

Military Intelligence Service. He was quickwitted and observant as well as brave. He interviewed deserters from the British camp at Brunswick and prepared a careful account of "the Situation, Strength and Intentions of the Enemy . . . taken at Princeton, Mar. 10, 1777," for Staff use. At that time Putnam's entire division for the defense of Princeton and its environs consisted of some 350 effectives.³²

Shortly after, Putnam was ordered to Peekskill to take command of the American lines across Westchester County. Once again, Burr was set to Intelligence work, a task at which he had proved himself most adept. On July 14, 1777, Putnam ordered him to proceed to the Sound and "transmit . . . without delay the intelligence you shall from time to time receive of the movements of the enemy, or any of their fleets."³³

CHAPTER V

THE WAR GOES ON

1. PROMOTION

IT costs money to raise and equip troops, and money — that is, good hard cash as opposed to the product of the printing-press — was very much lacking in the coffers of the Continental Congress. Yet the war had to be fought, and farmers and mechanics induced to enlist by the dangling of bonuses and the prospect of a regular wage. So a vicious system arose. There were plenty of wealthy men in the Colonies — patriots, it must be understood — who, while unwilling to be taxed for the sinews of warfare, succumbed readily to the lure of self-glory and the luster of a military title.

Whereupon the privilege was accorded those with ample money-bags to raise regiments at their own expense, and in return, the illustrious name of the donor was forthwith attached to the troop, while the donor himself — merchant, trader, land speculator, whatnot — was commissioned a Colonel by a grateful Congress, and placed immediately in command. No wonder a good many of these regiments were slightly less than useful to the harassed commander-in-chief!

William Malcolm — a worthy, and wealthy merchant of the City of New York — was one of these. He raised his regiment, was duly commissioned, and behold, Colonel Malcolm's Regiment, completely accoutered and consisting of some 260 men, was ordered to a station on the Ramapo, in New Jersey. But war, even in an encampment, was not all beer and skittles, as the worthy and rotund Colonel soon discovered. In the first place he had taken as his officers the young sons of wealth and influence, and they were not only without any experience in military matters, but resented any interruptions in their former easy-going civilian life. The men in the ranks were the usual bonus hunters, and similarly averse to discipline and the harshness of the army. So that the regiment rapidly grew unmanageable, much to the alarm and inward quakings of its most unwarlike Colonel.

So it was that Major Aaron Burr was suddenly given an opportunity. He had been almost a year with General Putnam as Staff

Officer, without promotion. Now, dated June 29, 1777, he received official announcement from General Washington of his appointment as Lieutenant-Colonel in the Continental Army and his immediate attachment to the regiment commanded by Colonel Malcolm, then in camp on the Ramapo.

But the ambitious young soldier, who had been gnawing his inwards in silence, was not appeased by the belated recognition. The flood gates of his wrath opened in one of the most remarkable responses from a junior officer to a Commander-in-Chief on record.

"I am . . . constrained to observe," he penned sarcastically, "that the late date of my appointment subjects me to the command of many who were younger in the service, and junior officers the last campaign . . . I would beg to know whether it was any misconduct in me, or any extraordinary merit or services in them, which entitled the gentlemen lately put over me to that preference? Or, if a uniform diligence and attention to duty has marked my conduct since the formation of the army, whether I may not expect to be restored to that rank of which I have been deprived, rather, I flatter myself, by accident than design?"¹

There is no record of General Washington's reply, but doubtless he silently laid this thinly veiled accusation alongside of certain other matters as cause for resentment against this very daring young man. Yet, in spite of his complaint, Aaron Burr was almost the youngest Lieutenant-Colonel in the Army. He was twenty-one!

The portly Colonel Malcolm was only too happy to welcome his newly appointed assistant. In spite of his youth and small size Aaron Burr had achieved for himself an enviable reputation, and he was a veteran of numerous campaigns. In fact, Colonel Malcolm was so grateful that he hastily offered to retire from the regimental scene altogether and leave the young officer completely in control as Acting Colonel. "You shall have all the honour of disciplining and fighting the regiment," he told him with a magnanimous gesture, "while I will be its father."²

Whereupon he retired with his family to a comfortable spot some twenty miles from the scene, breathing, no doubt, a huge sigh of relief. What, after all, had a peaceful merchant to do with war's alarms? Sufficient that he had his military title, that "Malcolm's Regiment" it was in all dispatches. A very nice young fellow, brisk and competent, was this new Lieutenant-Colonel Burr. He was very welcome to the job.

