter of the first wife. His second wife was Miss L*********, of New-York, and his third wife Miss J**, of New-York. Mrs. Coghlan is introduced here, because her early history is intimately connected with the subject of these memoirs.

In July, 1776, she resided in Elizabethtown, New-Jersey. Her father was with Lord Percy on Staten Island. In her memoirs, speaking of herself, she says:—"Thus destitute of friends, I wrote to General Putnam, who instantly answered my letter by a very kind invitation to his house, assuring me that he respected my father, and was only his enemy in the field of battle; but that, in private life, he himself, or any part of his family, might always command his services. On the next day he sent Colonel Webb, one of his aid-de-camps, to conduct me to New-York. When I arrived in the Broadway (a street so called), where General Putnam resided, I was received with great tenderness, both by Mrs. Putnam and her daughters, and on the following day I was introduced by them to General and Mrs. Washington, who likewise made it their study to show me every mark of regard; but I seldom was allowed to be alone, although sometimes, indeed, I found an opportunity to escape to the gallery on the top of the house, where my chief delight was to view, with a telescope, our fleet and army at Staten Island. My amusements were few; the good Mrs. Putnam employed me and her daughters constantly to spin flax for shirts for the American soldiers; indolence, in America, being totally discouraged; and I likewise worked some for General Putnam, who, though not an accomplished *muscadin*, like our dilletantis of St. James's-street, was certainly one of the best characters in the world; His heart being composed of those noble materials which equally command respect and admiration. * * * * * *

"Not long after this circumstance, a flag of truce arrived from Staten Island, with letters from Major Moncrieffe, demanding me; for he now considered me as a prisoner. General Washington would not acquiesce in this demand, saying that I should remain a hostage for my father's good behaviour. I must here observe, that when General Washington refused to deliver me up, the

noble-minded Putnam, as if it were by instinct, laid his hand on his sword, and with a violent oath swore that my father's request should be granted. The commander-in-chief, whose influence governed Congress, soon prevailed on them to consider me as a person whose situation required their strict attention; and that I might not escape they ordered me to Kingsbridge, where, in justice I must say, that I was treated with the utmost tenderness. General Mifflin there commanded. His lady was a most accomplished, beautiful woman; a Quaker," &c.

Mrs. Coghlan then bursts forth in expressions of rapture for a young American officer, with whom she had become enamoured. She does not name him; but that officer was Major Burr. "May these pages" (she says) "one day meet the eye of him who subdued my virgin heart. * * * * * To him I plighted my virgin vow. * * * * * * With this conqueror of my soul, how happy should I now have been! What storms and tempests should I have avoided" (at least I am pleased to think so) "if I had been allowed to follow the bent of my inclinations. Ten thousand times happier should I have been with him in the wildest desert of our native country, the woods affording us our only shelter, and their fruits our only repast, than under the canopy of costly state, with all the refinements of courts, with the royal warrior" (the Duke of York) "who would fain have proved himself the conqueror of France. *My conqueror* was engaged in another cause; he was ambitious to obtain other laurels. He fought to liberate, not to enslave nations. He was a colonel in the American army, and high in the estimation of his country. *His* victories were never accompanied with one gloomy, relenting thought. They shone as bright as the cause which achieved them."

The letter from General Putnam of which Mrs. Coghlan speaks is found among the papers of Colonel Burr, and is in the following words:—

New-York, July 26th, 1776.

I should have answered your letter sooner, but had it not in my power to write you any thing satisfactory.

The omission of my title, in Major Moncrieffe's letter, is a matter I regard not in the least; nor does it in any way influence my conduct in this affair; as you seem to imagine. Any political difference alters him not to me in a private capacity. As an officer, he is my enemy, and obliged to act as such, be his private sentiments what they will. As a man, I owe him no enmity; but, far from it, will, with pleasure, do any kind office in my power for him or any of his connexions.

I have, agreeably to your desire, waited on his excellency to endeavour to obtain permission for you to go to Staten Island. He informs me that Lieutenant-colonel Patterson, who came with the last flag, said he was empowered to offer the exchange of ——- ——- for Governor Skeene. As the Congress have reserved to themselves the right of exchanging prisoners, the general has sent to know their pleasure, and doubts not they will give their consent. I am desired to inform you, that if this exchange is made, you will have liberty to pass out with Governor Skeene; but that no flag will be sent solely for that purpose.

Major William Livingston was lately here, and informed me that you had an inclination to live in this city, and that all the ladies of your acquaintance having left town, and Mrs. Putnam and two daughters being here, proposed your staying with them. If agreeable to you, be assured, miss, you shall be sincerely welcome. You will here, I think, be in a more probable way of accomplishing the end you wish—that of seeing your father, and may depend upon every civility from,

Miss,

Your obedient servant,

ISRAEL PUTNAM.

