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AARON BURR, 1802

From a portrait by John Vanderlyn

AARON BURR

A Biography

By

NATHAN SCHACHNER



A PERPETUA BOOK 

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To
MY WIFE,
HELEN

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. ANCESTRAL VOICES	1
Respectable Burrs – The Odor of Sanctity – High Priest of Calvinism – The Daughter of Puritans	
II. CHILDHOOD	14
A Son is Born – Swift Tragedy – Orphans	
III. COLLEGE YEARS	21
The Insatiable Student – Myths in the Making – The Students Get Religion – Graduation – The Footsteps of His Fathers – Idyllic Interlude	
IV. SWORDS AND BULLETS	32
The Call to Arms – On to Quebec – Siege and Assault – End of the Venture – Major Burr of the Staff – Burr Rescues a Brigade – Military Intelligence	
V. THE WAR GOES ON	53
Promotion – Martinet Burr – Mutiny – Secret Service – No Man's Land – Resignation – The War Horse Snuffs Battle	
VI. PRELUDE TO LIFE	69
Courtship and Law Books – Special Dispensation – Theodosia Prevost Burr – Entering Wedge	
VII. CHIEFLY LEGAL	84
Political Interlude – Practicing Attorney – Domesticity	
VIII. THE POLITICIAN EMBARKED	93
Preview – Stepping-stone – Into the Arena	
IX. THE GENTLEMAN FROM NEW YORK	102
Strictly Professional – Senatorial Duties – Eyes on New York – Burr Decides an Election	
X. INTERMEDIATE YEARS	115
Hamilton Calls Names – Withdrawal and a Bargain – Richmond Hill and the Arts – Financial Legerdemain – Experiment in Education – Aspasia	
XI. PARTY GROWTH	132
Republican Cockades – Almost Minister to France – The Jay Treaty – Republican Defeat – Virginia Breaks a Promise	

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XII. BURR STOOPS TO CONQUER	145
The Lowly Asemblyman - Almost a Brigadier - Strange Bedfellows - The Holland Land Company - Watering a Bank - The Pot and the Kettle	
XIII. THE SECOND AMERICAN REVOLUTION	167
Burr Drafts a Ticket - Tammany Marches to the Polls - Clinton or Burr - Hamilton Writes a Pamphlet - Downfall of Federalism	
XIV. JEFFERSON OR BURR	188
Premonitory Murmurs - The Federalists Take Stock - Republican Fears - The House Votes - The House Elects - Cause and Effects	
XV. VICE-PRESIDENT BURR	210
Pride Goeth - The Spoils of Office - Grim Prospects and Idle Dalliance - The Judiciary Bill - Sundry Errors in Tactics	
XVI. THE LAST STRUGGLE FOR POWER	236
Escape Fantasies - Jefferson in the Saddle - Burr for Governor	
XVII. TRAGIC DUEL	246
Provocation - Apologia - Pistols for Two; Coffee for One - Indicted for Murder - Southern Journey	
XVIII. THE IMPEACHMENT OF JUSTICE CHASE	261
Jefferson Suddenly Courts Burr - Trial and Acquittal - A Long Farewell - L'Envoi	
XIX. BACKGROUNDS FOR THE CONSPIRACY	270
Westward the Course of Empire - Hamilton and Miranda - Foreign Aid - Creole Grievances - "The Finished Scoundrel"	
XX. WESTERN JOURNEY	296
Houseboat on the Ohio - Yrujo Starts a Backfire - Finances - Recruiting - Plot and Counterplot	
XXI. NEVER TO RETURN	320
The Fatal Cipher - The Bastrop Purchase - The Cat Jumps - The Betrayal	
XXII. THE MAN HUNT STARTS	344
Accusations in Kentucky - Action in Washington - Attack on the Island - Odyssey	
XXIII. DICTATORSHIP IN NEW ORLEANS	364
Gooseflesh and Sword Rattling - Surrender in Mississippi - Vindication - Escape and Arrest - Via Dolorosa	