2. MARTINET BURR

Burr took charge at once. His hand was firm, yet even. He tightened the lax discipline, instituted a regular series of strict drills and rigorous inspections. The lounging, sullen men were made to toe the mark, and toe it with the alert smartness of well-trained soldiers. Those of his officers who resisted the new order of things, or could not accommodate themselves, were dismissed summarily from the regiment. For two months he labored incessantly. By the end of that period he had a disciplined group, increased by his efforts to 300 effectives, and, surprisingly, he had made himself the idol of the men in the ranks and of officers alike. He never employed whippings or other forms of corporal punishment, then quite the usual thing in the patriot army. The men knew him to be strict, yet fair and just, and ready to listen to their reasonable complaints. He tended the sick himself, and opened his private purse freely to the necessitous. "His attention and care of the men," averred a subaltern, "were such as I never saw, nor anything approaching it, in any other officer, though I served under many."³

Yet he found time from his arduous duties to meet, and visit socially, a certain Mrs. Theodosia Prevost, wife of an English officer, who lived in Paramus with her mother, her sister, and her five children.

In September, 1777, while the regiment still lay at "Suffren's, in the Clove," news was received that the enemy had gathered at Hackensack in great force and was advancing into the country. Colonel Burr immediately put his force into motion to oppose their passage. While on the march an express came from General Putnam ordering him to retire with the public stores into the mountains rather than risk battle with a greatly superior enemy. The young Colonel replied firmly to the messenger — he was forever disobeying orders he conceived ill-judged — that "he could not run away from an enemy he had not seen, and that he would be answerable for the public stores and for his men."

They arrived at Paramus, some sixteen miles away, by sunset. There they found considerable bodies of the militia, hastily assembled, in great alarm and disorder, and doing more damage to the neighboring farms than to the still-distant enemy.

Burr set them to work at once repairing the fences they had trampled down, and moved forward with thirty of his own men and some militiamen to act as guides to reconnoiter the enemy. He found the advance picket posts some three miles from Hacken-

sack. He at once ordered his little troop into a nearby wood to get some sleep — they had marched under forced draft over thirty miles since noon — and went on alone to spy out the size of the opposing force. Within a half-hour he was back, had aroused his sleeping men, and led them stealthily between the outflung sentinels until only a few yards separated them from the main body of the pickets, without an alarm having been given.

The surprise was complete. Most of the enemy force was killed, and the rest taken prisoner without the loss of a single American. Still unresting, Burr sent an express back to Paramus to bring up the regiment and rally the country. But the British had had enough of this most unorthodox war. They retreated the very next day, leaving behind them the greater part of the cattle and plunder they had garnered. Burr wished to pursue and attack, but General Putnam had sent another, and this time peremptory order, commanding him to join without delay the main Continental Army, then in Pennsylvania.⁴

Burr bowed to the inevitable. By November, 1777, Malcolm's Regiment was at Whitemarsh, about twenty miles from Philadelphia. A few weeks later they went into winter quarters at Valley Forge. That long, dark winter of cold and starvation and suffering, while the British dined and wined in the warmth and luxury of Philadelphia; that winter when the fortunes of the embattled Colonies seemed at their lowest ebb!

It was still Malcolm's Regiment, but Lieutenant-Colonel Burr was to all intents and purposes its Colonel. Malcolm himself observed the gallant actions of his command with a "father's" pride, and from a safe distance. The Regiment was attached to General Conway's Brigade. Burr's Orderly Books for this period are full of the minutiae of daily routine, enlivened with reports of courts-martial over which he presided, or the results of which were sent to him for approval.