This letter is in the handwriting of Major Burr, and undoubtedly was prepared by him for the signature of the general. Miss Moncrieffe was, at this time, in her fourteenth year. She had travelled, and, for one of her age, had mingled much in the world. She was accomplished, and was considered handsome. Major Burr was attracted by her sprightliness and vivacity, and she, according to her own confessions, penned nearly twenty years afterward, had not only become violently in love with, but had acknowledged the fact to him. Whether the foundation of her future misfortunes was now laid, it is not necessary to inquire. Her indiscretion was evident, while Major Burr's propensity for intrigue was already well known.

Burr perceived immediately that she was an extraordinary young woman. Eccentric and volatile, but endowed with talents, natural as well as acquired, of a peculiar character. Residing in the family of General Putnam with her, and enjoying the opportunity of a close and intimate intercourse, at all times and on all occasions, he was enabled to judge of her qualifications, and came to the conclusion, notwithstanding her youth, that she was well calculated for a spy, and thought it not improbable that she might be employed in that capacity by the British. Major Burr suggested his suspicions to General Putnam, and recommended that she be conveyed to her friends as soon as might be convenient. She was, in consequence, soon after removed to Kingsbridge, where General Mifflin commanded. This change of situation, in the work which she has published, is ascribed to General Washington, but it originated with Major Burr.

After a short residence at Kingsbridge, leave was granted for her departure to Staten Island. She accordingly set off in a continental barge, under the escort of an American officer, who was ordered to accompany her to the British headquarters. As the

boat approached the English fleet, she was met by another, having on board a British officer, and was notified that she could proceed no further, but that the king's officer would take charge of the young lady, and convey her in safety to her father, who was six or eight miles in the country with Lord Percy. She says, in her memoirs, "I then entered the British barge, and bidding an eternal farewell to my dear American friends, *turned my back on liberty*."

Miss Moncrieffe, before she had reached her fourteenth year, was probably the victim of seduction. The language of her memoirs, when taken in connexion with her deportment soon after her marriage, leaves but little room for doubt. Major Burr, while yet at college, had acquired a reputation for gallantry. On this point he was excessively vain, and regardless of all those ties which ought to control an honourable mind. In his intercourse with females he was an unprincipled flatterer, ever prepared to take advantage of their weakness, their credulity, or their confidence. She that confided in him was lost. In referring to this subject, no terms of condemnation would be too strong to apply to Colonel Burr.

It is truly surprising how any individual could have become so eminent as a soldier, as a statesman, and as a professional man, who devoted so much time to the other sex as was devoted by Colonel Burr. For more than half a century of his life they seemed to absorb his whole thoughts. His intrigues were without number. His conduct most licentious. The sacred bonds of friendship were unhesitatingly violated when they operated as barriers to the indulgence of his passions. For a long period of time he seemed to be gathering, and carefully preserving, every line written to him by any female, whether with or without reputation; and, when obtained, they were cast into one common receptacle,—the profligate and corrupt, by the side of the thoughtless and betrayed victim. All were held as trophies of victory,—all esteemed alike valuable. How shocking to the man of sensibility! How mortifying and heart-sickening to the intellectual, the artless, the fallen fair!

Among these manuscripts were many the production of highly cultivated minds. They were calculated to excite the sympathy of the brother—the parent—the husband. They were, indeed, testimonials of the weakness of the weaker sex, even where genius and learning would seem to be towering above the arts of the seducer. Why they were thus carefully preserved, is left to conjecture. Can it be true that Moore is correct, when, in his life of Lord Byron, he says, "The allusions which he (Byron) makes to instances of *successful passion* in his career, were not without their influence on the fancies of that sex, whose weakness it is to be most easily won by those who come recommended by the greatest number of triumphs over others? Some of these productions had been penned more than sixty years. They were all committed to the flames, however, immediately after the decease of Colonel Burr. Of them, it is believed, "not a wreck remains."

The faithful biographer could not pass over in silence this strong and revolting trait in the character of Colonel Burr. It will not again be referred to. From details, the moralist and the good man must shrink with disgust and abhorrence. In this particular, Burr appears to have been unfeeling and heartless. And yet, by a fascinating power almost peculiar to himself, he so managed as to retain the affection, in some instances, the devotion, of his deluded victims. In every other respect he was kind and charitable. No man would go farther to alleviate the sufferings of another. No man was more benevolent. No man would make greater sacrifices to promote the interest or the happiness of a friend. How strange, how inconsistent, how conflicting are these allusions! They are nevertheless strictly true.