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXIV. THE STAGE IS SET	387
Convicted in Advance - Preliminary Trials	
XXV. TRIED FOR TREASON	396
The Titans Gather - Marshall Defines Treason - Court Convenes - The President is Subpoenaed - The Mammoth of Iniquity - The Grand Jury Indicts	
XXVI. ON TRIAL	424
Oranges and Jail - Arrest of Testimony - The Misdemeanor Is Tried - Further Commitment - Mob Spirit	
XXVII. MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY	449
Flight - England Is Not Interested - The Grand Tour - Swedish Journey - Hamlet and Goethe	
XXVIII. FAILURE IN FRANCE	471
Proposals to Napoleon - Desperate Straits - England Again - Exile's Return	
XXIX. DECLINING YEARS	496
Double Tragedy - The Eden Case - Of Many Matters - Old and Wealthy Woman - Finale - L'Envoi	
NOTES	519
BIBLIOGRAPHY	547
INDEX	555

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NATHAN SCHACHNER

New York City
January, 1937

ILLUSTRATIONS

Aaron Burr, 1802	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
Reverend Aaron Burr	28
Aaron Burr, in Youth	29
Colonel Burr's Watch	76
Theodosia Burr	77
Alexander Hamilton	116
Richmond Hill Mansion	117
A Circular Issued by the Manhattan Company, 1802	148
Collect Pond, 1802, New York City	149
Matthew L. Davis	188
Hitherto Unpublished Letter from Burr to Jefferson	189
DeWitt Clinton	212
"A Genuine View of the Parties in an Affair of Honor After the Fifth Shot, at Hobuken, 31st July, 1802"	213
Burr-Lewis Campaign Poster, 1804	244
A Contemporary Election Broadside, 1804	245
Aaron Burr, 1802-1804	260
Theodosia Burr Alston, 1802	261
Aaron Burr, 1805	276
General James Wilkinson	277
Mr. and Mrs. Harman Blennerhassett	308
Andrew Jackson	309
Cipher Letter From Burr to Wilkinson, July 29, 1806	324

	FACING PAGE
Key to Burr-Wilkinson Cipher	324
Theodosia Burr Alston, 1811	364
The Arrest of Aaron Burr	365
Thomas Jefferson	404
John Marshall	405
Aaron Burr, in Old Age	452
Letter from Burr to G. W. Lathrop, 1814-1815 (?)	453
Aaron Burr, Aged 78	500
Madame Jumel	501

CHAPTER I ANCESTRAL VOICES

I. RESPECTABLE BURRS

I HAVE never known, in any country," declared John Adams, second President of the United States, "the prejudice in favor of birth, parentage and descent more conspicuous than in the instance of Colonel Burr."¹

The phraseology of the testy old man, reminiscing publicly in the year 1815, was singularly inept, for neither his own context nor the facts themselves disclose that Aaron Burr's meteoric rise, nor, for that matter, his as precipitous fall, was in anywise influenced by a general public preoccupation with the incidence of "birth, parentage and descent."

Nevertheless the major premise remains intact. It would be difficult, in that early period of American history, to discover another whose lineage, on either branch of the convergent family tree, was as proudly intellectual, as earnestly God-fearing, as solid and substantial in the things of the world, as that of Aaron Burr.

The first paternal Burr of whom there is any authentic public record was a certain Jehue, who migrated with Winthrop's fleet in 1630 to the bleak and uninviting shores of Massachusetts for the greater glory of God and the possible enhancement of his own economic status.

There is no reason to doubt that he found satisfaction on both counts, for he very early occupied a solid niche in the affairs of that theocratic Colony. In Roxbury, where he first settled, he was appointed Overseer of Roads and Bridges; when, seized with restlessness and lured by the reports of broad, fertile acres, he pushed on to Agawam, in the newly established Colony of Connecticut, he was soon its Tax Collector, probably the first. When he finally removed to Fairfield, in the same Colony, he was chosen Town Commissioner and representative in the General Court. In short, by the time he died in 1672 he had placed the name of Burr on a very respectable basis indeed.