For instance, Private Thomas McCalvy, who was accused of setting fire to gunpowder and thereby burning a fellow soldier's arm, was given two days' extra fatigue; while Thomas Barry, whose offense consisted in plundering the inhabitants, riotous and disorderly behavior, and "insolent and abusive language to officers," was adjudged worthy of 100 lashes "on the bare back." To which Colonel Burr appended in his firm, incisive hand, "the Above Sentences are Approved."⁵

Or that other trial, partaking somewhat of the nature of the ridiculous. "Michl Brannon Accused with taking a Shirt out of

Coll. Burr's Room from among the Clothing without Liberty & wearing the Same, & for Concealing the Shirt in another part of the Room & not putting it among the Clothing." For which the aghast court-martial sentenced him "to Receive 50 Lashes but on account of his Youth beg Leave to Recommend him to the Comdg Officers Clemency." Which recommendation his commanding officer, one Captain Tom, duly noted and graciously remitted half of the required number of lashes.⁶

It was this same Captain Tom, incidentally, for whom Colonel Burr himself had interceded only a month before for having been absent without leave.⁷

3. MUTINY

During that winter of 1777-8, Burr's active mind teemed with plans. He hated the enforced idleness, the dreary round of routine, the loss of morale and the widespread suffering. He submitted to Washington a carefully thought-out plan for a sudden attack against the British forces encamped on Staten Island, and offered to lead it himself. Washington turned the plan down. But there was another job which it was felt suited the young Colonel's particular talents. What he had done with the erstwhile rebellious, slack-living regiment he commanded had not escaped notice.

A body of militia occupied an important strategic pass known as the Gulf, some eight or ten miles away from the main camp. Their discipline was of the loosest, and time hung heavy on their hands. Some wit conceived the brilliant idea of raising false alarms at regular intervals, so that the bored militia might enjoy the spectacle of the hurried commotion and frenzied arming of the troops at Valley Forge. Surely a nice, innocent pastime, especially in wartime! But the ragged, starving Continentals surprisingly resented being dragged out of their poor enough beds to shiver in the cold. General McDougall, who had formed a vast respect for young Burr's abilities ever since Brooklyn Heights, suggested to Washington that he was the one man in camp to put a stop to such nonsense.

Burr did. He took command of the regiment of practical jokers, kept them under constant, unremitting drill all day, shifted them by quick, forced marches from position to position, instituted a system of rigid policing, made it his business to pay sudden surprise visits to the sentinel lines at all hours of the night and every night, and kept them on the jump generally until the militiamen,

astounded at the taste of real army discipline, determined to murder this martinet youngster who was riding them ragged.

Burr heard of the conspiracy. Without saying a word, he secretly caused the bullets to be drawn from the muskets, and, that night, ordered the rebellious troops to be formed for retreat. Alone he marched along the sullen ranks, saber in hand, eyeing the men closely. Suddenly, as he came opposite one of the ring-leaders, the man stepped forward, leveled his musket, shouted in a loud voice, "Now is your time, my boys," and snapped his empty gun. The young Colonel, quick as light, slashed down with his saber. The blade sliced through the mutineer's right arm, wounding it so badly that it had to be amputated the next day. That ended the mutiny, then and forever. There was some talk of a court-martial for this rough-and-ready method of enforcing discipline, but nothing came of it. Colonel Burr was evidently not a man to be trifled with.

In March, 1778, Malcolm's Regiment, commanded by Burr, was removed from Conway's Brigade and placed in the left wing of Lord Stirling's division. With the coming of summer the war emerged from its frozen quiescence into renewed activity.

The French had finally decided to join openly in the affray, and thereby made the purely local war one of worldwide proportions. Sir Henry Clinton had superseded the amiable, slow-moving Howe in command of the British forces at Philadelphia. With the advent of the French, and believing that the troops at his disposal did not justify a farflung front, he determined to evacuate the Quaker town and concentrate on New York as a base of operations.

Accordingly, he moved out, bag and baggage, and marched across the Jerseys to his proposed destination. Washington broke up camp at Valley Forge and started in pursuit. He caught up with the enemy at Monmouth, and engaged in battle on June 28, 1778.

Colonel Burr and his regiment were in the left wing of the American army, under Lord Stirling's command. Charles Lee, just returned from captivity with the British, and now Major-General, led the attack. At first the Americans were victorious; then Lee made those incomprehensible and disastrous moves which effectually threw away all chance for success and put the enemy in a position to threaten their left flank. Washington galloped up in a passion, swore roundly at the man who had snatched almost certain victory from his grasp, and ordered the lowering General off the field. Then he took personal command,

and re-established the lines; but it was too late. Clinton was able to withdraw his forces intact and pursue his interrupted march.