Many of the letters to and from Colonel Burr contain hints and opinions as to public men and measures. Thus far, they are links in the chain of history, in relation to the times when they were written. They serve, also, to illustrate the character and the principles of the writers themselves. With these views they are occasionally selected. Theodore Sedgwick is a name recorded in the annals of our country with distinction. He writes to Burr:—

Sheffield, 7th August, 1776.

MY DEAR BURR,

If you remember, some months since, you and I mutually engaged to correspond by letter. I told you then that you were not to expect any thing either entertaining, or in any degree worth the trouble of perusing. What can a reasonable being expect from an inhabitant of such an obscure, remote, and dead place as Sheffield, to amuse, instruct, or even to merit the attention of a young, gay, enterprising, martial genius? I know you will expect nothing, and I dare pledge my honour, therefore, that you will not, either now or in future, in this respect, be disappointed.

You recollect, perhaps, that when I had the pleasure to see you here, I informed you of a design to visit New-York and the southward. Soon after my business called me to Boston, and, on my return, I was obliged to go with the militia to Peekskill; from there I should have visited the city and my friends, had not some foolish accidents prevented. I now think, as soon as I can leave home, of making a tour; but this, like other futurities, is wholly uncertain.

The insignificant figure I make, in my own opinion, in this day of political and martial exertions, is an humbling consideration. To be stoically indifferent to the great events that are now unfolding, is altogether inconsistent, not only with my inclination, but even with my natural constitution; and to pursue a line of conduct which indicates such a disposition (I mean my continuance at home), is a mystery for which I will endeavour to account. Remember, I do not intend to libel the colony to which I belong.

Amid the confusion which was at once the cause and consequence of a dissolution of government, men's minds as well as actions

became regardless of all legal restraint. All power reverted into the hands of the people, who were determined that every one should be convinced that *the people* were the fountain of all honour. The first thing they did was to withdraw all confidence from every one who had ever any connexion with government. Lawyers were, almost universally, represented as the pests of society. All persons who would pay court to these extravagant and unreasonable prejudices became their idols. Abilities were represented as dangerous, and learning as a crime, or rather, the certain forerunner of all political extravagances. They really demonstrated that they were possessed of creating power; *for, by the word of their power, they created great men out of nothing*; but I cannot say *that all was very well*.

Observing these violent symptoms, I could not pursue that which was the only road to preferment; and I have never had an offer to go into the army, except the one I accepted; while I have seen, in more than one instance, men honoured with the command of a regiment for heading mobs. Well: with this, I believe, I have troubled you long enough. Pray, say you, what is it to me why you have not been in the army? Why, nothing, my dear friend; but it is something to me. You know, my dear Burr, I love you, or I should not submit such nonsense to your perusal. If Mr. Swift still lives, give him my best compliments. Pamela desires me to tell you she loves you. Answer this letter, and thereby oblige

Your sincere friend,

THEODORE SEDGWICH.

FROM COLONEL M. OGDEN.

Ticonderoga, July 26th, 1776.

DEAR BURR,

I have been waiting with the greatest impatience to know what is doing in York and Jersey. There are twenty different reports, that contradict each other, relative to Howe and his fleet. It has once been generally believed that a French fleet had arrived at New-York, and blocked up the British army. Independence is well relished in this part of the world. Generalship is now dealt out to the army by our worthy and well-esteemed general, Gates, who is putting the most disordered army that ever bore the name into a state of regularity and defence. If our friends in Canada, commanded by Burgoyne, will wait a few days, we shall give them a very proper reception.

The army are beginning to recruit fast, from the effects of a little fresh meat, and some rum, when on fatigue. Ten days ago there were not in our regiment eighty men fit for duty. We have now upwards of two hundred and thirty; and, in a few days, they will be all as rugged as New-Jersey is firm.

Colonel Winds is sent home on a fool's errand by the general, that he may be out of the way of doing any more harm to the regiment. The general assures me that I shall not be troubled with him again. I suppose, by that, he has written to have him detained below. A short history of this man will convince you that he ought to be nowhere but on his farm. He, in the first place, is a professed enemy to subordination, and has an utter aversion to discipline. He is positive, and prefers his own opinion to even the general's, because he was in the service last war. He is not possessed of one qualification that distinguishes a gentleman, nor has he genius or education. His whole study is to gain the applause of the private soldiers, at the expense of every officer in the regiment. He is hated by all his own officers except *two*, and despised by every gentleman in the army.