Nor did his descendants let him down. They increased and multiplied in accordance with the Biblical injunction, and they steadily and uninterruptedly added new laurels to the family

escutcheon. Their roots went deep into the Town of Fairfield; their influence spread over the Colony. They became deputies and members of the Council, lawyers and magistrates. Their activities ranged from officiating at witch trials to service in the House of Deputies. They became wealthy landowners and they went to war. They were captains, and majors and colonels, and, from all accounts, acquitted themselves most creditably.

Jehu Burr, Junior, for instance, one of four sons sired by Jehue the Elder, followed in his father's footsteps, representing Fairfield in the Court of Deputies and then in the Standing Council. He was one of the first in the youthful Colonies to advocate actively the adoption of a public-school system supported by state funds. This notable heresy of his, however, met with defeat at the hands of his sterner associates. He died in 1692, leaving ten children.

Major John Burr, his brother, achieved his warlike title in the ever-enduring Indian Wars. He, too, was a deputy, a senator, and later a magistrate. It was his proud distinction to be one of the judges at the trial of Mercy Desborough in 1692 for practices that smacked strongly of witchcraft. He voted equally with his fellows for the death sentence.

Then there was Judge Peter Burr, son of Jehu, Jr., who was graduated from that early cradle of the arts and theology, Harvard, and went into the law. He held at one time or another most of the offices within the gift of Connecticut, and ended as Chief Judge of the Superior Court. He died in 1724, perhaps the most eminent of the early Burrs.

There were others, too. Colonel John Burr, grandson of Jehue, Sr., who found time from his political and judicial activities to behave very gallantly in the New England expedition against Port Royal. Nor did they prevent him from becoming one of the largest landowners in the Colony. His estate at the time of his death in 1750 was valued at 15,288 pounds, an immense sum in those days.

Colonel Andrew Burr, grandson of Major John, followed the regular pattern. Law, magistrate, Speaker of the House, and a distinguished soldier who participated in the capture of that formidable fortress, Louisburg. His death occurred in 1763.

Nor were these all. Others of the Burrs, not mentioned, had claim to a certain prominence and the seated respect of their fellows. There were ministers of the Word of God among them, as was natural in pious New England, and they married well, all of them, forming a close-knit web with the first families of the Colonies, so that the strain was deepened and enriched.

Aaron Burr's grandfather on the paternal side, Daniel Burr, strangely enough, had little to commend him as far as positive achievements were concerned. It was true that he was comfortably wealthy and the owner of broad, well-tended lands in Fairfield, but these were inherited matters. He was a good, honest gentleman who minded his own affairs and tended his acres without too much ado in the world at large. But in one particular he was notable. He begot Aaron, who in due time was to become the Reverend Aaron Burr, the second President of Princeton College, and who in turn fathered Aaron Burr, the subject of this biography.²

2. THE ODOR OF SANCTITY

The Reverend Aaron Burr was an important figure in the intellectual and religious movements of the pre-Revolutionary era. Unfortunately, even to those who are at all aware of his existence, he is completely overshadowed by the fierce torrents of light — and of heat — that have beaten interminably upon his brilliant and enigmatical son. Only at Princeton, of which institution he was almost the sole begetter, do they still do him honor. Which is a pity, for he deserves better of posterity.

He was born January 4, 1715, within the limits of the present town of Fairfield, in the Colony of Connecticut. He duly attended the College of Yale at New Haven as all well-born young men of the Colony were accustomed to do. There he proved to be a studious, brilliant youth, small, well-formed, and quick of wit, even as his son after him. A graduate at the age of nineteen with honors in Latin and Greek, he won a scholarship that permitted two further years of graduate study at the College.³ But, he writes in 1736, suddenly "God saw fit to open my eyes and show me what a miserable creature I was." Fortunately, however, "it pleased God at length to reveal his Son to me in the gospel as an all-sufficient Saviour, and I hope inclined me to receive him on the terms of the gospel."⁴ Whereupon he promptly offered himself as a candidate for orders.