Colonel Burr commanded a brigade during the battle, consisting of his own regiment and some Pennsylvania troops. Shortly after the general action commenced, he discovered a detachment of the enemy breaking out of a patch of woods. Instantly he put his brigade into motion to stop the threat to Stirling's flank. To make contact it was necessary to cross a muddy lake over which a bridge had been thrown. Half of the brigade had passed over successfully under a galling enemy fire; the other half was advancing on the double-quick. Colonel Barber, aide to Washington, rode up with orders from his Chief commanding a halt. Burr protested that in their present position they were exposed to the concentrated fire of the enemy without adequate support, and that the balance of the brigade must cross before a halt could safely be called. Barber repeated that his orders were peremptory, and Burr was forced to obey. As a result, the divided brigade, sundered by the intervening bridge, suffered severely under the fire of an overwhelming enemy. Lieutenant-Colonel Dummer, second in command, was killed, and Burr's horse was shot under him. Sullenly and slowly, the advanced troops retreated back over the bridge. Another count in the reciprocal score between Colonel Burr and General Washington!

4. SECRET SERVICE

It was during this battle that Burr laid the seeds of that ill health which was to dog him for a considerable period, and force him eventually to resign from the army. The fatigue, the exertions, and the blazing sun, combined to give a case of sunstroke and a chronic diarrhea that only the severest regimen was able to overcome.

He was ordered immediately, however, to Elizabethtown, to gather intelligence of the enemy's possible future movements. He was instructed to ascertain "what are the preparations of shipping for embarkation of foot or horse?—what expeditions on hand?—whether up the North river, Connecticut, or West Indies?"⁸

Burr was already noted as a gallant officer, a disciplinarian and organizer, and a master of Intelligence. His activities in the latter branch of the service furnish the clue to the facility—which appeared almost miraculous to his political opponents in later life

— with which he was able to gain complete foreknowledge of their most secret plans and documents, and use that foreknowledge with crushing effect against them.

On the satisfactory completion of this mission he rejoined his regiment in time to receive orders to march at once to the fort at West Point. Almost immediately after, he was detached from regimental service for another very confidential mission. Sir Henry Clinton was in New York City and the patriots of the State were in an uproar over the numerous Tories in their midst, their activities and conspiracies. An oath of allegiance was prescribed by the Legislature under the egis of Governor George Clinton in order to separate the sheep from the goats. Those who refused the oath were to be transferred, immediately within the enemy's lines and their property confiscated. It was no time, thought the patriots, for delicate handling of Tories or those who pretended a neutrality in the struggle.

There was a group of these gathered at Fishkill. It was Burr's task to convoy them, by sloop, and under a flag of truce, down the Hudson into the City of New York.⁹ Considering that Burr already had "one, two or three trusty persons over to the city, to get the reports, the newspapers, and the truth, if they can,"¹⁰ is it not conceivable that these convoys were but a blind for more serious work; that thus he might safely get in touch with his agents and obtain the results of their spyings?

On his first voyage on the sloop *Liberty* to New York City, Burr added in his own handwriting to Governor Clinton's safe conduct: "Mrs. Prevost and Miss De Visme with one Man Servant in consequence of Lord Stirling's Leave to pass to N.York and return are admitted on board this Flagg."¹¹

September, 1778, found Colonel Burr still detached from his regiment and engaged in regular trips out of Fishkill conveying prisoners down to the enemy lines, and, incidentally, establishing contact with his spies in New York.¹²

Meanwhile Major-General Charles Lee had been court-martialed and suspended for one year from the service for his conduct at Monmouth and for other good and sufficient reasons. Colonel Burr was indignant over the result; he felt that Washington had pursued the General with ill-judged hatred; that Lee was a far better tactician than his superior; and he did not hesitate to express his sympathy to Lee. The letter has been lost, but Lee's grateful reply is extant. He intends, he declares sarcastically, "whether the sentence is reversed or not reversed [by Congress], to resign my commission, retire to Virginia, and learn to hoe to-

bacco, which I find is the best school to form a consummate general. This is a discovery I have lately made."¹³

Burr's open advocacy of the deposed General certainly did nothing to better the somewhat strained relations between himself and Washington. The young Colonel was quite sincere in his belief that the Commander-in-Chief was a military leader of limited capacity; honest, it was true, and well-intentioned, but lacking the spark of genius and stubbornly set in his ways. He thought the entire plan of campaign around New York to have been a blunder of the first magnitude, the indecisiveness of the battle of Monmouth to have been due at least equally to Washington's tactical blunders as to Lee's disobedience of orders; the slow quiescence of the winter at Valley Forge had roused him to fury. Strangely enough, Burr's own predictions and suggestions had a remarkable way of becoming justified by the course of later events. He was without question an able officer and leader in his own right, and his actions were always direct, energetic, and carried out with unhesitating decision. Washington himself, in spite of his resentment at the implied and expressed criticism of this forward young officer, appreciated Burr's capacities as a soldier.