We are in great want of brigadier-generals—three, at least. I mean for the men that are now here. General Arnold will command the water-craft on the lake in person. There are three brigades, commanded by the colonels, Reed, Stark, and St. Clair. The last of these I sincerely wish was appointed a brigadier by Congress. There is no better man; the other two have full enough already.

Please to forward the enclosed, with the letter to Mr. Spencer. My best respects to Generals Putnam, Greene, and Mifflin, and to Colonel Trumbull. Compliments to Webb. I wait, with the greatest impatience, some important news from New-York. Pray write particulars relative to the conduct of the Jerseymen. Should any fall, mention their names.

I am yours sincerely,

MATT. OGDEN.

TO T. EDWARDS.

New-York, 10th of August, 1776.

Dear Uncle,

I have received your letters from Stockbridge, with my watch, for which I thank you. Our six galleys which went up the North river attacked the British ships. They behaved well, but were drove off with the loss of three killed and twelve or thirteen wounded. A second attack is proposed. Vessels and chevaux-de-frises are sunk in the North river. The channel is said to be effectually stopped. We are endeavouring the same in the East river. The British fleet have been largely re-enforced at different times. They are now said to be upwards of two hundred sail within the Narrows. They have drawn up seven of their heaviest ships in a line, nearly two miles advanced of the rest.

By two Virginia gentlemen who went to England to take the gown, who returned in a packet and landed on Staten Island, where they tarried several days, and were permitted to cross to Elizabethtown on Thursday last, we have some intelligence of the enemy. Clinton has arrived with his shattered fleet and about 3600 men. By this it appears that he has either fallen in with part of Dunmore's fleet, or picked up the remainder of his own, which had been separated, and were not in the action near Charlestown. Of the Hessians only 1300 or 1400 have arrived. The remainder, about 9000, are daily expected. They were left near the banks of Newfoundland. Those already here are not much esteemed as soldiers.

The king's land-army is at present about 15 or 16,000 strong. They expect very soon to exceed 25,000. They have taken on board all their heavy cannon from Staten Island, and have called in several of their outposts. Thirty transports have sailed under convoy of three frigates. They are to come through the Sound, and thus invest us by the North and East rivers. They are then to land on both sides of the island, *join their forces, and draw a line across, which will hem us in and totally cut off all communication, after which they will have their own fun*.

These Virginia gentlemen lodged in a house with several king's officers. They hold us in the utmost contempt. Talk of forcing all our lines without firing a gun. The bayonet is their pride. They have forgot Bunker's Hill.

Your nephew,

A. Burr.

FROM COLONEL M. OGDEN.

Ticonderoga, August 11th, 1776.

Dear Burr,

I yesterday received yours of July 29th and August 2d. The others I made mention of in the letter to Mrs. Ogden that I sent to you unsealed. In my last you had a very particular account of the numbers, force, names, &c., of our navy on the lake. As to our leaving Crownpoint for this place, the field-officers knew nothing of it till it was concluded on by the generals, Schuyler, Gates, and Arnold.

General Arnold is taking a very active part, I mean in the command of the fleet. He will sail himself in a few days. He says he will pay a visit to St. Johns. I wish he may be as prudent as he is brave. Well, now have at you for news. Last evening the flag of truce returned, bringing a letter directed to *George Washington, Esq*., and a truly ridiculous copy of a general order, which you will see at General Washington's by the time you receive this. But there is one part of it in which I think they, in some measure, accuse us justly. I mean that of assassinating, as they term it with too much truth, Brigadier-general Gordon. He was shot by the Whitcomb I mentioned in my last, who had been sent there as a spy. The act, though villainous, was brave, and a peculiar kind of bravery, that, I believe, Whitcomb alone is possessed of. He shot Gordon near by their advanced sentinel; and, notwithstanding a most diligent search was made, he avoided them by mere dint of skulking.

I shall have the honour to command the New-Jersey redoubt, which I am now building with the regiment alone. It is situated on the right of the whole, by the water's edge. It is to mount two eighteen-pounders, two twelve, and four nine-pounders. In this I expect to do honour to New-Jersey. I yesterday received a letter from Colonel Dayton, dated the 28th of July, at the German Flats. He informs me that he is to take the command at Fort Stanwix.

Should there be any thing to be had in New-York in the clothing way, should be glad if you will lay some aside, no matter what—either small-clothes, shirts, stockings, or any thing of the kind. My best compliments to General Putnam. If you will let Robert or Sawyer have the perusal of this, they would learn the news of this army. Paper is so scarce, that one letter must serve both, unless something particular.

Yours sincerely,

MATT. OGDEN.