This was not a novel course for the young students of the time. The formalism into which the Protestant churches of England and America alike had set as in a mold had aroused much protest from the earnestly religious. The revolt came almost simultaneously in the Old and New Worlds. Jonathan Edwards, Burr's future father-in-law, had started a hornet's nest in Boston; John Wesley had performed the same service in England, and was even now, in this year of young Aaron's conversion, proselytizing with great en-

thusiasm among the heathen Indians and the more heathen white folk of the Province of Georgia. George Whitefield was stirring the congregations of London in his master's absence to a frenzy and was soon to depart for his torrential tour of America.

The yeast of discontent fermented rapidly. The early Protestantism, the Calvinism of old, had jellied into something suspiciously like the authoritarian hierarchies of the Catholic and Episcopalian Churches. Salvation and the approaches to God were locked gates, the keys of which were closely held by the official ministry, and woe betide any man who sought grace and salvation outside the official folds.

Now, this had not been Calvin's doctrine, nor the doctrine of Luther and Hus. Narrow in their vision they might have been, cheerless and dour in their conceptions of a merciless and vindictive God who separated with harsh finality the elect from the damned, but never had they dreamed that their names would be used as a smoke-screen for the very things they detested and despised more than all else. What was their quarrel with the ancient Churches? That priest and deacon and bishop and pope had interposed themselves between man and his Maker. Protestantism was a *personal* religion, a meeting of man's naked soul with God. No minister might intervene except to exhort and advise and direct.

The revival of pure religious emotion that swept the Colonies was an attempt to restore that early nakedness. It caught the Colleges, whose very inception and maintenance were for the greater glory of God and the generous nurture of new ministers to preach the Gospel. No wonder young Aaron, reared of pious parents, surrounded by religious influences, was converted. It was quite the fashion.

"My first sermon," he wrote, "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."⁵

He had found his life-work. Regularly ordained in 1738, the Reverend Aaron Burr was to remain for almost a score of years as the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Newark.

His fame increased apace. The so-called Great Awakening was now in full swing — that remarkable religious revival of which we have just spoken. It swept the emotional depths that lay underneath the hard New England Puritan crust like fire through stubble grass. Jonathan Edwards was thundering in Massachusetts. Whitefield had finally come across the sea and was rousing vast concourses of people to frenzies of religious hysteria. Mr. Burr, intellectual and classicist though he was, was nevertheless sufficiently young and ardent to cast himself headlong into the stream.

Already he had been in communication with Jonathan Edwards. He made religious pilgrimages in 1739 and 1740 to drink at the spiritual fountainhead. And once again in the year 1740 to hear Whitefield preach. When the clamoring people crowded unyielding walls to suffocation, the great revivalist shifted the vast concourse of souls eager to be saved out into the reaches of Boston Common. As many as ten thousand hearkened to his fiery discourse in a single session. So great was the press that in one church there was panic, and some five were killed and many more seriously injured.

The Reverend Aaron Burr was deeply impressed. He laid the basis of a close friendship with the Englishman, and confided to his diary that he was becoming more and more pleased with the man.⁶ In any event, he returned to his pastoral flock filled with a new zeal for the Lord's work. He preached to his rapt followers in his soft, mellifluous voice, his periods elegantly studied and composed, yet capable of arousing enthusiasm almost as extreme as the sterner quantities of Jonathan Edwards, or the vehement exaltations of George Whitefield.

Very early he became a leader in the Great Awakening. His sermons achieved publication and sold widely. He viewed with alarm the parlous and sinful state of the times, as all revivalists must; he glanced with awful trembling at the prospect of eventual popish domination; he saw Braddock's disaster as a visitation of God upon them for their sins; and he animadverted on politics, on French Bourbonism, and on the defenseless condition of the Colonies.⁷

Meanwhile he was gaining new laurels in a different field. Pious parents sent their sons to him to be taught English and the classical languages. His parsonage at the corner of Broad and William Streets in Newark was his schoolhouse. He proved to be the perfect pedagogue. The pupils loved him and imbibed from his lips a thirst for learning. The school grew and the circle of his

teaching widened. He wrote a Latin Grammar that rapidly became standard and passed through numerous editions.