Burr was not alone, either then or now, in his animadversions. Conway, Lee, Gates, among the generals, and a substantial minority of the Continental Congress felt the same way. Nor have modern historians and students of military tactics been disposed to place Washington among the first flight of great military commanders. But what young Burr, too close to the imperfections of the picture, failed to see was that his commanding general possessed other qualities, equally as valuable, which were absolutely requisite to the binding together of the Colonies, and the patient, steady continuance of a disheartening and seemingly lost struggle.

5. NO MAN'S LAND

By October Burr's physical disabilities had increased to such an extent that a short retirement was essential. Accordingly he wrote to Washington requesting a leave of absence. "Sir, the excessive heat and occasional fatigues of the preceding campaign, have so impaired my health and constitution as to render me incapable of immediate service. I have, for three months past, taken every advisable step for my recovery, but have the mortification to find, upon my return to duty, a return of sickness, and that every relapse is more dangerous than the former. I have consulted several physicians; they all assure me that a few months

retirement and attention to my health are the only probable means to restore it." He therefore asked for permission to retire — without pay, however, because "too great a regard to malicious surmises, and a delicacy perhaps censurable, might otherwise hurry me unnecessarily into service, to the prejudice of my health, and without any advantage to the public."¹⁴

Washington answered promptly and in very kindly and gracious accents. "You, in my opinion," he chided, "carry your ideas of delicacy too far when you propose to drop your pay while the recovery of your health necessarily requires your absence from the service. It is not customary, and it would be unjust. You therefore have leave to retire until your health is so far re-established as to enable you to do your duty."¹⁵

Washington was right. The illness had been incurred in the line of duty. Pay in such cases always continued. Nevertheless Burr rejoined his regiment at West Point, cutting short his leave, rather than accept an extended leave of absence with pay. It was too great a delicacy and matter of pride on his part, or perhaps he wished for no seeming favors from the hand of his commander.

In spite of debilitating illness, he continued to perform his duties with his usual competence. In December he was ordered to Haverstraw to command a brigade, consisting of Malcolm's Regiment, and parts of Spencer's and Patten's Regiments. From there, in January, 1779, he was transferred to the lines in Westchester County and placed in active charge of the entire area.

This was a most important assignment, and required an officer who combined tact, disciplinarianism, military intelligence and ability to an almost incredible degree. It was a remarkable tribute to a mere Lieutenant-Colonel to place him in command of this area. General McDougall was unquestionably responsible for Burr's transfer. The district was part of his military bailiwick, and he had never failed to push the young officer's fortunes whenever possible. With his kindly offices and the paternal friendship of General Putnam, as well as the talents that he had displayed on every possible occasion, it was a matter for wonder that young Burr had not been promoted long before this to higher rank. Ogden, only one year his senior, and greatly his inferior in ability, had been for over a year a full colonel, and was soon to be made a brigadier-general. The army was full of such instances. Yet Burr was being consistently overlooked when the promotion lists were published. Was he correct in his surmise that Washington was responsible for the patent neglect?

In any event, promotion or no, the proper care of the Westchester lines was most important to the well-being and safety of the American forces. They stretched from Fishkill and Croton on the Hudson through White Plains across to the Sound. Above was sound American territory, but to the east, northward along the Connecticut shore, the British were in the habit of landing raiding expeditions from their fleet and harrying and burning with much gusto and thoroughness. To the south, between Croton and Kingsbridge, the northernmost point of Clinton's army of occupation, there was confusion worse confounded. It was typical No Man's Land, held by neither army, and subject to marauding bands from both armies, or, rather, the riffraff of their camp-followers, who plundered the civilians indiscriminately, and who tortured and burned and robbed with a fine disregard pretended friend and foe alike. The supposed Loyalists were known as "Cowboys," and the equally hypothetical Patriots went under the euphonious appellation of "Skinners."

A great wail arose from the outraged district; and McDougall, finding that the former commanders were unable to cope with the situation, assigned to Burr the job of cleaning up the festering district, putting an end to the daily outrages, robberies and down-right murders, and of restoring discipline to the demoralized American forces themselves, who, it was more than suspected, participated in the avails, if not in the actual outrages themselves.