At this time Major-general Greene had the command on Long Island, but his health was so bad that it became necessary for him to resign it. The commander-in-chief ordered General Putnam to assume the command. Major Burr was his aid-de-camp. The landing of the British had been previously effected on the 22d of August, 1776, without opposition, near Utrecht and Gravesend, on the southwest end of the island. The American troops, less than 12,000, were encamped on the north of Brooklyn heights. The British force, including Hessians, was more than 20,000 strong. The armies were separated by a range of hills, at that time covered with wood, called the Heights of Gowannus. Major Burr immediately commenced an inspection of the troops, and made to the general a most unfavourable report, both as to their means of defence and their discipline. The major proposed, however, several enterprises for beating up the quarters of the enemy. To all which General Putnam replied, that his orders were not to make any attack, but to act on the defensive only.

On the 27th the action was fought. The loss of the Americans, in killed, wounded, and prisoners, was about 1000. That of the British, less than 350. The Americans were driven within the works which they had thrown up. Major Burr, previous to the action, had expressed to General Putnam the opinion that a battle ought not to be risked; and that much was to be gained by placing the troops in a position where the navy of the enemy would not be so serviceable to them.

On the 28th, the British advanced in column to within 500 or 600 yards of the American works. General Robinson, who commanded a portion of the enemy, represents, in his parliamentary examination, that they approached much nearer. The American troops were formed in line to receive them; but gave such indications of alarm, that Major Burr rode to General Putnam, and informed him that he had no hope the men would stand more than a single fire before they retreated. No attack, however, was made. Burr continued to urge upon General Putnam and Mifflin (the latter of whom came over on that day from New-York) the necessity of a retreat. During the night of the 28th, General Mifflin went the rounds, and observed the forwardness of the enemy's batteries, and, on the morning of the 29th, pressed upon General Washington an immediate retreat. A council was held, and the opinion of Mifflin unanimously adopted. The embarcation of the troops was committed to General McDOUGALL. He was at Brooklyn Ferry by eight o'clock. In the early part of the night, the weather was very unfavourable; but about eleven o'clock every thing was propitious. A thick fog ensued, and continued until the whole army, 9000 in number, with all the field artillery, ordnance, &c., were safely landed in New-York. Major Burr was at Brooklyn. Here General McDOUGALL had an opportunity of noticing his efficiency. His reputation for talents and intrepidity had previously reached the ears of the general. From this night, the 29th of August, 1776, until Major Burr retired from the army, he possessed the entire confidence and esteem of General McDOUGALL. Subsequent events, as will hereafter appear, tended to strengthen and confirm the correctness of those prepossessions, thus formed in the hour of peril, and in the midst of the most appalling dangers.

The situation of General Washington, after retreating from Long Island, was very distressing. The defeat which the Americans had experienced produced consternation and alarm in the ranks of a raw, inexperienced, and undisciplined army. In addition to other discouraging circumstances, within a few days after the retreat, nearly one fourth of the troops were on the sick-list. Colonel Glover says that the commander-in-chief divided his army, posting 12,000 at Kingsbridge, 6500 at Harlem, and 4500 in the city of New-York.

On Sunday, the 15th of September, 1776, General Howe, as commander-in-chief of the British forces, landed on Manhattan (New-York) Island. General Washington had previously made the necessary arrangements, and given orders for the troops to evacuate the city and retire to Harlem, distant about seven miles. The descent of the British created an alarm in the American ranks, and produced no inconsiderable degree of confusion in the retreat. By some unaccountable mismanagement, General Silliman's brigade was left in New-York, and conducted by General Knox to a small fort then in the suburbs, and known as Bunker's Hill. Major Burr having been despatched, at his own request, with a few dragoons, by General Putnam, to pick up the stragglers, discovered the error which had been committed, and galloping up to the fort, inquired who commanded. General Knox presented himself. Major Burr desired him to retreat immediately, or the whole brigade would be cut off and sacrificed. General Knox replied, that a retreat, thus in the face of the enemy, was impracticable, and that he intended to defend the fort. Burr remarked, that it was not bomb-proof; that it was destitute of water; and that he could take it with a single howitzer; and then, addressing himself to the men, said, that if they remained there, one half of them would be killed or wounded, and the other half hung, like dogs, before night; but, if they would place themselves under his command, he would conduct them in safety to Harlem. Burr's character for intrepidity and military skill was already so well established, that they determined to follow him. In the retreat they had some skirmishing, but met with very little loss in effecting their union with the main body of the army. The following documents, furnished by officers in Silliman's brigade, contain the details.

SAMUEL ROWLAND TO COMMODORE RICHARD V. MORRIS. Fairfield, (Conn.),

29th January, 1814.

SIR,