But there was something lacking. The Great Awakening had grown and burgeoned mightily under the zealous ministrations of Edwards, Burr and others. Yet there were still untapped wells of souls to be sought out and saved. Out in the hinterlands, on the frontiers, in Pennsylvania and the Southlands, were men and women and little children who perished because there were no preachers of the right persuasion to exhort and open their eyes.

So there were conferences. A training-school for the Presbyterian faith was urgently needed, a breeder of missionaries to the unenlightened. Nor — considering that the Reverend Aaron was himself a teacher of the humanities and a lover of fine books and finer thoughts — were the other adjuncts of learning to be disregarded.

Accordingly, in 1746, Aaron Burr, Jonathan Dickinson, John Pierson, Ebenezer Pemberton, and other gentlemen, both lay and of the cloth, petitioned Jonathan Belcher, Governor of the Province of New Jersey, for “the Establishment of a publick Seminary of Literature in New-Jersey.”⁸

The good Governor was an enthusiastic devotee and friend of Mr. Burr, and sympathetic with the general aims of the petitioning gentlemen. The charter was granted, and Jonathan Dickinson became the first President of the infant College of New-Jersey.⁹

The College was first established in May, 1747, at Elizabethtown under very modest auspices. President Dickinson's tenure of office, however, was pathetically short, for he died in August of the same year. The *eight* students who comprised the institution were thereupon removed to Newark and installed under the ministering wing of the Reverend Aaron Burr. In September, 1748, a new charter was applied for and granted, and Aaron Burr was unanimously chosen the second President of the College of New-Jersey.

Whereupon the College prospered and waxed mightily. President Burr threw himself into his duties with gusto and alacrity. One suspects that they were more congenial to his sensitive soul than even the pursuit of the Great Awakening. “Under his immediate Tuition and Government,” exulted the Trustees, “this Society has flourished far beyond the most raised and sanguine Expectations. The Number of Students has increased, in the short Space of five Years, from Eight or Ten, to about Sixty; besides near Forty in the Grammar-School.”¹⁰

It was not all smooth sailing, however. The College, perforce, for want of accommodations, was conducted at the parsonage,

along with President Burr's other multifarious duties. He still was Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Newark; he still was an active agent in the religious ferment of the times. And the management of the two-story, double stone building with its wing kitchens, barn, yard piled high with winter logs, garden and adjoining pasturage, as well as the temporal care of the attendant pupils, was soon to become a difficult task for a ripely mature bachelor. There was only one solution — marriage!

The Reverend Aaron Burr was thirty-seven. He was a famous preacher, the President of a College, his personality winning and his culture deep. It is a wonder that he had managed to evade matrimony thus long. He cast speculative eyes around, and decided rather suddenly on Esther Edwards, daughter of Jonathan Edwards, his old friend and co-worker in the tillings of the Lord. They were married on June 29, 1752, in Newark. She was only twenty-one and one of eleven children. The Reverend Jonathan Edwards had likewise heeded and obeyed the Biblical injunction.

The circumstances of this hasty courtship and marriage were rather curious. They excited a great deal of comment and some good-natured jesting at the time. The *New York Gazette* referred to it as a marriage “in the patriarchal mode” and wittily advised the pupils to follow the teacher in this as in all other matters.¹¹

A young student of the College described the whole affair for the benefit of his parents in language that deserves quotation. “In the latter end of May,” he wrote, “he [Burr] took a journey into N England, and during his absence he made a visit of but three days to the Rev. Mr. Edward's daughter, at Stockbridge, in which short time, tho' he had no acquaintance with nor, indeed, even seen the lady these six years, I suppose he accomplished his whole design; for it was not above a fortnight after his return here before he sent a young fellow . . . into N Engl. to conduct her and her mother down here.