On January 9th, McDougall notified General Parsons that "Lieut Col Burr is gone down to Command the Troops sent from hence for the winter. He will have under his orders four Parties of choice Continental Troops of sixty rank and file. And orders have been given to enlist till the first of April four Serjeants Parties of eight Brave Young Men of the Militia well acquainted with each Post, to serve as Guides and light Troops for the Regulars. . . . Their present Position is at Tarry Town, Young's, David Davis's, and Quaker Meeting House at the head of Purchase Street, in a few days I shall order Col Burr to advance the left in a south east line from Tarry Town, which I imagine by the Map will strike near Rye. . . . You know Lieut Col Burr he will cheerfully Harmonize with you; or any Officer from General Putnams Corps, which may be posted on our Left."¹⁶

Colonel Burr found matters in his district even worse than he had anticipated. Almost at once there was trouble — a serious affair that involved American troops and Lieutenant-Colonel Littlefield — the officer whom Burr had superseded — himself. Burr wrote in hot wrath to McDougall: "Colonel Littlefield, with

the party [a scouting troop], returned this morning. . . . Notwithstanding the cautions I gave, and notwithstanding Colonel Littlefield's good intentions, I blush to tell you that the party returned loaded with plunder. Sir, till now, I never wished for arbitrary power. I could gibbet half a dozen *good whigs*, with all the venom of an inveterate tory. The party had not been returned an hour, before I had six or seven persons from New-Rochelle and Frog's Neck, with piteous applications for stolen goods and horses . . . I am mortified that not an officer on the ground has shown any activity to detect the plunderers or their spoil. I have got three horses, and a number of other articles, and have confined two soldiers who had them in possession. But these are petty rascals. I feel more pity than indignation towards them. They were honest men till debauched by this expedition. I believe some officers are concerned. If I can be assured of that (and I shall spare no labour), you may depend on seeing them with a file of men. The militia volunteers excelled in this business. If I detect them I shall treat them with the same rigour, unless you advise to the contrary."¹⁷

But McDougall did nothing of the sort. He had sent Burr down to the Lines just for that purpose. "In all doubtful questions," he wrote back instantly, "which may arise on my orders as to the limits or legality of plunder in your front, I authorize you to be the sole judge."¹⁸

Burr, backed thus to the limit by the commanding general, proceeded to act with vigor and dispatch. Already, on January 12th, three days after his arrival, he had remanded one of the officers, Captain Brown, to Headquarters under arrest for "unbecoming behaviour."¹⁹ And on this particular bit of business he did not rest until it had been thoroughly cleaned up. On February 15th he sent to McDougall "Mr. Veal a valuable good Man of this Neighborhood" with a complaint "he made some time ago to me about some Irregularities committed by the Scout under Col. Littlefield. Capt Williams and some others were in the House. John Paulding one of the Volunteers on that Party will swear that Cap. William's Servant had the Things and that they were given by Cap. William's Direction." And on February 19th he reported with obvious satisfaction, "I have already adopted the Mode of Treatment you prescribed for Tories. Captain Williams has the hard Money as my Letter of this Morning will inform you."²⁰

To prevent any repetition of such disgraceful occurrences, and to tighten the discipline of the camp, Colonel Burr promulgated

orders that were terse, direct and very much to the point. "No officer is to presume to purchase Forage on Public Acct or to Impress Horses or any thing whatever for Public or private Use unless by Order of the Commdg Officer on Pain of his severest Displeasure." Prisoners were to be sent immediately to him for examination, civilian movements through the lines were to be very carefully scrutinized; scouting patrols, which had been used as a blind for plundering expeditions, were restricted to two-mile limits except on express order; and especially "no pretence will be admitted as an excuse for the seizing of Horses or Goods without proper Instructions. Practices contrary to this order will be deemed Marauding and treated as a Capital Crime." Arms and ammunition to be cleaned and inspected regularly, sentinels to be alert and watchful for spies and thieves, officers to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the duties and instructions, and "all disaffected Persons who come to the Guards on frivolous pretences and without proper Papers are to be severely whiped on the Spot and sent back." Officers absent from their guard "before regularly relieved or without proper Authority will be immediately Arrested. The Commanding Officer is ashamed of the necessity he is under of Enforcing such Common points of duty which every Corporal is supposed to be acquainted with — much more Gentlemen of some Years Military Experience." The young Colonel's sarcasm could sting like a lash! And, in accordance with McDougall's explicit commands, 100 lashes were to be meted out to any sentinel who quit his post while on duty or who parted "with his Arms unless they are wrested from him."²¹ Burr was determined to clean house at whatever cost! And he did.