“They came to town on Saturday evening, the 27th ulto., and on the Monday evening followg. the nuptial ceremonies were celebrated. . . . I think her a person of great beauty, tho' I must say that, in my opinion, she is rather too young (being 21 years of age) for the President.”¹²

Yet this same observant young critic was obliged to confess shortly after that “I can't omit acquainting you that our President enjoys all the happiness the married state can afford. . . . From the little acquaintance I have with his lady, I think her a woman of very good sense, of a genteel and virtuous education, amiable

in her person, of great affability and agreeableness in conversation, and a very excellent Oeconomist."¹³

He was not mistaken in his judgment. For the remainder of their lamentably short lives they were to be happy and utterly content with each other, despite the disparity of their years.

With the appearance of Esther Edwards the lines of greatness converged. To the sturdy heredity of the Burrs was added now the taint of genius that the Edwards possessed, not to mention the alleged ducal nobility of the Pierponts.

3. HIGH PRIEST OF CALVINISM

For Esther's father was that overwhelming Jonathan Edwards, theologian and Calvinist extraordinary, whose presence cast a huge shadow over colonial America immediately prior to the Revolution.

Born in 1703 of a line of respectable ministers and wealthy lawyer-merchants, he achieved the seemingly quite usual "soul awakening" while an undergraduate at Yale. He entered the ministry, preached a space in New York and was invited back to New Haven to teach. There he met Sarah Pierpont, daughter of a minister and Professor of Moral Philosophy at Yale, was smitten with the sweet sight of God's handiwork, and married.

He soon received a call to preach at Northampton, Massachusetts, and it was in that community that he reared the tremendous edifice of his theologic doctrine and wrote those voluminous volumes that are the despair of students of religious philosophy today. It was in that small community that he builded the largest Protestant congregation in the world, and preached unremittingly for twenty years to hysteria-ridden, emotionally unstrung auditors.

It is difficult to appraise Jonathan Edwards' work adequately. Many have tried it — the great divine has not suffered from a lack of biographers or interpreters. But too often they have fallen back on the more dramatic and sensational elements of his career. The Great Awakening, of which we have spoken in connection with the Reverend Aaron Burr, was, in America, largely his doing. But he was neither the originator nor the founder; the roots go back to England, to the Wesleys and to Whitefield whom Edwards met and admitted to closest friendship.

It is true that he was a Puritan of Puritans, that he remodeled the primitive Calvinism and fashioned it into a logical, coherent intellectual system. It is also true that he held forth in his pulpit with stern, unbending righteousness, flaying savagely the alleged

sins of his time, the dancing, the bundling — that he thundered the everlasting wrath, and drew for the horrified, yet fascinated gaze of his congregation the flames of Hell, the predestined damnation that awaited all but the elect — that he detailed pitilessly for their delectation the last refined agonies of the irremediably lost.

But there was something more to the man, to the cause that he sponsored. Religion had become formal, theocratic, a thing of government and power rather than of personal inner light. He made his dramatic decision to save the ancient Calvinism, to restore the old Congregational dominance, where the minister was but the servant, the exhorter, rather than the fount of all salvation. But he was caught, wittingly or unwittingly, in forces far removed. The Great Awakening, with its evangelical fervor and revivalist frenzy, as has been pointed out, was not a local manifestation; it was a worldwide movement.

Edwards, as well as Wesley, perceived that the trouble with the Church was that it had not reached the masses it pretended to serve. The religion of Calvin and the Puritans had congealed into a narrow aristocracy, essentially associated with wealth and birth. The lowly, the vast incoherent people to whom Christ had preached, were outside the fold, left to their own devices, barred from the seats of the haughty, comfortable congregations of the established towns. It was to bring these lowly into the fold, to bring emotional, personal religion to the inchoate frontiers, that the revivalists labored.

Theologically, Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley were poles apart, but in their social objectives they were essentially the same. The great divine's work was one of the earliest notes in American life for a more democratic regime, religious as well as political. It was a failure religiously. The Congregationalists were left ultimately divided and torn. Neither Edwards nor Aaron Burr, the elder, sensed the full implications of what they were doing, of the unloosing of democratic forces that necessarily ensued, of the strange fruit of which they had helped plant the seed.

The Reverend Jonathan Edwards especially failed. He was deposed from his own parish after twenty years because he was too unyielding, too harsh and narrow in his applications of theology to everyday life. The emotional fervor had died out slowly among his congregation — being but human people — while their pastor grew more and more harsh in his personal judgments and in his delineations of the requisites for salvation. The final and disastrous conflict between shepherd and flock arose out of the admis-

sion of sinners to the Sacrament. The congregation, uneasy and increasingly restive, insisted on a more liberal rule. But Edwards was adamant — only the saintly, the elect, were admissible. Being of the elect was no light matter. It required a blaze of inner illumination, a public confession that one had been touched with the divine, pure essence, a long, searching catechism and probation period from which many otherwise quite good and worthy people shrank. Not all of them were exhibitionists.

As a result Jonathan Edwards was cast out by a narrow majority and moved to Stockbridge, in western Massachusetts. This was a frontier settlement in the heart of the Indian country, subject to all the hardships of primitive life, to the ravages of wild beasts and of wilder Indians who seemingly did not appreciate to the full his missionary activities. His family, including little Esther, went with him, to share the fatigues and dangers and grinding poverty with uncomplaining fortitude. It was from Stockbridge that the Reverend Aaron Burr retrieved Esther and brought her back to Newark to preside over his bachelor establishment and the young students of the College.

4. THE DAUGHTER OF PURITANS

That the harshness and unflinching gloom of Puritan households have been greatly exaggerated and overdrawn is sufficiently proved in the person of Esther Burr herself. She had been reared in the very pith and center of the Calvinist domain, yet all contemporary accounts and the more concrete evidence of her own unpublished letters and private diary disclose an alert, lively young woman, sincerely and unaffectedly religious, it is true, but not untouched with normal feminine frailties, a proneness to laughter and gossip, and a certain light, skimming touch on sex and marriage that consort oddly with the supposedly sacred nature of those hoary institutions. And she adored her father, that thundering fount of wrath and brimstone and hellfire!

She slipped easily and graciously into the life at Newark. Her father saw to it that her spiritual welfare was not neglected. On September 17, 1753, the Reverend Jonathan Edwards of Stockbridge wrote to the Reverend Aaron Burr of Newark with all formality that the Church of Stockbridge at a meeting had unanimously recommended Mrs. Esther Burr, formerly Edwards, of their Communion, as worthy of entering "your stated Communion as a member in full standing."¹⁴

But there were other things that interested her. Their first child

was born May 3, 1754, and was christened Sarah Burr — known ever after to her family and intimates as Sally. Yet, with Sally, an infant barely six months old, in her arms, she could still write her sister Lucy, at Stockbridge, all the gossip of the town. Curiously this news showed a fine preoccupation with the fundamentals of life — births, marriages and deaths. "Miss Elez-h Eaton is like to be married. . . ." she reports, "ant you glad? Now I think of another piec of News. Joseph Woodruffs Wife has got a fine Son. One thing brings another, I thought I had no news. Mrs. Serjent is like to have a Child, pray what do you think of this? I know you will laugh . . . Loyer Ogdens Wife lately lay in with Twains, two Daughters & lost em both."¹⁵

She loved her minister-teacher husband. When he had gone to Boston on College business, she confided to her diary and her friend, Miss Prince, of that Puritan and maritime stronghold, that "O my dear it seems as if Mr. Burr had been gon a little Age! & it is yet but *one Fortnight!* I dont know what I shall do with myself the rest of the time. I am out of patience already. I imagine now this Eve Mr. Burr is at your house, *Father* is there & some others, you all set in the Middleroom, *Father* has the talk, & Mr. Burr has the *laugh*, Mr. Prince gets room to stick in a word once in a while, the rest of you set & see, & hear, & make observations to your selves, Miss Janny amongst the rest, & when you get up stairs you tell what you think, & wish I was there too."¹⁶ Dour, repressed Calvinist households!

There were consolations, however, for her husband's necessary absences. The Governor of New-Jersey, the estimable Jonathan Belcher, came to take her to the militia parade, and he and his lady stayed for tea.