It was not long before the results were plainly evident. He did not spare himself in the process. He seemed to sleep neither day nor night; his lightning descents upon remote outposts in the dead of night smote terror into the hearts of the slack and the indifferent; he weeded out the inefficient and the criminal among the officers, he made a complete register of all the inhabitants in the entire area, as well as an accurate map of the country. He was good at map-making; it was a practice that was to prove valuable in later years. He raised a corps of horsemen from the proved patriots of the neighborhood who served as an intelligence corps, and he had his most secret spies scattered over the countryside and penetrating even into the enemy lines. He effectually put an end to all plundering, so that even the known Tories were able to go to bed nights without fear. So remarkable was his espionage system, and his methods for the detection and punishment of un-

known thieves, that, according to an eye-witness, "it was universally believed that Colonel Burr could tell a robber by looking in his face, or that he had supernatural means of discovering crime."²² According to the same witness he gained "the love and veneration of all devoted to the common cause, and conciliated even its bitterest foes. His habits were a subject of admiration. His diet was simple in the extreme." He attended personally to the minutest details of his soldiers' comfort, to their lodgings, their diet, and even their sports when off duty. No wonder the men grew to idolize him, even as the men of Malcolm's Regiment had done before. He transformed them from negligent, discontented, plundering slackers to a disciplined, smart, and gallant command. Not a man deserted during his regime; there was not a single death from sickness. A most enviable record, indeed!

Nor were the enemy forgotten. Whereas their bands had been accustomed almost at will to break through the American defenses and harry and burn, the country back of the lines was now as safe as the streets of a peaceful city. All attempts to surprise Burr's clever guard system failed signally. Twice attacks were driven back with loss. He chased Governor Tryon, with 2,000 British, all the way back into Connecticut when that worthy attempted an attack. He led personally an assault upon a strongly fortified block-house held by Colonel Delancey at Delancey's Bridge, and took it without firing a shot or the loss of a single man.

6. RESIGNATION

But his health, already heavily undermined, gave way completely under these incessant fatigues and arduous duties. His physician insisted on his retirement, otherwise he would not answer for the consequences. Very reluctantly, therefore, on March 10, 1779, he tendered his resignation.

It was accepted with real regret by General Washington. The Commander appreciated the value of his services, even though he had his private prejudices against the young officer. "Perfectly satisfied," he said, "that no consideration save a desire to re-establish your health could induce you to leave the service, I cannot therefore withhold my consent. But, in giving permission to your retiring from the army, I am not only to regret the loss of a good officer, but the cause which makes his resignation necessary."²³

But Burr's old friend, Patterson, from a distance, put another construction upon the business. "I congratulate you on your re-

turn to civil life," he wrote, "for which (I cannot forbear the thought) we must thank a certain lady not far from Paramus. May I have occasion soon to thank her on another account; and may I congratulate you both in the course of the next moon for being in my line: I mean the married."²⁴ But of this lady and of Patterson's confident prediction more anon. For the present suffice it to say that Burr was definitely ill — he was to be a martyr to his ailment for a considerable time to come.

The effects of Burr's withdrawal soon manifested themselves. A good officer, Colonel Thompson, took over the command, but the British, apprised that the dreaded Burr was no longer on the ground, attacked and wiped out Thompson's Headquarters and took him prisoner. Colonel Green, who replaced him, was surprised and killed together with most of his men. The American lines were hurriedly shortened, leaving some twenty miles of country unprotected and subject to the old ravages. William Hull, an officer of the old command, wrote to his former Colonel sadly, "The ground you so long defended is now left to the depredation of the Enemy, and our friends in distressing circumstances."²⁵

Burr, however, was not to be permitted immediately to recuperate. Even though now a civilian, at McDougall's request he consented to undertake another mission. The General, at Newburgh, had been unable, in spite of repeated attempts, to get word through to Washington of enemy movements. Burr consented to make the passage. "To whom it may concern: — Colonel Burr, being on very pressing public business, every magistrate will assist him in changing horses, and all friends of the country will also assist him. June 2nd, 1779. Alexander M'Dougall, Major-General."²⁶

He got through successfully, and Washington, on hearing of McDougall's critical position, marched forthwith toward the Highlands with his forces.