Her life was a round of entertaining company, of dining from eight to ten ministers with dreadful regularity, of domestic affairs, of gossip, of attending sermons, of meetings of the Presbytery, of hearkening to the state of her soul and a little aghast at what she found, of tenderness for her husband, of antic fun withal and a quizzical attitude toward life.

Her diary is a remarkable document, filled to the brim with day to day matters, by turns sunny, sprightly, and religiously exalted.

"Pray what do you think every body marrye in, or about winter for," she inquires. "Tis quite merry, isn't it? I realy belive tis for fear of laying cold, & for the want of a bed fellow. Well, my advice to such ye same with ye Apostles, Let them marry — & you know the reason given by him, as well as I do — Tis better to Marry than

to — " But when it came down to cases, alas! " Cousin Billy Vance is going to be Married — did you ever hear the like? Pray what can he do with a Wife? He is more of a Woman than of a man." ¹⁷

Of her husband she writes vehemently, passionately. " Do you think I would change my *good Mr. Burr* for any person, or thing or all things on the Erth? *No sure!* not for a Million such Worlds as this [that] had *no Mr. B — r on it.*"

Life went on apace. The Lord's work had to be done; the training of the students, the needs of the infant College required the unremitting efforts of the Reverend Mr. Burr. It was soon evident that the cramped quarters of his parsonage were too limited, that the multitudinous requirements on his time and energy were too great to be united in a single individual. He had to decide between the First Presbyterian Church and the College. He decided in favor of the latter.

New quarters for the College had to be found. Meetings of the Trustees were held. The matter was debated. Suitable sites were discussed. The little village of Prince Town was finally decided on. It was well situated, in the heart of good farming country and great forests from which the winters' firewood could be readily obtained; it was the halfway station on the stage lines between New York and Philadelphia. The chief difficulty, however, was the raising of sufficient funds.

A great campaign was instituted under the immediate personal attention of President Burr. Governor Belcher, his close friend, assisted in every way possible. Funds were solicited among the elect and well-disposed in the Colonies; a vigorous drive was made abroad. Contributions poured in from Scotland, Ireland and " South Britain." Mr. Burr expressed his complete satisfaction with the agreeable returns. Over 1000 pounds came in from Scotland alone. They would " be able before long," he hoped, " to support a Professor of Divinity, that Office at present lies on the President, with a considerable part of the Instruction in other branches of Literature." ¹⁸

Nor were the faithful the only sources of supply. The unregenerate disgorged too, via the worldly method of lotteries. Burr petitioned for, and received, permission from the Governor and General Court of Connecticut to draw " a Lottery in their Colony for the benefit of said College." ¹⁹ Similar permission was obtained elsewhere. In Philadelphia, in New York, in Boston, in the South, the tickets were sold, the prizes distributed, and the resulting proceeds used to swell the College treasury.

President Burr did not withhold his own purse. He purchased

the lottery tickets on a generous scale — too generously, thought his somewhat resentful wife. " Mr. Burr has put Some Tickets into ye Philadelphia Lottery," she complains, " & I think we have lost enough by lotteries. We have lost about a hundred pounds York money by em, & I'm not willing to loose any more unless Duty evidently calls." ²⁰

Finally, in February, 1755, the contracts were let, and the building begun. He was busier than ever. To all his other duties was added the supervision of the slowly growing structures in far-off Prince Town. Yet he found time to exhort and preach with renewed vigor to his Newark flock. Mr. Burr, records his wife, " has been remarkably Stired up to be fervent in his preaching of late. O if the Lord would bless his labours! " ²¹

Nor did he forget that learning, like charity, begins at home. Esther had received the normal girl's education. Her spelling was weird and wonderful, her command of foreign languages nil. Wherefore " we have a French Master in the House with us. He is lerning the Scholars french & Mr. Burr is lerning too, he knew Somthing of it before. Mr. Burr has had a mind [that] I should lern, but I have no time." Rebellion stirred in the wifely bosom, albeit somewhat apologetically. " The married women has Somthing else to care about besides lerning French tho if I had time I shoul be very fond of lerning." ²²