7. THE WAR HORSE SNUFFS BATTLE

Colonel Burr may have thought he was through with battles and alarms after this, but the gods of war ordered differently. He sought peace and the restoration of a shattered constitution with friends at New Haven. The war pursued him. For, on July 5, 1779, a fleet of some forty sail under Sir George Collyer anchored off the Connecticut shore, preparatory to an attack on New Haven. Governor Tryon, that vindictive ex-Governor of the former province of New York, landed with 3,000 troops. The patriot inhabitants

flew to arms; the Tories rejoiced, armed themselves and went forth to join the invaders. East Haven was plundered and set on fire, and the scattered militia driven back on the main town. "Near 2 M. Stone," reports the Rev. Ezra Stiles, of Yale, "Dr. Dagget Professor of Divinity was captivated. He discharged his piece and then submitted as Prisoner — they after this pierced and beat him with Bayonets & otherwise abused him, so that his Life was in danger for a month after."²⁷

Burr heard the uproar and the sound of guns. Though he was confined to bed, he arose at once and volunteered to take command of the militia. But they were fleeing in a disordered rout. Then he heard that the students of Yale were hurriedly organizing in the College yard. He threw himself on a horse and galloped to the meeting-place, followed by some few of the militia who had rallied after him. The students enthusiastically placed themselves under the command of this veteran, scarcely older than themselves. More of the militia, shamefaced, joined.

The British were trying to force Darby Bridge, in order to gain lodgment in the town itself. Burr threw his force upon their left flank, and harried their march.²⁸ The enemy was compelled to retreat, but returned with artillery and reinforcements. Burr's little band was greatly outnumbered, and retired gradually, in good order. New Haven was captured, plundered, and burnt.

This, however, was the final act of the Revolutionary drama as far as Burr was concerned. The war went on, with varying fortunes, until the ultimate triumph and independence. The youthful veteran — he was twenty-three now — gradually regained his health by a careful regimen and a rigorous diet. On his retirement from the service, he was universally respected and acknowledged to be a brave, gallant, intelligent officer. The men in the ranks worshiped him and his brother officers testified to his worth. There was no dissenting voice, not even from those who had secretly withheld too rapid advancement. His thoughts now turned to civilian affairs — to his future career, and to a certain lady of Paramus.

CHAPTER VI

PRELUDE TO LIFE

1. COURTSHIP AND LAW BOOKS

AS a civilian, it became Burr's first duty to recruit his shattered health. This, however, was not to prove an easy task. It was to be over a year before he was sufficiently recovered to pick up the threads of his interrupted career. To the anguish of body there had been added another torment, no less keen because of its purely psychological character. He had fallen in love.

In 1777, while stationed at Ramapo, he had made the acquaintance of Mrs. Theodosia Prevost, who, with her younger children, her sister and her mother, resided at Paramus, but a short distance away. Her husband, Lieutenant-Colonel Jacques Marc Prevost, of the British Army, was then in the West Indies on duty with his regiment. Technically, therefore, she was an enemy, and to be treated as such.

But the American officers of the immediate vicinity did not consider her in that light. In spite of her marriage, she was herself of American birth and lineage. Her father, Theodosius Bartow, had been a lawyer in Shrewsbury, New Jersey. Her mother, Anne Stillwell, could trace her descent from Nicholas Stillwell, one of the earliest settlers and tobacco planters in the Colony of Virginia.

Theodosius Bartow died in 1746, immediately before the birth of a daughter, Theodosia. The widow, Anne Stillwell Bartow, shortly thereafter married Captain Philip de Visme of the British Army, by whom, at the date of his death in 1762, she had given little Theodosia five half-brothers and sisters.

Theodosia Bartow herself, at the tender age of seventeen, was married to Colonel Prevost, also of His Majesty's Forces. The young wife bore, in fairly rapid succession, five children to him — three daughters, Sally, Anne Louisa and Mary Louisa; and two sons, John Bartow and Augustine James Frederick, who, though but mere lads at the time of the Revolution, followed in their father's footsteps and were serving as ensigns with the British forces.

So that, during the entire course of the war, her position continued to be one of great delicacy and apprehension. In spite of